

# Internal Audit Report

## Customer Contact Journey

10 December 2025

CD2501

Overall Assessment	Reasonable Assurance
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This Internal Audit review is conducted for the City of Edinburgh Council under the auspices of the 2025/26 internal audit plan approved by the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee in March 2025. The review is designed to help the City of Edinburgh Council assess and refine its internal control environment. It is not designed or intended to be suitable for any other purpose and should not be relied upon for any other purpose. The City of Edinburgh Council accepts no responsibility for any such reliance and disclaims all liability in relation thereto.

The internal audit work and reporting has been performed in line with the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards (UK Public Sector) and as a result is not designed or intended to comply with any other auditing standards.

Although there are specific recommendations included in this report to strengthen internal control, it is management's responsibility to design, implement and maintain an effective control framework, and for the prevention and detection of irregularities and fraud. This is an essential part of the efficient management of the City of Edinburgh Council. Communication of the issues and weaknesses arising from this audit does not absolve management of this responsibility. High and Critical risk findings will be raised with senior management and elected members as appropriate.

# Executive Summary

## Engagement conclusion and summary of findings

There is reasonable assurance on the design and operating effectiveness of key controls established to support a positive customer contact journey across the Council including the dedication, professionalism and responsiveness of frontline contact colleagues and the commitment to improve the customer experience through implementation of customer centric and digital transformation initiatives.

The Council's ability to deliver a consistently high quality customer journey is however constrained by several factors. Addressing the following areas for improvement will support achievement of the Council's strategic priorities including delivery of the transformation approach and a focus on early intervention and prevention through an empowered workforce:

- reviewing system use across services to reduce the impact of disjointed systems and data silos through implementation of wider integrated or central systems and journey mapping to provide consistent customer experiences, reduce siloed working and reliance on manual workarounds
- improve governance and oversight to reduce the impact of inconsistent standards and guidance through implementation of a council-wide customer service policy, up to date customer service standards and charters and core learning modules on customer service
- embracing a culture of continuous improvement across the Council including embedding quality assurance and a commitment to getting things right, and demonstrating that customer feedback including complaints are valued and lessons are learned to improve services

Overall Assessment	Reasonable Assurance
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- providing clearly defined roles and response expectations to minimise delays and duplication through development and communication of service level agreements for customer contact including elected member enquiries.

## Areas of effective practice

- the Council's Customer Centric Engagement Strategy is currently in development and aims to provide a seamless, inclusive, and responsive customer experience
- Customer Contact Advisors are supported by Knowledgebase, a centralised digital hub of information, solutions and resources, to efficiently direct queries across the Council
- services have been working with the Corporate Risk Team to update risk registers using the corporate risk register template at service level
- the Homelessness service has developed processes to support customers such as a SharePoint calendar for appointments, and a keeping in touch leaflet
- Customer Care actively seek and analyse customer feedback, identifying root cause to enable service improvements
- automated forms in Waste and Cleansing services have supported the management of customer enquiries to ensure quick resolution
- customers can access services and support through a range of accessible and inclusive channels including phone, digital, email and in person.

## Audit Assessment

Audit Area	Control Design	Control Operation	Findings	Priority Rating
Risk Management			N/A - No findings noted	N/A
Policies, procedures and training			Finding 2 – Customer Service Policies, Procedures and Training	Medium Priority
Customer contact and touch points			Finding 1 – System Usage and Customer Journey Mapping	High Priority
Performance and Quality Assurance			Finding 3 – Quality Assurance, Complaints and Lessons Learned	Medium Priority
Information Governance			See Finding 1	Medium Priority
Service Level Agreements and Service Standards			Finding 4 – Service Level Agreements	Medium Priority

[See Appendix 1 for Control Assessment and Assurance Definitions](#)

# Background and scope

The City of Edinburgh Council (the Council) provides over 700 services to a wide range of customers including service requests, provision of information and support and delivery of statutory services. A customer contact journey refers to the interactions an individual has with the Council starting from initial contact, moving through various touchpoints, and potentially concluding with customer feedback. Best practice involves teams communicating collaboratively and effectively so that the customer experience is seamless rather than being routed through disconnected services and systems.

Customers can access support through several channels, including online portals, email, phone, webchat, and face-to-face in Council buildings. The Council's [customer care standards](#) outline what customers can expect when they contact the Council, including timescales for response.

## Customer Digital Enablement

The Council is focused on improving its digital services and ensuring accessibility for all residents as outlined in the [Digital and Smart City Strategy](#). Aims of the strategy include ensuring services are digital by default, mobile first, and putting citizens at the centre of what the Council does by engaging them in the design and delivery of services.

An update on the Customer Centric Engagement Strategy which is part of the Council's Transformation approach was presented to the Strategic Programme Board in July 2025 outlining planned improvements to the customer experience.

For customers using digital services online, the Council uses a mixture of integrated and non-integrated webforms. Integrated webforms (used for reporting issues such as missed bin collections, streetlight problems and potholes), are automatically directed to the relevant service, who update the action in the relevant system, which then automatically triggers an update to the customer through the Verint Customer Relationship Management System (Verint). For non-integrated forms (used for reporting issues such as

overhanging trees), the information can be automatically generated into a report via the Verint CRM and sent on to the service to action.

Enhancements to the current AI chatbot service are due to be introduced which will direct customers to relevant pages on the Council's website, and onto an advisor, if required.

## Customer Satisfaction surveys

Customer satisfaction following contact with the contact centre is captured in real time via GovMetric and is included in the Customer Services contact [quarterly](#) and [annual](#) performance reporting. In 2024-25, 22,481 customers provided feedback, with 66% reporting they were fairly or very satisfied. Satisfaction levels can be driven by the customer contact experience, their experience to date and the service outcome. If a customer requires further support to resolve an issue, or expresses dissatisfaction with a service, the Customer Contact team or appropriate service makes contact to assist them to resolve their query or to log a complaint. Each service is responsible for managing and resolving their own customer complaints.

## Performance

The performance of the Customer Service team is reported in the quarterly [public performance scorecard](#) under the Customer and Corporate Services theme 'it's important that when people get in touch we respond quickly – be it in answering their questions, processing their requests for financial assistance or putting them in touch with the most appropriate Council services.' In 2024-25 Q3 [reporting](#), KPIs for customer hub satisfaction, % of calls answered within 60 seconds and % of abandoned calls were all within target.

## Scope

The objective of this review was to assess the adequacy of design and operating effectiveness of the key controls established to enable the Council to manage the customer journey from the point of contact to resolution including liaison between teams and achievement of service standards

across the organisation. It also considered complaints, lessons learned, performance monitoring and reporting across a sample of key service requests /customer interactions.

Through a review of the 2023/24 [Complaints Annual Report](#), the following areas were selected for review:

- Customer Care (Customer and Digital Services)
- Missed bins (Waste and Environment)
- Parks & Greenspaces
- Homelessness & Housing Access

### Alignment to Risk and Business Plan Outcomes

The review also considered assurance in relation to the following Corporate Leadership Team risk categories:

- Service Delivery
- People
- Technology & Information

- Reputational
- Health & Safety (including Public Safety)
- Regulatory and Legislative Compliance
- Supplier, Contract and Partnership Management

### Business Plan Outcomes:

- People can access public services locally and digitally in ways that meet their needs and expectations and contribute to a greener net zero city
- The Council has the capacity, skills, and resources to deliver its priorities efficiently, effectively and at lower cost.

### Reporting Date

Testing was undertaken between 23 June 2025 and 12 August 2025.

Audit work concluded on 12 August 2025, and the findings and opinion are based on the conclusion of work as at that date.

# Findings and Management Action Plan

## Finding 1 – System Integration and Customer Journey Mapping

Finding Rating	High Priority
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Customer contact journeys across the Council often require customers to deal with more than one team or service to get a resolution. When teams and services are supported by shared or integrated systems, they can easily exchange and access information, reduce reliance on manual processes and deliver a smoother, more consistent customer experience.

### System Integration

The Council's Customer Contact Centre manages most frontline service enquiries by either providing a resolution or redirecting to services. The Contact Centre uses the Verint Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which integrates with other services systems including Capture and Confirm. Contact can also come via an online enquiry or direct to services.

The Council does not use a council wide CRM system which means customer journeys can be fragmented. Multiple systems and inboxes are used to deal with enquiries which leads to siloed operations where teams work in isolation rather than collaboratively. In addition, manual work arounds are in place for some areas which increases the risk of errors and inconsistencies. For example, the Contact Centre operates a manual list for service contacts which by its very nature requires frequent updating.

The lack of a single council wide CRM means there is poor visibility of progress with dealing with enquiries across services and colleagues are unable to easily track enquiries or see the full history of a case which may lead to issues being overlooked. Some teams are unable to access the different systems used. For example, the Family Household Support Service offer support in all areas including housing, but they are unable to see all relevant system notes which can lead to duplication or conflicting advice being given. Similarly, Parks and Green Spaces do not use the Confirm system used by Roads, so enquiries are not work-flowed effectively.

### Customer Journey Mapping

While the Council has mapped some customer journeys where systems are integrated with Verint such as missed bins and pothole reporting, it has not mapped end-to-end customer journeys for enquiries where systems are not integrated across services and therefore passed to services via email.

Customer journey mapping is essential in the absence of integrated systems as it highlights gaps, delays and issues in the customer journey. It helps ensure accountability, reduces duplication and importantly improve the customer's experience. Journey mapping also supports a culture of improvement as it often highlights what it is like to be the customer and to be on the receiving end of disjointed systems. Journey mapping also supports development of an integrated CRM as it sets out the processes in operation across services.

### Alignment to Transformation

Improving the customer contact journey is essential for delivering the value streams of the Council's Transformation approach - improving the Council's relationship with citizens and communities; combatting poverty through early intervention and prevention and helping colleagues improve performance by giving them the tools they need to get the job done. A Customer Centric Engagement Strategy is in development which outlines planned improvements to the customer experience including the use of AI tools for faster responses, improved visibility of the end to end process and better use of data.

An integrated CRM and clear journey mapping is an essential enabler for the Council's transformation approach including early intervention and prevention, as, they do not only record customer interactions, they can also provide a source of valuable information which can indicate patterns or emerging issues and enable the Council to triage and respond before issues become critical and support data driven decision making.

## Risks

- **Strategic Delivery** – lack of integrated systems leading to missed opportunities for early intervention and prevention
- **Technology and Information** – multiple systems leading to duplication and inefficiencies. In addition, separate legacy systems reinforce service level siloes
- **Service Delivery** – lack of service access to records on support or advice provided may result in inconsistent approaches and duplication which impacts resources
- **Reputational** – fragmented customer journeys leading to increased customer dissatisfaction and complaints
- **Health and Safety** – disjointed workflows and manual workarounds may result in health and safety issues not being addressed in a timely manner
- **Regulatory and Legislative Compliance** – disconnected systems may lead to data and information governance risks resulting in potential data breaches and external scrutiny.

## Recommendations and Management Action Plan: System Integration and Customer Journey Mapping

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
1.1	The Council should consider use of a unified Customer Relationship Management System across the Council to support delivery of the Transformation approach, equip services and colleagues with a central system for managing enquiries and service delivery requests as well as providing a history of interactions and resolutions which should reduce duplication, improve efficiency and support consistent customer journeys across the Council.	A business case for a Council wide CRM is currently being considered and is expected to be presented to the Strategic Programme Board (SPB) in the first quarter of 2026.	Corporate Director of Place	Service Director for Customer and Digital Services	31/07/2026
1.2	Services should document end to end customer journeys for high-volume and high risk enquiries to provide a visual understanding of how customers interact across different touchpoints. Points of failure and disconnections between services (including system usage) should be identified and solutions	Phased Implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to be developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.  The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
	developed to enable an improved customer experience.	identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work.			
1.3	Services that manage customer enquiries via mailboxes should review the number of mailboxes in use with an aim to reduce and simplify the process. In addition, services should ensure that records are managed, stored and disposed of in line with the Council's Records Retention Schedule and the service records management requirements.	<p>Phased Implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to be developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.</p> <p>The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work.</p>	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026

## Finding 2 – Customer Service Policy, Procedures and Training

Finding Rating	Medium Priority
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Policies and procedures are essential to ensure clear direction, consistency, compliance, and standardisation. Regular review of procedures is essential to ensure that processes remain accurate, relevant, and in line with current legislation and industry standards.

### Customer Service Policy and Standards

While Corporate [Customer Care Standards](#) are in place which set out expected standards of customer service, including timescales for responses, to customers and Council employees, the Council does not have a specific policy related to customer service which clearly establishes applicable standards aligned to Council priorities and other frameworks and governance and oversight arrangements to ensure a consistent approach. This includes consideration of the interim equality outcome for 2025-26: People with communication needs find it easier to engage with council services through improved and standardised approaches to Inclusive Communications across the organisation.

The Customer Care Standards set out a one-day response for a phone enquiry and a ten-day response for email enquiry. However, officers interviewed advised they were not aware of the standards and advised that they generally quote ten days for all responses. In addition, some officers expressed concern over generic response times which may not take into account service pressures and resource/capacity constraints. The Council does not monitor achievement of the timescales set out in the standards.

It was also noted that the [Customer Care Charter](#) on the Orb is out of date and does not reflect current Council structures and business plan priorities. Officers were unable to confirm who the owner of this document is or when it was last updated.

### Customer Service Procedures

There is a lack of documented procedures to guide officers responding to customer enquiries in line with required standards which results in inconsistencies in service delivery and responses. The Customer Services team are currently developing Knowledgebase (a centralised digital hub of information, solutions and resources) to support Customer Contact Advisors and Customer Services Transactions Officers' direct queries more efficiently. Services will need clear customer enquiry procedures for input into Knowledgebase.

### Customer Service Training

Customer service training varies across service areas. MyLearningHub contains several customer modules and service specific training is also in place. For example, Customer Contact Centre colleagues undertake 'People at Heart' training while the Forestry team complete 'Customer Excellence' training. The modules contain different content and have different outcomes and priorities; streamlining training would ensure colleagues are aware of the Council's Customer Service Standards and support colleagues to manage customer enquiries consistently.

### Risks

- **Service Delivery** – lack of awareness and application of standards and training resulting in a failure to meet customer needs
- **Reputational** – untimely and delayed responses to enquiries and service requests may impact the Council's reputation
- **People** – unclear standards and differing approaches leading to a lack of confidence and ownership across colleagues and inconsistent outcomes for citizens.

## Recommendations and Management Action Plan: Customer Service Policy, Procedures and Training

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
2.1	The Council should consider development of a Customer Service Policy to ensure clear governance and consistency and alignment to relevant frameworks including the Business Plan objectives, transformation, early intervention and prevention approaches and equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes and to manage risks associated with outdated standards, lack of ownership and inconsistencies across services.	<p>Phased implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to be developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.</p> <p>The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work</p>	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026
2.2	The Council's Customer Care Standards should be reviewed to ensure they align with the Council's priorities and are reflective of service pressures and resources. Once updated they should be communicated to all colleagues and achievement of the standards regularly monitored and reported on.	<p>Phased implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to be developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.</p> <p>The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work</p>	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026
2.3	The outdated Corporate Customer Care Charter should be removed from the Orb and its relevance discussed.	<p>Phased implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to be developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.</p> <p>The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work</p>	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026
2.4	Linking to the issues raised in Findings 1 and 2, services should document customer service procedures which include:	Phased implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief	30/04/2026

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>where enquiries are recorded and, if not within a system, details of mailboxes they should be directed to</li> <li>if the enquiry requires a response from another team, how this will be communicated to the customer</li> <li>the lead officer</li> <li>KPIs for response times and services provided</li> <li>consideration of standard responses where possible, that are transparent and clear</li> <li>guidance for how enquiries are closed, including a method of checking the enquiry is complete prior to closure</li> <li>definition of high and standard priority enquiries, and where they should be directed</li> </ul> <p>Procedures should be shared with the Customer Contact Centre who can update knowledgebase, they should also be shared with all relevant officers and teams to ensure consistency.</p>	<p>be developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.</p> <p>The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work</p>		Executive's Office	
2.5	<p>Customer Services should engage with Learning and Development to identify Customer Service training for all services managing customer enquiries to support colleagues responding in a consistent manner and in line with Council standards.</p> <p>Once agreed, the Customer Service training should be added as core learning for all Council colleagues.</p>	<p>Phased implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to be developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.</p> <p>The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work</p>	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026

## Finding 3 – Quality Assurance, Complaints and Lessons Learned

Finding Rating	Medium Priority
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### Quality Assurance

Implementing robust quality assurance (QA) processes helps to ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery and increased customer satisfaction. While effective QA processes have been established by the Customer Contact team, an embedded approach to QA across other Council services is not evident, which can result in delays to resolving customer enquiries and customer dissatisfaction. For example, the Waste and Cleansing team do not consistently check that bins are emptied before closing missed bin enquiries, which has subsequently led to duplicate enquiries and complaints.

### Complaints Handling and Recording Systems

The Customer Care team log complaints in Capture, a legacy access database. The system is slow and usage of the system across services is inconsistent, resulting in inconsistent responses and resolution of complaints. System limitations mean that Customer Care Advisors are not always able to see previous updates given to customers, and the outcome of stage one complaints.

The audit of Complaints Management in July 2022, highlighted that directorates use different methods of recording complaints (including within systems and manual processes such as Excel spreadsheets). Work to identify an appropriate Council wide system continues to be led by the Corporate Complaints Team. In the interim, issues with standalone systems continue, with inconsistent handling and recording across services. In addition, some complaints are not captured formally if directed to colleagues' mailboxes instead of via a central recording process. This results in difficulties monitoring complaints and inaccurate data reporting.

### Feedback and Lessons Learned

It is important that lessons learned from complaints and feedback are collated within services and teams to enable root cause and improvements to be identified which improve the customer experience.

The Council's [Complaints Annual Report](#) 2023-2024 identified improvement actions including better management reporting and monitoring of complaints, and the development of local procedures to ensure the better co-ordination of complaints within service areas. However, completion of directorate and service actions is not monitored.

Quarterly reporting on complaints is compiled for directorates which breaks down performance by service and includes improvement actions. However, the Council does not publish information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services on a quarterly basis as required by the Council's [Complaints Handling Procedure](#).

### Performance Reporting

Performance monitoring and reporting for the Customer Contact Centre includes a key performance indicator to measure customer satisfaction. Other Council teams with customer service responsibilities, such as Homelessness, Waste and Cleansing and Parks and Greenspaces do not measure and report on customer satisfaction.

### Risks

- **Service Delivery** – lack of embedded QA across services leading to varied standards and customer experiences, complaints sent to inboxes bypass formal recording impacting ability to track progress
- **Reputational** – failure to verify actions such as bin emptying before closing enquiries leading to unresolved issues and increased complaints, poor visibility of complaints outcomes may lead to public mistrust
- **Governance and Decision Making** – incomplete or inaccurate performance data may prevent informed decision making

# Recommendations and Management Action Plan: Quality Assurance, Complaints and Lessons Learned

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
3.1	Services with customer service responsibilities should incorporate Quality Assurance processes into procedures (see 2.4) to ensure customer enquiries are managed appropriately, are responded to in a timely manner and key themes and issues link into service performance reporting and People management conversations.	Phased implementation – this will follow the actions agreed against Finding 2. The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026
3.2	The Council should prioritise the review for implementation of a central / integrated system for recording and managing complaints across the Council.	See agreed management action <a href="#">1.1</a>	Corporate Director of Place	Head of Democracy and Governance Information Governance Manager & Council Data Protection Officer	31/07/2026
3.3	In the interim period, the Council should consider how it is getting assurance and oversight on the timeliness of responses to customers and that complaints are responded to within timescale. This should include ensuring that the Customer Care team have access to appropriate information to respond to frontline enquiries.	Link to action 2.1 – the Senior Responsible Officer will be responsible for ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place while the standards are established.	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026
3.4	Improvement actions outlined in the <a href="#">annual complaints report</a> 23/24 and future complaints performance reporting should be collated into an action plan and	The Strategic Complaints Group and the Corporate Complaints Management Group currently consider lessons learned and	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office Information Governance	30/04/2026

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
	progress monitored by the Corporate Complaints Management group.	improvements identified through customer complaints.  Phased implementation – this will follow the actions agreed against Finding 2. The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work		Manager and Council Data Protection Officer	
3.5	In line with the requirements of the Council's <a href="#"><u>Complaints Handling Procedure</u></a> , the Council should publish information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services and to demonstrate the improvements resulting from complaints and show how complaints can help to improve services. In line with the procedure the reports should be easily accessible to members of the public and available in alternative formats as requested.	Phased implementation – this will follow the actions agreed against Finding 2. The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office Information Governance Manager and Council Data Protection Officer	30/04/2026
3.6	The Council should consider introducing customer satisfaction measures across wider Council Services, specifically to encourage feedback on the customer contact journey including how this could be improved and to share positive feedback.	Phased implementation - Phased implementation – this will follow the actions agreed against Finding 2. The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office Information Governance Manager and Council Data Protection Officer	30/04/2026

## Finding 4 – Service Level Agreements

Finding Rating	Medium Priority
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### Service Level Agreements

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) establish expectations, define responsibilities and provide accountability between services. However, there are limited customer service SLAs between services, and some customer enquiries are being passed between services with a lack of clear roles and responsibilities, resulting in varying response timeframes, inconsistent recording and in some cases a delayed or inadequate resolution for the customer.

### Elected Member Enquiries

The [Member-Officer Protocol](#) sets out roles and responsibilities to ensure clarity when carrying out respective duties including provision of information to members to enable them to carry out their role as councillors. As part of audit work, members raised concerns regarding the timeliness of responses to enquiries by officers with significant delays and examples of where emails had not been responded to at all. The Member-Officer Protocol does not set

out any timescales for responding to enquiries. It is recognised that meeting a pre-defined timescale for providing information can be challenging and dependent on the complexity of the enquiry.

There are no dedicated mailboxes in services for Elected Member enquiries which means enquiries are often sent to multiple officers leading to conflicting or missed responses. Emails to individuals also make it difficult to monitor the volume and themes of member enquiries.

### Risks

- **Service Delivery** – without clear SLAs there can be a lack of accountability and unclear expectations on expected response times leading to inconsistent and/or delayed responses and increased failure demand.
- **Reputational** – if enquiries are not responded to in a timely manner there may be a breakdown of trust between customers and the Council and elected member /officer relationships.

## Recommendations and Management Action Plan: Service Level Agreements

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
4.1	SLAs should be incorporated into Customer Service procedures (see 2.4) to ensure that when enquiries cross over services, they are managed in line with expected Council standards and there is a clear lead officer responsible for responding to the customer.	Phased implementation - Phased implementation – this will follow the actions agreed against Finding 2. The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office Information Governance Manager and Council Data Protection Officer	30/04/2026
4.2	The Council should consider updating the Member-Officer Protocol to include service standards for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledging receipt of enquiries</li> </ul>	Phased implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to be	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timeline for a substantive reply</li> </ul>	<p>developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.</p> <p>The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work</p>			
4.3	Directorates should consider dedicated mailboxes for member enquiries to officers to support logging, allocation, and monitoring of responses as well as analysis of trends and key themes.	<p>Phased implementation: A focus on customer service within the Council has been identified as a priority in 2026. The terms of reference for this work are yet to be developed. Therefore, phased implementation is proposed on this recommendation.</p> <p>The recommendation will be shared with the Senior Responsible Officer (once identified) for consideration as part of the development of the programme of work</p>	Chief Executive	Operations Manager, Chief Executive's Office	30/04/2026

# Appendix 1 – Control Assessment and Assurance Definitions

Control Assessment Rating		Control Design Adequacy	Control Operation Effectiveness
Well managed		Well-structured design efficiently achieves fit-for purpose control objectives	Controls consistently applied and operating at optimum level of effectiveness.
Generally Satisfactory		Sound design achieves control objectives	Controls consistently applied
Some Improvement Opportunity		Design is generally sound, with some opportunity to introduce control improvements	Conformance generally sound, with some opportunity to enhance level of conformance
Major Improvement Opportunity		Design is not optimum and may put control objectives at risk	Non-conformance may put control objectives at risk
Control Not Tested	N/A	Not applicable for control design assessments	Control not tested, either due to ineffective design or due to design only audit

Overall Assurance Ratings	
Substantial Assurance	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Reasonable Assurance	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Limited Assurance	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
No Assurance	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Finding Priority Ratings	
<b>Advisory</b>	A finding that does not have a risk impact but has been raised to highlight areas of inefficiencies or good practice.
<b>Low Priority</b>	An issue that results in a small impact to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
<b>Medium Priority</b>	An issue that results in a moderate impact to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
<b>High Priority</b>	An issue that results in a severe impact to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
<b>Critical Priority</b>	An issue that results in a critical impact to the achievement of objectives in the area audited. The issue needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

## Appendix 2 – Areas of Audit Focus and Control Objectives

Audit Area	Control Objectives
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risks related to customer contact journeys are identified, recorded and managed within service risk registers, and regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate mitigating actions are in place and remain effective, with escalation to divisional and directorate level risk committees where required. This includes consideration of fraud and serious organised crime related risks.</li> </ul>
Policies, procedures and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>End-to-end customer contact journeys have been mapped and clearly documented and agreed across all relevant service areas</li> <li>There are clearly established policies and procedures, including customer service standards, in place, which are adhered to, subject to regular review and updated in line with the relevant legislation, requirements and guidance, and following any changes to practice</li> <li>Customer service training and development activities are completed and included in role-specific learning for officers who engage with customers as part of established customer contact journeys.</li> </ul>
Customer contact and touch points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer service operations are designed and functioning effectively and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comprehensive, accessible and inclusive contact methods</li> <li>accurate customer identification and verification, considering data privacy and security</li> <li>timely responses across customer touch points, which are in line with KPIs and customer care standards, and pain points are minimised and appropriately managed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Performance and Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance for achieving agreed service standards and other key customer measures are accurately recorded, monitored and reported on, with action taken to address underperforming areas</li> <li>Monitoring and oversight arrangements are in place to ensure customers who have contacted the Council for a service have had a resolution in line with agreed Customer Service Standards</li> <li>Customer feedback and complaints procedures are in place to ensure the customer journey is in line with customer care standards, and there is continuous improvement in customer experience</li> <li>Quality assurance arrangements have been established to ensure the customer contact journey is effectively monitored and managed and includes an embedded approach to lessons learned.</li> </ul>
Information Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information governance risks for customer contact journey within services are clearly understood and effective controls have been established to ensure adherence to relevant Council policies and procedures</li> <li>Records of customer contact are accurately recorded and stored in line with relevant Council policies and procedures, and are accessible for QA, complaints and performance monitoring.</li> </ul>
Service Level Agreements and service standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where services are provided by one service on behalf of another Council area, team or third party to support customer contact journeys, there is a service level agreement in place which sets out the types of services provided, relevant service requirements, timescales, and performance requirements.</li> </ul>