

Report of:	Managing Director
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Portfolio Leader:	Leader of the Council
Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Cabinet: 11/07/19 Corporate Scrutiny Cttee: 18/07/19

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 JULY 2019
SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED: APRIL 2018 TO MARCH 2019
(ANNUAL REPORT)

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Corporate Scrutiny Committee on the number and types of complaints received by the Council in the period April 2018 to March 2019.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Corporate Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the information about complaints received by the Council in this period and lessons learnt.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

Key Issues

- 3.1 This report contains information about the quantity, nature and timeliness of responses to formal complaints received in the period April, 2018 to March, 2019.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.2 Council approved a new Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy on 21 February, 2018; contained within the new policy is a commitment to report complaints information to Cabinet.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:

- (i) High standards of customer service contributes to the Council's corporate priorities of promoting prosperity and improving community wellbeing by supporting businesses and individual residents.

5 Report Detail

5.1 The Council has substantial customer contact with residents and businesses on a daily basis. Examples of the scale of this contact include:

- Dealing with all businesses that are liable to pay Business Rates.
- Dealing with all residents who are liable to pay Council Tax.
- Dealing with claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction in times of reducing entitlements and the implementation of Universal Credit.
- Dealing with Council tenants in the 5150 houses on rent, housing repairs etc.
- Dealing with all food, licensed premises and taxi businesses in the District for licensing purposes.
- In the 12 month period, just under 86,000 telephone calls were handled by Customer Services; an average of 7,166 calls per month.
- An additional circa 51,000 calls were handled by Revenues and Benefits staff

5.2 A proportion of the contact with customers involves difficult and sensitive issues such as taking enforcement action for non-payment of Council Tax/Business Rates and breaches of legislation. In the context of this significant and complex customer contact, the Council receives a relatively small number of complaints but it remains important that effective arrangements are in place to handle these and to learn any lessons.

5.3 There were a total of 27 formal complaints in the 12 month period from April 2018 to March 2019, broken down as follows:

Quarter 1 – April to June 2018 = 10

Quarter 2 – July to September 2018 = 3

Quarter 3 – October to December 2018 = 8

Quarter 4 – January to March 2019 = 6

5.4 In Quarter 1, all complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the policy. Of the 10 complaints, 7 were answered by the target date of 10 working days as per the policy which gives a 70% compliance.

5.5 In Quarter 2, all complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the policy. Of the 3 complaints, 1 was answered by the target date of 10 working days as per the policy which gives a 33% compliance.

5.6 In Quarter 3, 5 of the 8 complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the policy. 2 of the 8 complaints were resolved at Stage 2 of the policy; and 1 of the 8

complaints went to Stage 3 of the policy which is submission to the Council's Appeals and Complaints Panel for consideration by Members. Of the 8 complaints, 4 were answered by the target date of 10 working days (Stage 1) as per the policy which gives a 50% compliance.

5.7 In Quarter 4, all complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the policy. Of the 6 complaints, 5 were answered by the target date of 10 working days as per the policy which gives a 83% compliance.

5.8 A breakdown of the 27 complaints received is attached at Appendix 1. 1 of the 27 complaints was submitted anonymously.

5.9 Key lessons from these complaints include:

- In the EH Q3 case (resolved January, 2019) concerns were expressed regarding the engagement of front line officers with residents who have mental health issues. It is acknowledged that mental health training/awareness raising for front line officers would be beneficial and a facilitator is being sought to deliver this.
- The priority chart used and publicised for disabled adaptations needed reviewing. The information provided proved misleading, suggesting applicants were given priority on age rather than on the points based system used.
- Complaint received in relation to on-going window disrepair – initially not upheld, however, following further complaints an issue was identified with the window and subsequently rectified. The lesson learnt in this case to actively listening to the complaint, stop being defensive and not making judgement, particularly when the individual concerned has raised multiple issues.
- Complaint received in relation to on-going WC blockages identified issues with drainage on 4 housing estates where there are two WCs in the property which run into one sewer pipe – if a blockage occurs this is now treated as an emergency. Longer term this issue has identified an issue with the pitch fibre drainage which will be addressed through the capital works programme.

5.10 There was 1 formal complaint received about an elected Member that required investigation in the period April to March, 2019.

5.11 There were 4 formal complaints received about Council Officers that required investigation in the period April to March, 2019.

5.12 There were 4 enquiries from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) in the period, requesting information from the Council following complaints submitted direct to the LGO. In all of these cases the LGO elected not to instigate a formal investigation.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None.

6.2 Legal

None.

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None.

6.5 Human Rights Act

None.

6.6 Data Protection

None.

6.7 Risk Management

None.

6.8 Equality & Diversity

None.

6.9 Best Value

None.

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Breakdown of Complaints Received

Previous Consideration

Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy	Council	21 February 2018
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Background Papers

Individual complaints

APPENDIX 1**BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED**

QUARTER 1 – April to June 2018		
SERVICE	COMPLAINT	RESOLVED AT STAGE 1 (YES/NO)
Local Taxation & Benefits	Council Tax Liability Order	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	About an Officer	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Level of service	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Enforcement action to recover debt	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	About an Officer	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Level of service	YES
Planning Services	Discrimination linked to consultation	YES
Housing Property Services	Delay in disabled adaptation	YES
Housing – Disabled Adaptations	Time taken to assess need for disabled adaptation	YES
Housing Options Service	Level of service provided	YES
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FOR Q1 = 10		

QUARTER 2 – July to September 2018		
SERVICE	COMPLAINT	RESOLVED AT STAGE 1 (YES/NO)
Environmental Health	Action proposed by service	YES
Housing Property Services	State of Council house for new tenant	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Lack of response	YES
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FOR Q2 = 3		

QUARTER 3 – October to December 2018		
SERVICE	COMPLAINT	RESOLVED AT STAGE 1 (YES/NO)
Housing Maintenance	About an Officer	NO
Housing Maintenance	Quality of repair	YES
Housing Maintenance	About an Officer	YES
Environmental Health	About an Officer and recording equipment	NO
Local Taxation & Benefits	Business Rates	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Level of service	YES
Planning Services	Consultation timescales and information	NO
Local Taxation & Benefits	Application for Housing Benefit	YES
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FOR Q3 = 8		

QUARTER 4 – January to March 2019		
SERVICE	COMPLAINT	RESOLVED AT STAGE 1 (YES/NO)
Parks and Open Spaces	Damaged caused by a Tree	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Business Rates recovery	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Issues registering a property for Council Tax	YES
Insurance	Mis-sold Mortgage Insurance Policy	YES
Parks and Open Spaces	Trespassing and removal of shrubbery	YES
Managing Director	Council Committee Meeting	YES
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FOR Q4 = 6		