

Audit & Governance Committee – Recommendations Tracker

17 January 2024

ACTIONS

Number	Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation / Action	Action by whom	Action update	Target date for Completion
A6/23	5 June 2023	Questions and Petitions	The Director of Law and Governance will note the member of the public's suggestion of consideration to be given to positive feedback of nil return, as part of the report to be received later in the year concerning Members' and officers' declarations of gifts and hospitality.	Director of Law and Governance	Update provided by the Director of Law and Governance on 13 November 2023: Following the introduction of unit 4, online systems to record officer declarations of interest and gifts and hospitality are currently being implemented with a communication to all officers scheduled for early December. It is proposed that a new, annual report on Member and officer declarations of interests and gifts and hospitality, be incorporated into the annual report on ethical standards to the Committee which is timetabled for March 2024.	March 2024

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Page 16	A7/23	5 June 2023	Annual Complaints Performance Report	<p>The Customer Relations Manager, the Head of Customer Engagement and System Development and the Director of Law and Governance will take Committee member's comments and suggestions away and will report back at November's meeting where the LGSC Annual Letter and Complaints Update, and Council Complaints – Half Yearly Update items are scheduled; areas to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) comparative complaints figures with other local authorities. b) whether a similar internal investigator appointment will be beneficial for ASC and having more internal investigator roles in Education Services. c) consider whether the Corporate category can be renamed to 'Other' and explore whether it can be broken down by the services they related to as soon as possible; to liaise with Committee members on the services to be listed. d) consider how non-formal complaints information such as around highways that residents direct to Members, can be incorporated in future reports or provided to the Committee in another form. e) explore the suggestion with database providers of a response box being added to formal complaints indicating the residents' borough or district. f) provide a report on the customer services steering group, identifying the problems, where those were occurring and what was being done. 	<p>Customer Relations Manager / Head of Customer Engagement and System Development / Director of Law and Governance</p>	<p>As of 9 January 2024, the Customer Relations Team Manager and the team are working on an update.</p> <p>Update provided by the Customer Relations Manager on 13 November 2023:</p> <p>Regarding the Task and Finish group on complaints (refer to item 7 - Annex 2, heading: 'Learning from Complaints'): The group is currently at discovery stage with all three customer relations teams engaged in the process. The aim is to provide an outcome report for the Chief Executive by 31 December 2023, a summary of which can then be shared with the A&G Committee in the New Year.</p> <p>Update provided by the Customer Relations Manager on 3 November 2023:</p> <p>a) Comparative complaints figures with other local authorities.</p> <p>We are continuing to gather data from comparable authorities. Challenges include that data captured is different and does not lend itself to direct comparisons. So far only three authorities have responded to the data sharing request.</p> <p>b) Whether a similar internal investigator appointment will be beneficial for ASC and having more internal investigator roles in Education Services.</p>	January/February 2024
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<p>Page 17</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) provide an update on the Customer and Communities Directorate’s mapping exercise of the Council’s communication touch points and whether those were user friendly. h) consider a similar approach of having a central email address for residents when communicating with the Council around reporting a defect or complaint and issues to be allocated to the relevant officers for a response within an agreed timeline. i) provide an update on dovetailing residents’ formal complaints with concerns raised to Members if they were about the same issue, as well as where concerns should be referred to the formal complaints process. 		<p>The ASC complaint procedure is a single tier process. The expectation is that the service complained about is best placed to respond in detail; essentially taking forward their own investigation. Complaints are responded to by Managers / Senior Managers who have a background in Social Work and therefore completely understand the complexity of the complaint and if the Council have adhered to its duties under the Care Act 2014.</p> <p>Staffing resources in Customer Relations for Education Services have increased to allow better triaging and quality assurance of complaints as well as enquiry handling. 4 complaint leads have also been appointed within the SEND Service who are working closely with the Customer Relations Team to improve the quality and timeliness of initial responses which in turn will decrease the volumes of complaints escalating through the process.</p> <p>c) Consider whether the Corporate category can be renamed to ‘Other’ and explore whether it can be broken down by the services they related to as soon as possible; to liaise with Committee members on the services to be listed.</p> <p>The update report recognises the request and refers Services other than social care and education rather than Corporate Services. The weekly complaint snapshot</p>	
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Page 18					<p>reports shared with the CEO and Leader of the Council provide the Service breakdown suggested. Proposal that A&G Committee Chair and Vice Chair are included in the circulation of the weekly reports going forward.</p> <p>d) Consider how non-formal complaints information such as around highways that residents direct to Members, can be incorporated in future reports or provided to the Committee in another form.</p> <p>This proposal continues to be considered; challenges include that the way these enquiries are captured and recorded is not currently uniform within the three Customer Relations Teams.</p> <p>e) Explore the suggestion with database providers of a response box being added to formal complaints indicating the residents' borough or district.</p> <p>The request has been shared with the provider who are exploring the most appropriate way to take this forward. Challenges include restrictions due to GDPR which means that providing the information cannot be compulsory and therefore the data may not be complete.</p> <p>f) Provide a report on the customer services steering group,</p>	
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Page 19					<p>identifying the problems, where those were occurring and what was being done.</p> <p>In Education Services the steering group continues to focus on improving the quality and timeliness of responses whilst identifying the root causes of complaints. Perceived poor standards of communication and delays in the Education Health Care Plan process continue to be the primary cause of complaints. Education Services continue to work to address this given the acknowledged national challenges in securing assessments and outcome reports by Education Psychologists.</p> <p>g) Provide an update on the Customer and Communities Directorate’s mapping exercise of the Council’s communication touch points and whether those were user friendly.</p> <p>h) Consider a similar approach of having a central email address for residents when communicating with the Council around reporting a defect or complaint and issues to be allocated to the relevant officers for a response within an agreed timeline.</p> <p>The above (g and h) continue to be explored as challenges include the fact that the timescales for responses for two of the complaint procedures (Adults and Childrens</p>	
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Page 20					<p>Services) are governed by statutory legislation and cannot be deviated upon. The introduction of the online self service complaint portal addresses the central point to register a complaint. As the three customer relations teams are located separately within the Council a central or single email address at present needs to be explored in more detail due to the administrative element of recognising the specific nature of the complaint and which service is best able to respond.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">i) Provide an update on dovetailing residents' formal complaints with concerns raised to Members if they were about the same issue, as well as where concerns should be referred to the formal complaints process.</p> <p>The CFLL Customer Relations Team has recruited an officer to a new role that focuses on building relationships with members and services. The role remit includes working with the services and members to decrease the volume of duplicated effort in providing both a response for the Member to share with the family or their representative MP and a formal stage 1 complaint response direct to the family.</p>	

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A8/23	12 July 2023	Counter Fraud Annual Report 2022/23	The Audit Manager – Counter Fraud will find out whether a check had been undertaken across all schools in Surrey to make sure that all the business managers were on the right salary level.	Audit Manager – Counter Fraud	Update provided by the Audit Manager (Counter Fraud) on 2 January 2024: Supporting papers for school staff are held locally, confirmation of SBM paypoints would not be possible without writing out to all schools; the team did perform analysis on payroll records for schools. This included stratified sampling and review of high earners to identify anomalies. The team did not detect any oddities. Further work in this area will be picked up once Unit4 has bedded down and BAU has returned to school payroll.	September 2024
A9/23	12 July 2023	Counter Fraud Annual Report 2022/23	The Audit Manager – Counter Fraud will ensure that next year’s Counter Fraud Annual Report includes an NFI results section summarising the major areas identified in the cases.	Audit Manager – Counter Fraud	Update provided by the Audit Manager (Counter Fraud) on 2 January 2024: The Annual Counter Fraud Annual Report in July will include results on the biennial NFI exercise (results are reported in alternate years to reflect the 2 year cycle of NFI).	July 2024

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A10/23	12 July 2023	Update on the Surrey Forum and the Four Associated Strategic Partnership Boards	The Director – Corporate Strategy and Policy will liaise with the chairs of the Surrey Forum and the non-statutory boards: One Surrey Growth Board, Greener Futures Board, and Thriving Communities Board, asking whether the agendas, minutes and membership lists could be made available to all Members.	Director – Corporate Strategy and Policy	<p>Update by Committee Manager on 20 December 2023: the link will be circulated to members as soon as this is set up.</p> <p>Update provided by the Strategic Lead - Strategy and Policy on 26 October 2023:</p> <p>Approval has been received from the chairs of One Surrey Growth Board, Greener Futures Board and the Thriving Communities Board to make the agendas, minutes and membership lists of the non-statutory boards available to all Members. It has been agreed that officers will create a dedicated SharePoint space where these papers will be saved and the link will be circulated to members as soon as this is set up. As the Surrey Forum provides a more discursive, advisory setting, often sitting in workshop mode, it will not be publishing its agenda, minutes or membership list.</p>	Next few months
A15/23	12 July 2023	External Audit Plan 2022/23	The External Audit Update Report scheduled for November will include a separate report on the Value for Money (VfM) arrangements.	Grant Thornton representative	<p>Update by the Strategic Finance Business Partner on 1 December 2023:</p> <p>The Value for Money assessment is nearing completion for 22/23 and will be included in the Audit Findings Reports 2022/23 as part of the Statement of Accounts items scheduled to be reported to this Committee in January 2024.</p>	January 2024

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A16/23	12 July 2023	External Audit Plan 2022/23	The Grant Thornton representative will confirm whether PSAA has approved the proposed audit fee for 2022/23.	Grant Thornton representative	Update provided by the Strategic Finance Business Partner on 9 January 2024: It is understood that the fees quoted in Annex A are yet to be agreed by PSAA. Grant Thornton to provide an update at January's Committee meeting.	TBC
A17/23 Page 23	12 July 2023	Whistleblowing Annual Report	The two recommendations for improvement made by the Committee will be incorporated into next year's Whistleblowing Annual Report. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That existing employees alongside new employees would be asked to sign the Code of Conduct too. That the headcount figures regarding the whistleblowing cases be updated to include other employees such as those in schools and contractors. 	Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance		July 2024
A18/23	12 July 2023	Whistleblowing Annual Report	The Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance will ensure that next year's Whistleblowing Annual Report includes the comparison of how other councils track their grievances as well as their whistleblower cases.	Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance		July 2024

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A32/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Customer Relations Team Manager will look to provide a dashboard or Key Performance Indicator within the complaints annual report going forward setting out the year-on-year comparison regarding the volume of financial remedies to enable the evaluation of improvements being made.	Customer Relations Team Manager	Information provided by the Customer Relations Team Manager on 8 January 2024: This will be included going forward beginning with the Annual Report due in 2024.	June 2024
A33/23 Page 24	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Head of Customer Services will share the document which set out the parameters of the Task and Finish Group.	Head of Customer Services	Information provided by the Customer Relations Team Manager on 8 January 2024: The report was commissioned by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to review the organisation-wide approach to complaints handling in response to SCC's performance against key performance indicators (KPIs). Specific concerns were raised about timeliness of complaint responses and escalations to the Ombudsman. More details are contained within the outcome report and will be shared at Committee in March 2024.	March 2024
A35/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Committee Manager will add an item to the work plan for the next Committee meeting in January where officers will present the results of the Task and Finish Group.	Committee Manager	Rescheduled to March's Committee meeting to ensure the finalisation of the outcome report.	March 2024

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A38/23	22 November 2023	Annual Governance Statement Half Year Update	The Director - Law and Governance will provide an update on health integration and how it was improving.	Director - Law and Governance		January/ February 2024

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COMPLETED RECOMMENDATIONS/REFERRALS/ACTIONS – TO BE DELETED

A14/23	12 July 2023	Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23	Committee members will feedback any queries on the Narrative Report within the Statement of Accounts in due course.	Committee members	Statement of Accounts 2022/23 item is on January's Committee agenda.
A19/23	13 September 2023	Recommendations Tracker and Work Plan	The Strategic Finance Business Partner will provide a joint update with Grant Thornton in early October on the progress of the finalisation of the Statement of Accounts 2022/23 and pension fund accounts.	Strategic Finance Business Partner	A joint update was provided by the Strategic Finance Business Partner and Grant Thornton, 12 October 2023.
A28/23	22 November 2023	Recommendations Tracker and Work Plan	The Committee Manager will add timelines into the Tracker.	Committee Manager	The Committee Manager has included a new column 'target date for completion' and will continue to request/populate the timelines from report authors.
A29/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Customer Relations Team Manager / Head of Customer Services will follow up the second additional recommendation.	Customer Relations Team Manager / Head of Customer Services	<i>(All Members would be provided with the information set out in paragraph 11 of the report regarding the notification of LGSCO cases and decisions, to show the improvements made and to extend communication and transparency).</i> All Committee members added to distribution list from 01/01/2024.

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A30/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Customer Relations Team Manager / Head of Customer Services will follow up the third additional recommendation.	Customer Relations Team Manager / Head of Customer Services	<p><i>(The risks regarding the complaints process would be considered in line with the council’s Risk Management Strategy to actively manage those risks going forward.)</i></p> <p>Information provided by the Customer Relations Team Manager on 8 January 2024:</p> <p>Confirmed: Reputational and Financial Risks Financial Regulations.doc (sharepoint.com)</p>
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A31/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Customer Relations Team Manager will liaise with the Head of Customer Engagement and System Development to provide a response to what was being done in CFLL to increase the timeliness of responses to complaints.	Customer Relations Team Manager	<p>Information provided by the Customer Relations Team Manager on 8 January 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An internal audit report published in January 2023 highlighted that responsibility for quality and timeliness of complaint responses sits across all services. • The two major recommendations were to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1) Add complaint management to the CFLL directorate-wide risk register ○ 2) Increase staffing in this area • New resourcing was agreed in stages, both for the Customer Relations team and also for SEND services, where a large number of complaints are held. • The new posts in the Customer Relations team (first cohort recruited in September 23 and second cohort due to start by February 2024) are focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Better triaging to identify more cases for early resolution rather than raising as formal complaints, thereby reducing complaint volumes ○ Quality assurance of responses before they are sent to residents, reducing unnecessary escalations and preventing additional workload ○ Writing responses to MP and Councillor enquiries on behalf of operational service teams, releasing those teams to deliver more timely responses to formal complaints ○ Reviewing processes and delivering further training for service teams ○ Working with operational services to develop better processes for
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					<p>preventing unnecessary complaints (through learning from complaints) and for resolving concerns fully at the earliest possible stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new fixed term posts in SEND (recruited and trained during October 2023) are focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gathering information more quickly from case officers and from information systems to inform complaint responses ○ Coordinating and drafting complaint responses more efficiently and with greater consistency
A34/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Head of Customer Services will add the Committee in the weekly distribution list regarding the collated complaints across all three teams; and the distribution list regarding the new quarterly report which pulled together those three teams' activity and performance.	Head of Customer Services	The Communications Coordinator added all Committee members to the distribution list on the week beginning 01/01/2024.

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A36/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Customer Relations Team Manager will follow up the query with the Assistant Director - Support Services (CFLL) concerning Home to School Transport around whether it would be cheaper for the Council to provide taxis for children to go to school rather than the Council being fined by the LGSCO.	Customer Relations Team Manager	Information provided by the Assistant Director – Support Services (Children, Families, Lifelong Learning) on 3 January 2024: We provide Transport support for over 10,000 each day to their school provision. As an approximation a fine of £125 per week from the LGSCO is £25 per day. The average taxi cost per day is £57.15 and these prices are on an upward trajectory. So in summary, it is cheaper to accept a fine than to put transport in place for each child.
A37/23	22 November 2023	6 Month Complaints Performance Update Report 2023/24	The Customer Relations Team Manager / Head of Customer Services will for the next Committee meeting provide the head count of how many FTE staff are in the team (across the three services) compared to last year.	Customer Relations Team Manager / Head of Customer Services	Information provided by the Customer Relations Team Manager on 8 January 2024 - See Appendix 1.
A39/23	22 November 2023	Internal Audit Progress Report - Quarter 2	The Audit Manager will liaise with the Committee Manager to circulate Internal Audit's methodology regarding school audits to the Committee.	Audit Manager / Committee Manager	The Audit Manager has noted that the Chief Internal Auditor after the Committee meeting had spoken with the Member who raised the query to clarify his request. Rather than seeing the school audits methodology he wanted to know the process around how school audit opinions were awarded based on findings and risk; the Chief Internal Auditor had explained to him verbally which he was happy with. Therefore, no document needed to be circulated to the Committee.