

Argyll and Bute Council
Internal Audit Report
February 2023
FINAL

Customer Service Centre

Audit Opinion: High

	High	Medium	Low	VFM
Number of Findings	1	0	5	1

Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
Introduction	3
Background	3
Scope	4
Risks	4
Audit Opinion	4
Recommendations	5
2. Objectives and Summary Assessment	5
3. Detailed Findings	7
Appendix 1 – Action Plan	13
Appendix 2 – Audit Opinion	18

Contact Details

Internal Auditor: **Annemarie McLean**
 Telephone: **01700 501354**
 e-mail: **annemarie.mclean@argyll-bute.gov.uk**

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

Introduction

1. As part of the 2022/23 internal audit plan, approved by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee in March 2022, we have undertaken an audit of Argyll and Bute Council's (the Council) system of internal control and governance in relation to the Customer Service Centre.
2. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) with our conclusions based on discussions with council officers and the information available at the time the fieldwork was performed. The findings outlined in this report are only those which have come to our attention during the course of our normal audit work and are not necessarily all the issues which may exist. Appendix 1 to this report includes agreed actions to strengthen internal control however it is the responsibility of management to determine the extent of the internal control system appropriate to the Council.
3. The contents of this report have been agreed with the appropriate council officers to confirm factual accuracy and appreciation is due for the cooperation and assistance received from all officers over the course of the audit.

Background

4. Argyll and Bute Council (the Council) are committed to providing excellent customer service by putting customers at the centre of its everyday business. Excellent customer service will enhance the Council's standing, allow ease of interaction and help resolve any issues quickly and efficiently. Whilst poor customer service can have detrimental effect on the Council's reputation it can also drive down organisational efficiency and effectiveness, it is therefore important that public bodies promote and maintain good customer services with the public, thereby, reducing costs by minimising the time needed for handling customer interactions and complaints.
5. In 2010 the council launched its Customer Service Charter as part of a programme of activities aimed at further improving customer service standards. The Charter tells customers the standards of response they can expect depending on how they contact us.
6. The Customer Engagement Team's (CET) role is to handle initial customer enquiries and requests for every council Service, via a wide range of channels. The CET aims to get every customer enquiry 'right first time' without having to needlessly transfer the query to officers within specific services.
7. At the time of our review the CET have an annual budget of £1.42 million with 45 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff spread between Web Team, Digital Services Team, Customer Service Centre (CSC), Service Points and Registration.
8. It is essential that the Council use all the tools available to help deliver the best quality of service possible. The CET core systems include Oracle Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Netcall Converse Contact Management Systems plus subsidiary systems like room booking and Facebook.

9. Customer Service Centre staff rely on services to provide them with sufficient information and resources to allow them to handle enquiries effectively on their behalf. All enquiries that cannot be resolved immediately are transferred to the service staff via email.
10. Contact centre staff are primarily based in Campbeltown, however, Service Point staff are based across the Council areas and use the same systems providing resilience and also assisting with peaks in customer demand. In the year 2021/22 of the 563,467 total customer interactions, 152, 272 were mediated interactions with staff split across the following channels:

Telephone	111,726
Face to face	11,797
Email	18,002
Letter	4,856
Smart Assistant	3,156
Facebook	381
Text	558
Webmail - Contact Us form	194
Chat	1,077
Voiceform	525
TOTAL	152,272

2021/22 ALL TOTALS	Total	% Split
Mediated Transactions	152,272	27%
Automated Information requests	296,736	53%
Automated Transactions	114,459	20%
TOTAL	563,467	

Scope

11. The scope of the audit was to review the process and systems used for the handling of initial customer contacts and ensure that customer enquiries are followed up in a timely manner, as outlined in the Terms of Reference agreed with the Customer Engagement and Transformation Manager on 13 January 2023.

Risks

12. The risks considered throughout the audit were:
- **SRR05** - The Council fails to understand service user needs and emerging demographic trends and does not align service delivery to meet these - Ineffective partnership working
 - **SRR06** - Insufficient resources to ensure effective service delivery - Services fail to achieve agreed performance levels and as a result are not contributing fully to Council objectives
 - **Audit Risk 1:** Failure to comply with established processes and procedures
 - **Audit Risk 2:** Failure to manage customer expectations

Audit Opinion

13. We provide an overall audit opinion for all the audits we conduct. This is based on our judgement on the level of assurance which we can take over the established internal controls, governance and management of risk as evidenced by our audit work. Full details of the five possible categories of audit opinion is provided in Appendix 2 to this report.

14. Our overall audit opinion for this audit is that we can take a High level of assurance. This means that internal control, governance and the management of risk are at a high standard. Only marginal elements of residual risk have been identified with these either being accepted or dealt with. A sound system of control designed to achieve the system objectives is in place and being applied consistently.

Recommendations

15. We have highlighted one high priority recommendations, and five low priority recommendations and one value for money recommendation where we believe there is scope to strengthen the control and governance environment. These are summarised below:

- HSCP must engage with CET to review the online and offline information available to agents and customers to ensure it is accurate, up to date and reflects current team structures and duty rotas.
- The Contact Centre should continue to update procedures to document the process for raising issues with Services and ensure they continually reflect current working practices.
- The Customer Service Standard Charter must be updated to reflect the updated performance standards as part of the Customer Service Strategy Review.
- Customer Service Centre should review, with Services, the definitions of the Avoidable and Non Avoidable Contacts with a view to gathering actionable data on the volume of repeat contacts due to lack of follow up, availability of information and establishing whether there is an issue with customers being unable to reach staff who have been named as a key contacts.
- ICT to complete the planned update to Skype for Business directory.
- Contact Centre and HSCP should analyse whether it is more efficient that certain call types on the HSCP Golden Number are routed directly to HSCP for them to manage
- Consideration should be given to whether it would be beneficial to reintroduce a Customer Service Board or equivalent which would be platform to raise any issues with Services for solutions to aide customer service and engagement.

16. Full details of the audit findings, recommendations and management responses can be found in Section 3 of this report and in the action plan at Appendix 1.

2. Objectives and Summary Assessment

17. Exhibit 1 sets out the control objectives identified during the planning phase of the audit and our assessment against each objective.

Exhibit 1 – Summary Assessment of Control Objectives

	Control Objective	Link to Risk	Assessment	Summary Conclusion
1	Processes and systems are in place for the handling of customer	SRR05	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are processes, systems and manuals in place for the handling of customer contacts and enquiries. • There would be benefit to updating procedures to reflect current working practices.

	contacts and enquiries.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance standards are in place, monitored and reported. There would be benefit to reviewing, with Services some of the lagging indicators e.g. Avoidable Contacts, due to the limited availability of other real time data. • The Customer Service Standard Charter would benefit from a review to reflect the updated performance standards.
2	Customer contacts and enquiries are handled in line with processes and procedures.	SRR05 SRR06 Audit Risk 1 Audit Risk 2	Substantial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer contacts and enquiries are handled in line with processes and procedures. • Staff do not always have up to date information resulting in transfers to Services to resolve. • One Service is not engaging appropriately despite the repeated requests from Senior Managers to review and update information.
3	Customer contacts and enquiries are followed up in a timely manner.	SRR05 SRR06 Audit Risks 1 Audit Risks 2	Unassessed due to unavailable data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the CET is to handle and deal with initial customer contacts and enquiries for the majority of the Council's Services. • Not all Services have access to the Oracle CRM system used to record fulfilment of customer interactions. An obstacle to monitoring follow up is lack of integration between systems used by Services and Oracle CRM. This means the digital functionality to fully test or establish whether customer contacts and enquiries are followed up in a timely manner is not currently available. • The Council's Customer Services Support Team which includes the CET have successfully retained its Customer Service Excellence Accreditation, which is externally assessed. The team were specifically praised for their commitment to a first class approach to delivering customer focused services.

18. Further details of our conclusions against each control objective can be found in Section 3 of this report.

3. Detailed Findings

Processes and systems are in place for the handling of customer contacts and enquiries.

19. The Council has processes and systems in place for the handling of initial customer contacts and enquires. Staff, known as agents, within the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and Customer Service Points (CSP) provide a multi-channel contact centre and switchboard facility for the council. Inbound calls are received using the phone numbers, referred to as the 'Golden Numbers' published on the Council's Contact Us webpage.
20. Customer contacts and enquiries related to statutory duties, Registration Services and Blue badges, are dealt with by Registrars who are based in CSPs as there is a high volume of face to face contact for these. The Council also have a dedicated website for Marriage and Civil Ceremonies.
21. The Netcall Contact Management System (Netcall) provides effective control of the customer requests flowing in through the varied channels. This information is displayed on a Dashboard which allows staff at all levels to monitor performance in real time.
22. Information on every individual agent's knowledge of different elements of the council and their skills in responding through different channels is held by Netcall in an agent's skills matrix. The system routes all inbound requests using real time data to dynamically match incoming work to appropriately skilled agents. This allows more complex requests like complaints to be allocated to the most experienced agents while routine tasks like taking a payment can be routed to agents who are developing their skills.
23. The Oracle CRM system is used by agents to:
 - record contacts as incidents against the most suitable sub category called Products;
 - identify customers using unique indicators including phone number, email or name and address etc.
 - access product Tabs, which are populated with information provided by Services, and can include key facts, links to the Council webpage for that Service or online forms e.g. service requests;
 - the Social Work Product Tab provides a link the HSPC SharePoint holds contact details and Duty Rosters for the various area teams for that day or week;
 - transfer unresolved enquires to Services using built in standard email templates;
 - interface into OpenRevs for Council Tax and related Benefit enquiries, Carefirst Social Care system and the Roads and Amenities Oracle CRM
 - access a simple audit trail summarising the incident and if required, detailing who or which Service an enquiry was transferred to.
24. The Council has training manuals and procedures in place for the handling of customer contacts and enquiries. Services are responsible for providing their own set of guidance, information and training to agents. A review of the manuals, including those provided by Roads and Amenities and Regulatory Services, and the procedures for dealing with customers found them to be comprehensive. There are limited details of follow up processes as this is carried out by Services themselves rather than centrally.

25. While the guidance and systems manuals have been updated recently, there would be benefit to continually reviewing processes to ensure they reflect current working practices, including the production of reports and the process for raising any issues with Services.

Action Plan 2

26. Where services don't provide guidance manuals they are responsible for engaging with the CET to ensure that agents have accurate and up to date information. There is evidence that some teams within HSCP are not fully engaging with CSC, despite repeated requests from Senior Managers requests to review their online and offline information and that the Duty rotas and contact details on the HSCP SharePoint are not always up to date. A previous [Review of Customer Service Centre](#) by internal audit identified this issue and while the systems have been changed the requirement to engage with CSC and to provide and update information remains the responsibility of the Service.

Action Point 1

27. Performance standards are in place, monitored and reported. Internally, via the Councils scorecard system Pyramid and reports to Senior Managers/DMT and quarterly statistics are published on the Council's website. The aim is to ensure all "On demand" contacts such as phone calls and web chats are responded to immediately and all "Off demand" contacts like emails are cleared every day, this is monitored using the Netcall system dashboard.
28. Customers can see current contact centre call volumes and waiting times on the website. To monitor customer satisfaction every caller to the call centre is offered a short survey. The outcomes are displayed in rolling totals on the dashboard so the supervisor can readily spot drops in performance; usually due to technical issues and provide support to agents.
29. The aim of CSC is the timely and effective provision of information so customers do not have to contact us needlessly, but when they do resolve their enquiries there and then. This allows resources in Services to be focused on service delivery and not enquiry management.
30. The Oracle CRM system is also used as a management tool to identify issues, record the quality of service and the provision of information by classifying customer contacts as either Avoidable or Non Avoidable Contacts.
31. Avoidable contacts or "failure demand" are where a customer has to contact the Council needlessly, these are further broken down to allow identification for Services of areas where there may be issues and to identify solutions. Categories include:
- Service delivery failure – something promised either hasn't been done or not done to a satisfactory standard.
 - Equipment/System failure – Service delivery failure specifically attributable to failure of equipment e.g. bin lorry breakdown
 - Information provision failure – information required by customer is either inaccurate, is not clear enough or is unavailable
 - Needless progress chasing – customer contacts for progress update because we have unreasonably failed to keep them up to date or inform them of the completion of their service request.

32. Statistics for each service are examined on a quarterly basis and only shared with Services where a trend or spike identifies an issue. These are lagging indicators and do not match real time concerns or trends identified by staff regarding arising issues. There would be benefit to reviewing with Services, the definitions of the Avoidable and Non Avoidable Contacts with a view to gathering data regarding the volume of repeat contacts due to lack of follow up, availability of information and establishing whether there is an issue with customers being unable to reach staff who have been named as a key contacts.

Action Point 3

33. The Council's [Customer Service Charter](#) (the Charter) is available on the website, beside the quarterly performance statistics. The Charter does not reflect all the channels now available to customers to raise initial enquiries however the current performance levels are exceeding those stated. The Charter is currently being reviewed based on consultation with the public after the pandemic and will be updated to reflect the results and to take account of other key Council Strategies including the Digital Strategy and Customer Service Strategy.

Action Plan 4

34. The Council's Customer Services Support Team which includes the CET have successfully retained its Customer Service Excellence Accreditation, which is externally assessed. The team were specifically praised for their commitment to a first class approach to delivering customer focused services.

[Customer contacts and enquiries are handled in line with processes and procedures.](#)

35. A visit to the CSC and CSP in Campbeltown confirmed through observation and discussions with staff, that customer contacts and enquiries are handled in line with processes and procedures.

36. Staff displayed a broad depth of knowledge of Council Services when handling enquiries, ranging from a request to get new wheels for a blue bin to a customer selling and moving house. The Council Tax enquiry required the agent to use four systems to log the incident, check and update records for two proprietries, amend contact details, check amounts outstanding on the old property, advise the customer of the resulting overpayment, transfer this to the new address, arrange for updated bills and confirmation of this to be sent to the customer, add notes to the Council Tax system and close the incident.

37. Agents are provided with extensive training and support to develop their "Skills". This is split between the systems used to handle customer contacts and enquiries, which is provided by staff within the CET and Service specific training and knowledge delivered by the service staff. New agents and those who are developing their skills are assigned to mentors who are on hand to help and support them. A record of staff training is maintained.

38. To ensure that the staff within the CET develop and maintain the required skills and have a customer focused approach the team have adopted the Council's Grow Our Own policy, some examples of the success include;

- All Digital Development staff are former CSC agents or back office service processors
- All three new Digital Agent posts have been successful candidates applying from within the CSC/CSP cohort

- The Web Developer and Digital Engagement Developer roles were graded to reflect the complexity of the development work and systems integrations they now complete.
39. Expected levels of performance are outlined in the Team Plan and provided to staff during their performance and career conversations. The Agent Profile on Netcall provides daily performance information including number of interactions handled and stored directory information.
40. For quality and training purposes supervisors carry out call evaluations. Staff are provided with the list of questions that they are evaluated on. In addition to receiving feedback, staff are able to view their evaluations on the team Penny SharePoint. The focus is on the quality and accuracy of information given and recorded and not time taken to deal with the call.
41. The primary purpose of the agents is to resolve as many enquiries as possible at first point of contact in order to reduce workloads on back office teams. Enquiries are only transferred to back office where:
- customer specifically requires to speak to a named member of staff e.g. an allocated planning officer or social worker;
 - where the agents do not have sufficient information to resolve the query; or
 - the enquiry relates to a complex and technical issue that requires in depth service knowledge or service delivery to resolve.
42. When an enquiry or service request is transferred to the back office it is classed as closed as the agents cannot do anything further to resolve the matter. There are a small number of services that the team provides, where they control fulfilment of requests (e.g. Blue Badge Applications) and there are processes in place to ensure requests are followed up to completion. A demonstration of this was provided by the CSP Supervisor.
43. Agents rely on the Skype for Business call directory to search for and contact staff in other departments. The details on Skype don't always match current staff roles, this causes difficulty for agents trying to find out who to contact in Services. The ICT service has confirmed this is a known issue. A solution for improving integration with ResourceLink is being finalised by the ICT Apps and Servers teams with the aim to significantly improve the quality of information in Skype for Business by the end of March 2023. As the source of this data is the ResourceLink system, the quality of information presented in Skype for Business will be highly dependent on the accuracy of the data in ResourceLink.

Action Plan 5

44. There are situations where agents either don't have sufficient information or the information they do have is out of date. This impacts upon their ability to resolve incidents at first point of contact and results in pass backs to Services. Evidence of this can be seen in the extract of the call handling performance statistics for January 2023.

Queue/ Golden Numbers	Total Calls Queued	% of Total Calls Queued	% Resolved First Point	Calls Transferred	% Transferred
Social Work	1766	22%	73%	467	27%
Council Tax	1315	16%	93%	96	7%
Roads and Amenities	1266	16%	94%	70	6%
Payments	1218	15%	96%	46	4%
Benefits	792	10%	90%	79	10%
General Enquiries	710	9%	76%	165	24%
Planning	680	8%	88%	80	12%
Regulatory Services	227	3%	91%	20	9%
Complaints	42	1%	95%	2	5%
Book It	27	0%	89%	3	11%
Total	8043		87%	1028	13%

45. From the statistics provided there appears to be a high proportion of calls being handled by CSC that could be better dealt with by HSCP. Given the high number of calls, call transfers and the teams they are transferred to, consideration should be given to whether it would improve efficiency for certain call types on the HSCP Golden Number to be routed directly to HSCP for them to manage or that specific issues which require more specialist or detailed knowledge are dealt directly by HSCP.

Action Plan 6

46. Previously any issues with Services were raised and discussed at the Customer Services Board. Since this was disbanded any issues arising are raised by staff through the line management/Council Hierarchy on a more informal level either by call, meeting or emails. Where an issue is deemed to be either a recurring issue or where there is lack of engagement with a specific service the Customer Engagement Manager raises this with the Head of Service Customer Support Services for discussion at DMT.

47. Consideration should be given to whether it would be beneficial to reintroduce a Customer Service Board or an equivalent forum which would be platform to raise any issues with Services for solutions to aid customer service and engagement.

Action Plan 7

Customer contacts and enquiries are followed up in a timely manner

48. Not all Services use the Oracle CRM system and currently only the following incidents are managed, by the Service, to their conclusion:

- All service requests for Roads & Amenity Services
- Complaints
- Blue Badges
- Member zone (previously Councillor Casebook)

49. Agents are provided with copies of the Good Agent Guide which provides process for agents when updating status for follow up enquiries/repeat calls, this explains that it only applies to products that are managed to their conclusion in Oracle CRM.
50. Where a service uses Oracle CRM system to deal with enquiries for their department, staff within that service deal with the monitoring and follow up until resolution within the timescales for that particular area. This is recorded in the systems audit log.
51. An obstacle to monitoring follow up is lack of integration between systems used by Services and Oracle CRM. This means the digital functionality to fully test or establish whether customer contacts and enquiries are followed up in a timely manner is not currently available. The process would be manual and would require Services to allocate staff to monitor and collate this information.
52. The Digital Service Team are currently reviewing the Oracle CRM Case progress/tracking functionality for usefulness, usability and accessibility.
53. When Services approach CET for help handling enquiries or tasks, the team look for ways to build in progress tracking, follow up and task functionality. An example of this was the digitalisation of the School P1 Registration process which has been a great success and has helped streamline the process for Schools.
54. Other examples of the efforts of CET to promote ways that customers can stay informed of the progress of incidents logged and any service updates that may affect them. These include promoting:
 - Keep in the Loop (KITL) subscription alerts which issued 266,735 emails to subscribers in 2021/22.
 - My Account using the Sign up today! banners on the Council website and the automatic response emails sent to customers when carrying out an activity that can be tracked, like the P1 registration process, encouraging customers to Track Progress of this request using My Account, and providing the link to sign up or log in.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

	No	Finding	Risk	Agreed Action	Responsibility / Due Date
High	1	<p>Failure to ensure CET have up to date Service information</p> <p>There is concern that some teams within HSPC are not fully engaging with CSC, despite repeated requests from Senior Managers to review their information. In addition, the Duty rotas and contact details on the HSPC SharePoint are not always up to date.</p> <p>HSCP must engage with CET to review the online and offline information available to agents and customers to ensure it is accurate, up to date and reflects current team structures and duty rotas.</p>	<p>SRR06 - Insufficient resources to ensure effective service delivery - Services fail to achieve agreed performance levels and as a result are not contributing fully to Council objectives.</p>	<p>Provided by key officer HSCP management will work with the CET team to determine the best way to approach the current problem and implement the correct solution agreeable by HSCP and CSC.</p>	<p>Charlotte Craig Business Improvement Manager</p> <p>30th June 2023</p>
Low	2	<p>Procedure Manuals</p> <p>Procedures notes would benefit from being continually updated to reflect current working practices, including the production of reports, raising issues with Services and to ensure they reflect current working practices</p>	<p>Processes may be applied inconsistently.</p>	<p>Provided by key officer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CSC will review Training Manuals for each key Service Area (Golden Number) with specific focus on escalation routes and issue reporting. 2. CET will review operational performance reporting and KPIs as part of the corporate Performance Review Project. 	<p>Robert Miller Customer Engagement Manager</p> <p>31st October 2023</p>

	No	Finding	Risk	Agreed Action	Responsibility / Due Date
Low	3	<p>Performance Indicators</p> <p>Information gather using the Avoidable and Non Avoidable categories do not match real time concerns or trends identified by staff regarding arising issues as these are lagging indicators.</p> <p>Customer Service Centre should , with Services, review the definitions of the Avoidable and Non Avoidable Contacts with a view to gathering actionable data on the volume of repeat contacts due to lack of follow up, availability of information and establishing whether there is an issue with customers being unable to reach staff who have been named as a key contacts.</p>	Performance Measures are not gathering meaningful data	<p>Provided by key officer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CET will engage with Service Leads to review Avoidable Contact measures and reporting. 2. CET will send a report with Improvement Recommendations to DMT and ELT for approval by July 2023. 	<p>Robert Miller Customer Engagement Manager</p> <p>31st July 2023</p>
Low	4	<p>The Customer Service Standard Charter</p> <p>The Charter does not reflect all the channels now available to customers to raise initial enquiries.</p> <p>The Charter is currently being reviewed based on consultation with the public after the pandemic and will be updated to reflect the results and to take account of other key Council Strategies including the Digital Strategy and Customer Service Strategy.</p> <p>to be updated to reflect the updated performance standards</p>	The public may not be aware of the Councils current customer service standards	<p>Provided by key officer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CET will consult customers on Charter Standards as part of the survey informing the new Customer Service Strategy. 2. CET will include proposals for a revised Customer Service Charter in the Customer Service Strategy to be approved by ELT and SMT. 	<p>Robert Miller Customer Engagement Manager</p> <p>31st October 2023</p>

	No	Finding	Risk	Agreed Action	Responsibility / Due Date
Low	5	<p>Skype for business does not contain up to date contact details.</p> <p>ICT to complete the planned update to Skype for Business directory.</p>	CSC agents are unable to identify staff in the Service when dealing with customer enquiries	<p>Provided by key officer</p> <p>Improved and regular integration between ResourceLink and Active Directory</p>	<p>Katrina Duncan ICT Projects and Liaison Manager</p> <p>31st March 2023</p>
Low	7	<p>Collaborative Working</p> <p>Consideration should be given to whether it would be beneficial to reintroduce a Customer Service Board or equivalent forum which would be platform to raise any issues with Services for solutions to aide customer service and engagement</p>	Lack of formal process creates barriers to collaborative working resulting in inefficient use of resources	<p>Provided by key officer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SMT has requested a review of the efficient delivery of Communication and Customer Engagement as part of the 24/25 budget efficiency and this will include governance arrangements such as a joint Board. 2. CET will consult Services on the efficacy of a corporate forum for aiding the achievement of high levels of customer communication, care and engagement to feed into the review at 1. Above. 	<p>Robert Miller Customer Engagement Manager</p> <p>31st October 2023</p>

	No	Finding	Risk	Agreed Action	Responsibility / Due Date
Value for money	6	<p>Routing of calls to the appropriate channels</p> <p>Calls for HSPC represent the highest volume of both calls handled by CSC and transferred to the Service. The data provided detailing the teams the calls are transferred to indicates that it may be more appropriate for properly trained staff to handle and manage these calls.</p> <p>Contact Centre and HSCP should analyse whether it is more efficient to route certain call types on the HSCP Golden Number directly to HSCP for them to manage or that specific issues which require more specialist or detailed knowledge are dealt directly by HSCP.</p>	Complex customer contacts are not handled appropriately by trained staff at the first point of contact who have access to the correct information	<p>Provided by key officer</p> <p>The service will engage in discussions with CET's Customer Engagement Manager to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place which maximises efficiency and effectiveness of the handling of customer contacts and enquiries via the HSCP Golden Number</p>	<p>Charlotte Craig Business Improvement Manager</p> <p>30th June 2023</p>

In order to assist management in using our reports a system of grading audit findings has been adopted to allow the significance of findings to be ascertained. The definitions of each classification are as follows:

Grading	Definition
High	A major observation on high level controls and other important internal controls or a significant matter relating to the critical success of the objectives of the system. The weakness may therefore give rise to loss or error.
Medium	Observations on less significant internal controls and/or improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of controls which will assist in meeting the objectives of the system. The weakness is not necessarily substantial however the risk of error would be significantly reduced if corrective action was taken.
Low	Minor recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of controls or an isolated issue subsequently corrected. The weakness does not appear to significantly affect the ability of the system to meet its objectives.
VFM	An observation which does not highlight an issue relating to internal controls but represents a possible opportunity for the council to achieve better value for money (VFM).

Appendix 2 – Audit Opinion

Level of Assurance	Definition
High	Internal control, governance and the management of risk are at a high standard. Only marginal elements of residual risk have been identified with these either being accepted or dealt with. A sound system of control designed to achieve the system objectives is in place and being applied consistently.
Substantial	Internal control, governance and the management of risk is sound. However, there are minor areas of weakness which put some system objectives at risk and specific elements of residual risk that are slightly above an acceptable level and need to be addressed within a reasonable timescale.
Reasonable	Internal control, governance and the management of risk are broadly reliable. However, whilst not displaying a general trend, there are areas of concern which have been identified where elements of residual risk or weakness may put some of the system objectives at risk.
Limited	Internal control, governance and the management of risk are displaying a general trend of unacceptable residual risk above an acceptable level and placing system objectives are at risk. Weakness must be addressed with a reasonable timescale with management allocating appropriate resources to the issues raised.
No Assurance	Internal control, governance and the management of risk is poor. Significant residual risk and/or significant non-compliance with basic controls exists leaving the system open to error, loss or abuse. Residual risk must be addressed immediately with management allocating appropriate resources to the issues.