

Report of:	Managing Director
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Portfolio Leader:	Leader of the Council
Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Cabinet: 17/09/20

CABINET
17 SEPTEMBER 2020
SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED: APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020
(ANNUAL REPORT)

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the number and types of complaints received by the Council in the period April 2019 to March 2020.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet 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 2019 to March 2020.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.2 The Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy contains 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 contribute 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 5136 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, 79,088 telephone calls were handled by Customer Services; an average of 6,590 calls per month.
 - An additional circa 50,501 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 33 formal complaints in the 12 month period from April 2019 to March 2020, broken down as follows:
- Quarter 1 – April to June = 13
- Quarter 2 – July to September = 10
- Quarter 3 – October to December = 8
- Quarter 4 – January to March = 2
- 5.4 In Quarter 1, 9 of the 13 complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the policy. 3 of the 13 complaints went to Stage 3 of the Policy which is submission to the Council's Appeals and Complaints Panel (or Planning Control Committee if relevant) for consideration by Members. 2 of the 13 complaints were about an elected Member(s).
- 5.5 In Quarter 2, 9 of the 10 complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the policy. 1 of the 12 complaints was resolved at Stage 2 of the policy.

- 5.6 In Quarter 3, all complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the policy. 1 of the 8 complaints was about an elected Member.
- 5.7 In Quarter 4, all complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the policy.
- 5.8 A breakdown of the 31 complaints received is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.9 3 of the 33 formal complaints received were about an elected Member(s) that required investigation in the period April 2019 to March 2020.
- 5.10 10 of the 31 complaints received were about Council Officers that required investigation.
- 5.11 There was 1 detailed investigation by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in the period between April 2019 and March 2020; the complaint was not upheld.
- 5.12 Key lessons from the complaints received during this period include:
- To complete all void repairs (where possible) before handover. A tenant complained about the condition of property on handover, with further informal complaints received about the condition of properties by other tenants. A Void Improvement Group reviewed this and determined to improve the standard of properties being returned. Staff changes have also now been made.
 - To ensure better communication with tenants in respect of job times. A tenant complained about not being informed of the length of time it would take to complete a job. There was a breakdown in communication between the Contact Centre and Housing Repairs; this has now been resolved and Teams now have liaison meetings and systems are better updated with information.
 - Another communication skills improvement was required following a tenant's complaint that they were not treated with much respect or giving sufficient information on their waiting list position. All Housing staff attended a customer services training course during Q1 2019/20 and the Allocations Team staff were trained in how to obtain the waiting list information from Northgate.
 - Timescales for escalation of a complaint to be incorporated when the Complaints Policy is next reviewed. The current Policy is silent on escalation times.
 - To ensure that any email/Northgate recording notes are to be non-judgemental and factual.

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

Background Papers

Individual complaints

APPENDIX 1**BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED**

QUARTER 1 – April 2019 to June 2019		
SERVICE	COMPLAINT	RESOLVED AT STAGE 1 (YES/NO)
Environmental Health	Level of service received/lack of action taken	YES
Housing	Level of customer service received	YES
Housing	Property allocation and Anti Social Behaviour	YES
Housing	Property allocation and condition	YES
Housing	Level of customer service received (about an Officer)	YES
Housing	Property repair	YES
Housing	Officer conduct	YES
Housing	Level of customer service received and application of Council procedure	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Benefit overpayment	YES
Planning	Conduct of Members and an Officer	NO
Housing	Discrimination (about an Officer)	NO
Housing	Level of service received	NO
Monitoring Officer	About a Member	N/A
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FOR Q1 = 13		

QUARTER 2 – July 2019 to September 2019		
SERVICE	COMPLAINT	RESOLVED AT STAGE 1 (YES/NO)
Housing	Level of customer service received and application of Council procedure (about an Officer)	YES
Housing	Condition of property	YES
Housing	Property repair/maintenance	YES
Housing	Discrimination (about an Officer)	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Level of service received (about an Officer)	YES
Parks and Open Spaces	Level of customer service and maintenance of open space	YES
Parks and Open Spaces	Maintenance and condition of a Park	YES
Planning	Lack of notification regarding planning application	YES
Property Services	Decision regarding vacant business premise	YES
Environmental Health	Mortuary services	NO
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FOR Q2 = 10		

QUARTER 3 – October 2019 to December 2019		
SERVICE	COMPLAINT	RESOLVED AT STAGE 1 (YES/NO)
Customer Services	Telephony system/Call waiting time	YES
Democratic Services	Application of Council Policy / Procedure (about an Officer)	YES
Environmental Health	Environmental Nuisance	YES
Housing	Discrimination	YES
Housing	Level of customer service (about an Officer	YES
Parks and Open Spaces	Level of service received (about an Officer)	YES
Planning	Outcome of decision and level of customer service	YES
Monitoring Officer	About a Member	N/A
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FOR Q3 = 8		

QUARTER 4 – January 2020 to March 2020		
SERVICE	COMPLAINT	RESOLVED AT STAGE 1 (YES/NO)
Housing	Level of service received	YES
Local Taxation & Benefits	Level of service received and time taken to deal with appeal	YES
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FOR Q4 = 2		