

Dorset Council

Report of Internal Audit Activity

Progress Report 2025/26 – September 2025

Executive Summary

As part of our update reports, we will provide an ongoing opinion to support our end of year annual opinion.

We will also provide details of any significant risks that we have identified in our work, along with the progress of mitigating previously identified significant risks.

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SWAP is an internal audit partnership covering 27 organisations. Dorset Council is a part-owner of SWAP, and we provide the internal audit service to the Council.

For further details see:
<https://www.swapaudit.co.uk/>



Audit Opinion, Significant Risks, and Audit Follow-Up Work

Audit Opinion:

This is our second full update report for 2025/26 financial year.

Our live Rolling Plan dashboard available through our audit management system AuditBoard [AuditBoard | Login \(auditboardapp.com\)](#), and specifically the Audit Coverage (*located on the first tab of the dashboard or on page 2 of this report*), reflects the outcomes of recently completed reviews. Based on these reviews, we recognise that, in general, risks are well managed. However, we have identified some gaps, weaknesses and areas of non-compliance and whilst we have a reasonable level of confidence that the agreed actions will be implemented to address these issues, we do have a number of long outstanding actions which we continue to address with support from the committee. As a result of this and the significant concerns that were highlighted within the annual opinion for 2024/25 we continue to offer a **Limited** opinion until we are able to validate that these areas of significant concern have been resolved.

Since our last report in August 2025, we have not issued any **Limited** assurance opinions on the areas and activities audited.

Significant Corporate Risks

Update on Effectiveness of Business Continuity Plans

In August, we reported that our follow up work identified that only one action remained in progress, with a revised implementation date 31st December 2025. In September 2025, we have been able to close off that one remaining action and can now confirm that this significant corporate risk has been appropriately mitigated.

Contract and Expenditure Compliance with Scheme of Delegation and Council Constitution

We have undertaken a follow-up review which has shown that ten of the sixteen actions have been implemented, some ahead of their scheduled implementation date. A copy of the follow-up report can be found on page 6.

Internal Audit Plan Progress 2025/26

Our audit plan coverage assessment is designed to provide an indication of whether we have provided sufficient, independent assurance to monitor the organisation's risk profile effectively.

For those areas where no audit coverage is planned, assurance should be sought from other sources to provide a holistic picture of assurance against key risks.

SWAP Internal Audit Plan Coverage

Table 1 below presents our audit coverage mapped against the Authority's **Principal Risks**, introduced in May 2025. Further detail can be found using our audit management system, AuditBoard [AuditBoard | Login \(auditboardapp.com\)](https://auditboardapp.com). As you will see, we continue to make good progress towards coverage of the new principal risks. We have only been working on this updated framework for five months, and it will take time to achieve full coverage.

Table 1

Principal Risk  Hover over new Principal Risks to see a definition	Coverage	Average Opinion
Commercial	None	
Data and Information Management	In Progress	
Finance	Adequate	Reasonable
Legal	Some	Limited
Operations	Adequate	Reasonable
People	None	
Project / programme	Some	Non Opinion Audits
Property	None	
Reputation	Some	Reasonable
Security	Some	Reasonable
Technology	Some	Reasonable

Assurance	Description
Substantial	Sound system of governance, risk management and controls exist
Reasonable	Generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place
Limited	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified
No Assurance	Fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified

Coverage	Description
Good	Good audit coverage completed
Adequate	Adequate audit coverage completed
Some	Some aspects of audit coverage completed
In Progress	Some aspects of audit coverage in progress
None	No audit coverage to date

Internal Audit Plan Progress 2025/26

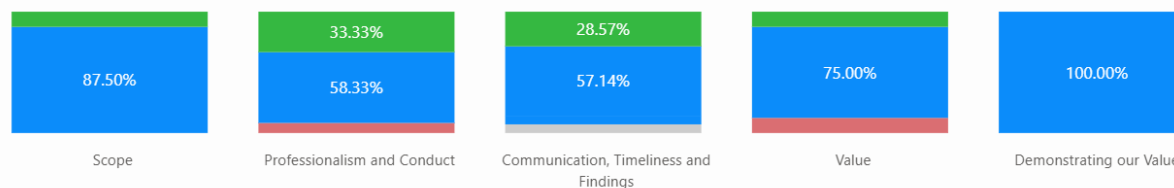
We review our performance to ensure that our work meets our clients' expectations and that we are delivering value to the organisation.

Performance scores from post audit questionnaires:



Responses by Questionnaire Section

● Not Applicable ● Fell Below Expectation ● Yes ● Met Expectation ● Exceeded Expectation



Overall Score

97%

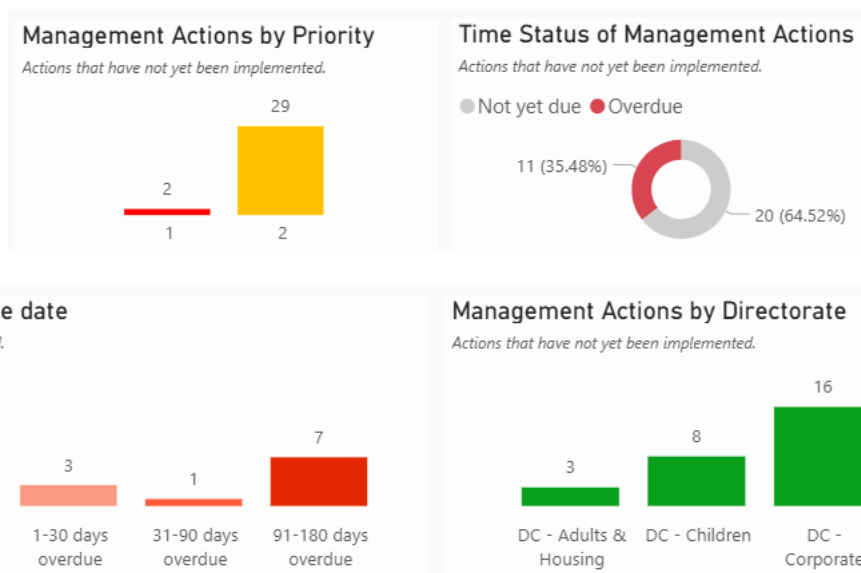
Internal Audit Plan Progress 2025/26

We monitor the Council's performance for implementation of agreed actions.

Outcomes from Follow-Up Audit Work

The graphic below provides an analysis of overdue priority 1 and 2 actions. There are 31 actions that have yet to be implemented, 11 of which are currently overdue.

The number of overdue actions and those not due but with revised timescales is slowly improving. Since our report to the committee in August we have stopped amending or extending implementation dates to simplify the overdue action information going forwards. A detailed table in Appendix B (pages 7–17) lists all overdue actions, as well as those with one or more revised implementation dates. It also highlights actions completed since our last report. Additionally, we have agreed that the Business Insight and Performance team will take a greater role in issuing reminders and following up with council officers for updates on action implementation. This reflects the Council's commitment to move towards greater ownership and timely implementation of the internal audit actions. Additional information is available in the Management Actions tab of the SWAP Executive dashboard, which can be accessed via this link: [AuditBoard | Login \(auditboardapp.com\)](#)



Internal Audit Plan Progress 2025/26

Added Value

‘Extra feature(s) of an item of interest (product, service, person etc.) that go beyond the standard expectations and provide something more while adding little or nothing to its cost.’



Added Value

Cifas

The use of the Cifas data sharing service continues to deliver benefits in the prevention and detection of fraud. Previously agreed areas are still being routinely checked against the database, with matches identified and appropriate action taken where necessary.

Benchmarking

A benchmarking exercise has been undertaken to provide comparative insights into the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 review of exclusions.

Newsletters and updates

SWAP regularly produces a newsletter and other relevant updates for partners, including fraud bulletins. These communications highlight topical issues and provide useful information to support awareness and risk mitigation.

Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation – Final Follow Up Report September 2025



Follow Up Audit Objective

To provide assurance that agreed actions to mitigate against risk exposure identified within the 2025/26 Limited opinion audit of the Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation report have been implemented.

Follow Up Progress Summary

Priority	Complete	In Progress	Not Started	Summary
Priority 1	1	1	0	2
Priority 2	10	4	0	14
Priority 3	0	0	0	0
Total	11	5	0	16

Follow Up Assessment

The original audit was completed and reported in May 2025 and received a Limited assurance opinion. This is the first follow up audit which has found that ten of the sixteen actions have been completed, some ahead of their proposed implementation date set by the service.

Follow Up Scope

Testing has been performed in relation to all actions and supporting evidence obtained to support implementation of actions.

Key Findings

	Following the audit the Council set up a working group which consisted of senior officers from Finance, Legal and Commercial & Procurement. The working group have created an action plan which is being monitored to ensure actions are implemented in a timely manner. Responsibility for some of the actions was assigned to the Senior Leadership Team and they have met formally to discuss these, recording decisions made. Senior Leadership Team have approved some revisions to the Scheme of Delegation, and this will be received by Full Council on the 23 rd October.
	Legal Services have advised the Monitoring Officer on the legality of the Comensura contract and agreement has been reached that it is not unlawful to continue to use it, however the Monitoring Officer raised concerns resulting in the strengthening of controls around the use of the contract. The current contract is in place until April 2026, with available extensions under consideration.
	The Council are committed to implementing the audit actions to ensure that proper procedures are followed when setting up new Statement of Works through Comensura. A review of procedures has resulted in a change to the Project Initiation Document to include authorisation by the budget holder and finance, with the authorisation for setting up new Statement of Works within c.net (Comensura platform) now limited to the senior officers within the Commercial & Procurement Team, who are acting as 'gatekeepers' to ensure correct authorisation has been followed. Intranet guidance has been revised and promoted through meetings held with all c.net users. Monthly management information reports from Comensura are now being circulated with compliance to approved processes being monitored by the Commercial & Procurement Team.

Further Follow-Up Required/Next Steps

Further details of actions can be found in the management action plan. A summary of the key findings from our review will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 13th October 2025. Further follow up will be undertaken for the six remaining actions.

Overdue Actions with Number of Times the Implementation Date has been Amended as at 19.09.2025

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	Current Revised Date	No. of Revisions	Change in Timescale (Days)
Use of Consultants and Temporary Staff	Chris Matthews – Head of People and Workforce	Corporate Services	Procurement will work with the BI & Performance Team and develop a dashboard to report performance metrics on consultants and temporary staff.	2	30/04/24	30/04/25	3	365
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement / Head of Legal	Corporate Services	The authorisation levels in SAP and the Scheme of Delegation will be reviewed by the Head of Legal, the Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement and the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial who will make a shared recommendation to the Senior L Leadership Team. As part of this consideration will be given to whether there is a need for a two-tier Scheme of Delegation; one for approval to commit expenditure and another for officers processing payments relating to that committed expenditure. If it is proposed that the authorisation levels in SAP should be any different from those currently in the Constitution, then this should be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee and Full Council for approval. This is to ensure that authorisations are aligned, that they deliver appropriate governance, oversight and authorisation of payments without unnecessarily holding up payment to suppliers and that any changes of substance to the Constitution are made by Councillors.	1	10/07/25	n/a	0	0

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	Current Revised Date	No. of Revisions	Change in Timescale (Days)
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement / Head of Legal	Corporate Services	A review of the payments over £500 that are published on the Council's website will be undertaken to ensure that all relevant payments are included each month. The Monitoring Officer will be informed of the outcome of the review so that he can consider whether there is any need to issue a (public interest) report under section 5 Local Government and Housing Act 1989.	2	31/07/25	31/08/25	1	31
MCA Best Interest Assessment - Independent Assessor Investigation	Julie Ingram - Corporate Director for ASC	Adults and Housing	Appropriate recovery steps will be taken regarding two duplicate invoices for work. The payments for BIA work, which appear to be Form 4s will also be considered for recovery. Finance will be instructed to write to these individuals where there is overpayment for work with a view to recovering this money.	2	31/03/25	n/a	0	0
MCA Best Interest Assessment - Independent Assessor Investigation	Julie Ingram – Corporate Director for ASC	Adults and Housing	Flexi balances and long working days will be monitored more effectively in line with the corporate expectations and consideration given to working time directives. Work has started in this area with the Service Manager and the Head of Service. This action will be picked up as part of the wider service enhancement review.	2	31/03/25	n/a	0	0
Children's Service Direct Payments	Pru Caldwell-McGee - Service Manager, B2SA	Children's	The Direct Payments Policy will be reviewed to ensure alignment with current practices and regulations. A standardised case review process will be established based on policy criteria and provide training to staff and regular monitoring and quality assurance checks for ongoing compliance will be	2	30/04/25	n/a	0	0

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	Current Revised Date	No. of Revisions	Change in Timescale (Days)
			conducted.					
Children's Service Direct Payments	Pru Caldwell-McGee - Service Manager, B2SA	Children's	A process will be implemented to ensure all direct payment bank accounts are reviewed on a regular basis. This will check the surplus of money in the account and ensure the money is spent on agreed resources.	2	30/04/25	n/a	0	0
DC Dignity at Work (Place)	Jan Britton – Executive Director	Place	The Place directorate will look at introducing ways of empowering employees to speak up. Examples of this could be: - Sharing anonymised cases studies from other services in the directorate and using these as a basis of a lessons learned exercise. - Introducing a working group which covers all services and employees at all different levels where learning across services can be covered and brought back to the services. - Introducing a positive role model within the services. They would encourage all employees to speak up when they experience unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.	2	31/05/25	n/a	0	0
DC Dignity at Work (Place)	Jan Britton – Executive Director	Place	The directorate will try to identify ways the process after reporting an incident is more transparent for the victim.	2	31/05/25	n/a	0	0
DC ICT Change Management	Paul Thompson - Service Management	Corporate Services	Ensure that mandatory risk and impact assessments are completed for all proposed changes. Develop and implement robust testing	2	30/08/25	n/a	0	0

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	Current Revised Date	No. of Revisions	Change in Timescale (Days)
	Lead (ICT Operations)		and validation protocols prior to deployment. Provide targeted training to relevant teams to ensure process adherence and initiate periodic audits to monitor and enforce compliance.					
DC ICT Change Management	Paul Thompson - Service Management Lead (ICT Operations)	Corporate Services	Develop and implement a comprehensive change management policy and procedure aligned with ITIL Best Practices. Establish measurable metrics and reporting mechanisms for Post-Implementation Reviews to ensure insights are used for continuous improvement. Conduct regular training to enhance staff understanding and adherence to the updated processes	2	30/08/25	n/a	0	0

Overdue Actions with Number of Times the Implementation Date amended, **complete** since last update (14.07.2025)

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	No. of Revisions	Date Completed	Completion Time (Days)
DC Data Quality & Information Governance	Marc Eyre – Service Manager for Assurance	Corporate Services	Taking a risk-based approach, the Strategic Information Governance board will review the data sharing arrangements for the cohort of c.800 employees and consider which of them require a Microsoft license.	2	30/6/23	3	26/08/25	788
DC Effectiveness of Manager Self-Service	Head of Human Resources	Cross Directorate	The Work Schedule Rule will be checked for all staff to ensure that they are on the correct rule.	2	30/09/23	4	16/07/25	655

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	No. of Revisions	Date Completed	Completion Time (Days)
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Senior Leadership Team	Corporate Services	A decision will be made as to what level of officer should be given Approver status in c.net, also whether interim and temporary staff will be allowed to hold approver (either proposal or transaction) status.	2	30/06/25	1	15/09/25	77
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Senior Leadership Team	Corporate Services	A review of c.net users who hold Customer Admin rights will be undertaken to establish whether this is to continue for users outside of Commercial & Procurement.	2	30/06/25	1	15/09/25	77
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Senior Leadership Team	Corporate Services	Commercial & Procurement will identify monitoring reports that are available to ensure that the controls within the Comensura system are being adhered to. This could include but isn't limited to budget increases, transaction approvals. Compliance will be monitored by the Head of Commercial & Procurement and instances of non-adherence to agreed processes will be escalated to the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial using the reports available to them.	2	31/07/25	1	15/09/25	76

Audit Actions

APPENDIX B

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	No. of Revisions	Date Completed	Completion Time (Days)
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Senior Leadership Team	Corporate Services	Commercial & Procurement will run monitoring reports periodically and undertake spot checks to ensure that there are no users outside of Commercial & Procurement who hold Customer Admin status.	2	30/06/25	1	15/09/25	77
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Senior Leadership Team	Corporate Services	Consideration will be given to the continued use of Comensura for the engagement of specialist contractors and consultants (SoW projects). Once that decision is made, guidance should be provided to all relevant officers.	2	30/06/25		15/09/25	77
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement / Head of Legal	Corporate Services	Clarification will be provided to the Senior Leadership Team on the scope of the contract and specific type of supplier(s) that can be engaged using the Comensura SoW contract to ensure that this complies with the contract. If it is concluded that the Comensura contract has likely been used beyond the scope advertised, then the Monitoring Officer will be asked to consider whether to issue a (public interest) report under Section 5 Local Government and Housing Act 1989.	1	31/05/25	1	18/09/25	110

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	No. of Revisions	Date Completed	Completion Time (Days)
DC ICT Change Management	Paul Thompson - Service Management Lead (ICT Operations)	Corporate Services	Establish a mandatory process to ensure Post-Implementation Reviews are conducted for all projects and significant changes. Provide training on ITIL v4 framework requirements and integrate PIR detailed completion into project closure checkpoints. Monitor compliance through periodic audits and incorporate lessons learned into future planning.	2	31/07/25	0	17/09/25	48
DC Subject Access Requests	Service Manager for Assurance	Corporate Services	The service will obtain Counsel's opinion on the Council's interpretation of its GDPR obligations in relation to Subject Access Requests (SARs). This legal advice will inform the development or revision of internal guidance and training materials for staff involved in SAR processing. Depending on the outcome, the service will conduct a formal review of current redaction practices applied to SARs.	2	31/07/25	0	15/09/25	46
Temporary Accommodation	Andrew Billany – Corporate Director for Housing	Adults and Housing	The Housing service will design and roll out a thorough staff training program for effective use of the internal software system (Huume).	2	30/4/25	1	18/07/25	79
Temporary Accommodation	Andrew Billany - Corporate Director for Housing	Adults and Housing	The housing service will in conjunction with assets and property formalise a comprehensive asset register to track all accommodation assets. This includes recording property location, ownership, acquisition date, value, and related agreements which will be regularly updated to maintain accuracy and compliance with policies and regulations.	2	31/3/25	1	18/07/25	109

Actions not yet due with multiple revision dates as at 19.09.2025

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	Current Revised Date	No. of Revisions	Change in Timescale (Days)
Joint Funding Arrangements	Beth Whittaker - Corporate Director for Education & Learning	Children's	The work being carried out for the automation of decisions made by the MARP will include a mechanism for recording, tracking and monitoring cases. This will include upwards reporting to the appropriate committee/ directorate leadership group.	2	30/04/24	30/09/25	2	518
Temporary Accommodation	Andrew Billany – Corporate Director for Housing	Adults and Housing	The Housing Service will ensure that temporary accommodation rents will be set at the level recommended in the Housing Revenue Accounts guidance.	2	31/03/25	30/06/26	1	456
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Corporate Director Finance and Commercial	Corporate Services	Procurement of the new ERP system will include a request for functionality to ensure that orders can be linked to a contract, or the Cabinet approval document for trade payments. There will also be a request for workflow for non trade payments and AP Uploads which includes appropriate authorisation and budget commitments being placed in advance where possible.	2	30/06/25	30/09/25	1	92
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council	Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement/	Corporate Services	Whenever an agreed existing SoW budget needs to be increased and/or milestones moved, this will go through the approval process as it would if it were a new SoW project, taking into account cumulative spend, and this will be in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation. The	2	31/08/25	30/09/25	1	30

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	Current Revised Date	No. of Revisions	Change in Timescale (Days)
Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Corporate Director Finance & Commercial		process will also include inputting amended commitments on SAP.					
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	SLT/Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement / Head of Legal/Corporate Director for Finance & Commercial	Corporate Services	The current Comensura contract finishes in April 2026, with options of further 12 month extensions until April 2028. For future arrangements, consideration will be given to the type of contract and works that are to be included, with a clear mandate from Senior Leadership Team (SLT). All relevant guidance will be updated and made available to all staff to ensure that it is used lawfully and within contract procedure rules.	2	30/09/25	31/10/25	1	31
DC Contract & Expenditure Compliance with Council Constitution & Scheme of Delegation	Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement / Senior Leadership Team	Corporate Services	A review of resources within Commercial and Procurement will be undertaken to ensure they are able to carry out the required additional processes as a result of this audit.	2	31/08/25	30/09/25	1	30

Actions not yet due with multiple revision dates, **complete** since last update (14.07.2025)

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	No. of Revisions	Date Completed	Completion Time (Days)
Effectiveness of Business Continuity Plans	Marc Eyre – Service Manager for Assurance	Corporate Services	Services will be required to identify their critical systems within the review of the Business Impact Analysis (BIA). Additionally, a review will be conducted to remove any outdated systems from the list.	2	31/05/25	4	15/09/25	107
Adults Block Booked Beds Contracts	Elaine Stratman - Brokerage & Market Service Manager	Adults and Housing	A standardised reconciliation process will be implemented to compare provider invoices against both void rates and fixed rates to ensure accurate and consistent billing. This process should be conducted regularly to identify and address any discrepancies.	2	31/03/25	3	18/07/25	109
RMMSCW Framework	Jess Maskrey – Head of Assets and Property	Place	Guidance will be written for the procurement of a contractor when a lot becomes available. This will be communicated to all staff and included within the new framework.	2	30/06/24	2	19/09/25	447
RMMSCW Framework	Jess Maskrey – Head of Assets and Property	Place	A system will be established for the approval of works above the limit set for Lots within the current RMMSCW Framework. This should also be duplicated within the new proposed framework.	2	30/06/24	2	19/09/25	447
RMMSCW Framework	Jess Maskrey – Head of Assets	Place	Assets and Property will work with Housing to establish a formal process for requesting work and signing off invoices.	2	30/09/24	2	19/09/25	355

Audit Title	Officer Responsible	Directorate	Action	Priority	Original Date	No. of Revisions	Date Completed	Completion Time (Days)
	and Property							
RMMSCW Framework	Jess Maskrey – Head of Assets and Property	Place	Consideration will be given to including audit actions contained within this report with the tender process for the new framework, for example the requirement to seek an exemption when the estimate is over the schedule of rates prior to the award of the work.	2	30/06/24	2	19/09/25	447
Estates Income and Debt Management	Jess Maskrey – Head of Assets and Property	Place	Once TF Cloud has been implemented and had time to embed, Estates will undertake a benefits realisation exercise to establish the value added by the new system and understand how it is allowing the service to meet its objectives. Any gaps identified by the work will be investigated further.	2	31/01/25	1	22/09/25	235