



Internal Audit Report

FINAL

Customer Services

Review of Customer Service Centre

January 2014

1 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared as a result of the Internal Audit review of Customer Services, Customer Service Centre as part of the 2013/2014 Internal Audit programme.

The Customer Service Centre project commenced with the procurement of the hardware and software in 2006, with the system going live in June 2007. The Lagan CRM solution complemented by the integrated telephony software from Macfarlane Callplus allows the Council to overcome the challenges of providing improved access to information across a widely distributed geographical area. Customers have an improved choice on how they interact with Council Services, by phone, face to face or online. Lagan Customer Service Centre System was last audited in 2012/2013.

2 AUDIT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The overall objective was to ascertain whether the system incorporates adequate internal controls. The Audit scope reviewed the processes operated to ensure that calls are promptly and accurately recorded with an appropriate Audit trail. Internal Audit also reviewed the procedures in place in relation to open calls forwarded to 'back office' functions to ensure that calls are appropriately and promptly dealt with.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

The risks identified were:

- Increased customer dissatisfaction if calls are abandoned;
- Increased customer complaints if calls are abandoned or not appropriately followed up;
- Reputational loss to the Council.

4 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

There are no Corporate Governance issues to be reported as a result of this audit.

5 MAIN FINDINGS

- 5.1** The Lagan CRM solution complemented by the integrated telephony software from Macfarlane Callplus allows the Council to overcome the challenges of providing improved access to information across a widely distributed geographical area.

- 5.2** The aim of the Customer Service Centre is to ensure that telephone calls are answered first time and enquiries dealt with at first point of contact.
- 5.3** A call is taken via a “golden number” attributed to the relevant service and the agent receives a ‘whisper’ as to which line the call is coming in on, this advises the service required.
- 5.4** To access Lagan a member of staff is required to enter the allocated User ID and Password, user details appear on the screen. This shows the user ID and details of when logged in. This ensures the system incorporates adequate internal controls.
- 5.5** Calls are generally answered promptly, however, during periods of high volume calls it can take up to 10 minutes to answer these calls. Callers will hang up resulting in abandoned calls. The current abandoned call rate is 7%. There are however two ways in which this is averted;
- The use of the Queuebuster Tool, which provides the customer with the opportunity to an automatic call back at 2 minutes and each two minutes duration thereafter. The customer is guaranteed a call back after 20 minutes.
 - On particular lines where the customer is looking for a named person, there is also an opportunity for a call back, but this is a manual process. The Customer Service Centre Agents receive the message and are able to check if the named person is available prior to placing the call back.
- 5.6** There are identified and evidenced issues relating to the lack of response at times from some Services when call centre staff try to forward on calls that they cannot deal with. There are particular concerns surrounding Social Work.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Three recommendations were identified as a result of the audit of which three were of medium priority. The recommendations are shown in the action plan attached at Appendix 1 and have been compiled with the co-operation and agreement of the Head of Customer and Support Services and Director of Community Services.

Internal Audit considers that, in an effort to improve the quality of information, monitoring and control, the recommendations should be implemented in accordance with the agreed action plan. Management have set achievable implementation dates and will be required to provide reasons to the Audit Committee for failure to implement within the agreed timescale. Where management decides not to implement recommendations it must evaluate and accept the risks associated with that decision.

A system of grading audit findings, which have resulted in an action, has been adopted in order that the significance of the findings can be ascertained. Each finding is classified as fundamental, material or minor. The definition for each classification is set out below:-

High - major observations on high level controls and other important internal controls. Significant matters relating to factors critical to the success of the objectives of the system. The weakness may therefore give rise to loss or error;

Medium - observations on less important internal controls, improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of controls which will assist in meeting the objectives of the system and items which could be significant in the future. The weakness is not necessarily great, but the risk of error would be significantly reduced if it were rectified;

Low - minor recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of controls, one-off items subsequently corrected. The weakness does not appear to affect the ability of the system to meet its objectives in any significant way.

7 AUDIT OPINION

The report provides a Substantial level of assurance. Based on the findings we can conclude that there are procedures in place regarding the Call Centre and that the system incorporates adequate internal controls. Recommendations arising from the audit work should be implemented by the nominated responsible officer within the agreed timescale. Recommendations not implemented will require explanation to the Audit Committee. This could lead to findings being reported in the Internal Control Statement produced by the Council in support of the Annual Accounts.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Customer Service Centre staff for their co-operation and assistance during the Audit and the preparation of the report and action plan.

Argyll & Bute Council's Internal Audit section has prepared this report. Our work was limited to the objectives in section 2. We cannot be held responsible or liable if information material to our task was withheld or concealed from us, or misrepresented to us.

This report is private and confidential for the Council's information only and is solely for use in the provision of an internal audit service to the Council. The report is not to be copied, quoted or referred to, in whole or in part, without prior written consent.

APPENDIX 1 ACTION PLAN

No.	FINDINGS	PRIORITY	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	IMPLEMENTATION DATE
1	There are identified and evidenced issues relating to the lack of co-operation and response at times from Social Work when call centre staff try to forward on calls that they cannot deal with.	Medium	Social Work staff must become better engaged with the Call Centre staff. This should include adherence to conditions of Service Level Agreement, representation at meetings of relevant officer groups and regular liaison with Customer Service Centre staff.	Head of Service Adult Care	30 September 2014
2	As above	Medium	Social Work must develop a call handling protocol procedure. This should be distributed to all Social Work staff.	Head of Service Adult Care and Children & Families	30 September 2014
3	Calls that cannot be dealt with the point of contact are forwarded to the 'back office'; this can include sending e-mails to the various services. There is currently no tracking facility when calls are forwarded to the 'back office' (forwarded to the Services) to deal with. Once a call has been forwarded it is the responsibility of the Service to deal with the issues raised in the call. When a call is forwarded the call is closed off by the Call Centre.	Medium	A process of monitoring whether 'back office' functions are dealing with calls forwarded should be considered by services as a form of quality assurance. The costs and benefits of putting in any process should be carefully considered against the risks.	Service Centre Manager	30 September 2014