

# SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## 8 OCTOBER 2018

### Annual report on complaints, comments and compliments

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Mrs Squires

**Responsible Officer:** Lisa Lewis, Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement

**Reason for Report:** Annual report on complaints, comments and compliments received as part of our 1.7 million plus contacts with customers in 2017/18.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

To note the record of complaints, comments and compliments.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** To ensure that the Council provides access to services for customers in whatever way they choose to transact with us. Ensuring extended access via digital means and improving the way that we hold information and deliver our services to customers, placing them at the centre of what we do.

**Financial Implications:** None

**Legal Implications:** None

**Risk Assessment:** Accurate recording and monitoring of complaints is good practice and ensures openness and accountability to all customers.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** Complaints are received by a variety of means which ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all customers. In addition, where there is a need Customer First staff will assist in the recording of complaints. There is also an interpretation service available through Language Line.

#### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council receives contact from customers in a variety of ways for all services. The table below gives details of these contacts.

	<b>2017/18</b>
Number of visitors to the office making payments or for enquiries	30,202
Telephone Payments (including automated)	54,946
Calls answered in the call centre	121,445
Calls to direct lines (not including calls to mobiles)	373,000+
Emails Received	Over 1 million
Digital Payments	78,926
Online- forms submitted	33,946
Planning Applications via portal	1343

- 1.2 This report provides a summary of the number of complaints, compliments and comments received for each service from 1/4/2017 to 31/3/2018 that were recorded on the corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. An official complaint is recorded when a customer has been unable to resolve their issues with the service concerned or where the issue is more serious than a normal service request that can be resolved by officers as part of their day to day activities.
- 1.3 All complaints, comments and compliments are recorded on the CRM in accordance with our corporate complaints policy. The name, address and contact details of the complainant, the nature of the complaint and the outcome of the complaint investigation are recorded. Statistics on the complaints, comments and compliments recorded in 2017/18 can be found at appendix 1.
- 1.4 It is not the totality of the expressions of dissatisfaction with service delivery, for example the Customer First team record many service requests and services also record customer contacts/service requests on their own ICT systems. These include routine enquiries, requests for service and service failures that can be resolved quickly to the customer's satisfaction, such as a missed waste collection that can be resolved by the team returning to the property within agreed times. Members are provided with performance statistics quarterly via Spar.net. A summary of calls logged on the CRM by Customers First for customers via the call centre is included at appendix 2.

## **2.0 Performance statistics**

- 2.1 Complaints are recorded on the CRM and, based on the information recorded, we are able to abstract the number of complaints raised as a level 1 complaint. These are investigated by the service manager. We are also able to abstract the number raised as level 2 complaints which are investigated by Group Managers.
- 2.2 The percentage of complaints that, as a result of investigation are up-held, is also recorded.
- 2.3 As a measure of how promptly we deal with the complaint we record the percentage acknowledged within 3 working days and the percentage resolved within our agreed timescales. These two performance statistics are reported on Spar.net monthly.

## **3.0 What does feedback tell us?**

- 3.1 As a result of investigations into complaints received, service managers have made changes to working practices; a record of these changes is also recorded. This is an excellent way to improve our services and respond to customer comments.
- 3.2 Compliments are fed back to staff and acknowledged by line managers.

#### **4.0 Referrals to the Ombudsman complaints service**

- 4.1 There were 8 complaints to the Ombudsman during 2017-2018.
- 4.2 A summary of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman 2017-18 is provided at appendix 3.
- 4.3 The Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review letter for 2018 is provided at Appendix 4.

**Contact for more Information:** Lisa Lewis, [llewis@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:llewis@middevon.gov.uk) 01884234981

**Circulation of the Report:** Margaret Squires, all group managers, all leadership team.

<b>Feedback 1.4.2016 to 2017</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
Complaints received	300	263
Invalid or withdrawn complaints		
Comments received	101	200
Compliments received	229	133
<b>Total</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>596</b>
Number of complaints at level 2	32	31
Number of complaints at level 2 upheld	8	8
Number of complaints at level 1 upheld	45	37
Number where a change was made to the service procedures as a result of the complaint	27	15

<b>Service</b>	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Compliments</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Audit	0	0	1
Bulky Waste	0	1	0
Car Parks	17	0	6
Cemeteries	2	0	0
Community Alarms	1	2	0
Community Housing support	0	1	0
Council Tax Billing	9	0	3
Council Tax Reduction	1	0	0
Customer Services	12	12	9
Electoral Register	4	0	0
Environmental Services	2	0	0
Fly Tipping	1	1	1
Garden Waste	17	2	76
Grass Cutting	6	4	2
High Hedges	1	1	0
Homelessness	1	3	1
Housing Benefits	13	0	0
Housing Repairs	38	52	59
Housing Tenancy	28	14	3
ICT Services	0	0	2
Leisure**	11	0	5
Licensing	1	0	0
Markets	1	0	0
Parks and Flower Beds	0	8	3
Planning	18	5	0
Pollution incl Noise	1	0	0
Private Sector Housing	2	0	1
Property Services	2	1	3
Public Toilets	0	0	1

<b>Service</b>	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Compliments</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Recycling	22	13	13
Refuse Collection	25	12	11
Street Cleansing	3	0	0
Trade Waste	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>200</b>

\*\*The above have all been logged via the CRM, Leisure record direct complaints separately and have dealt with a further 121 complaints through their own system.

Customer First service requests logged on the CRM 2017-18  
(Including requests for customer call back by service area)

<b>Service</b>	<b>Volume</b>
Abandoned vehicles	117
Benefits	1083
Building control	86
Building maintenance	3218
Bulky waste	919
Cadavers	9
Care services (service requests and reporting faults)	281
Car park faults	25
Clinical waste service requests	1283
Community development	52
Communications logs from media	105
• Council tax	
Discounts	536
General enquiries	3463
Moving home	2555
Refunds	350
Recovery	86
Business rates	169
Corporate	1726
• Dogs	
Dangerous dogs	25
Dog fouling	74
Lost/found dogs	142
Street scene - graffiti, flooding, pests, fixed penalty notice, permits	1052
Electoral services	1259
Fly tipping	319
HR and Legal	136
ICT	310
Housing (tenancy, housing needs, other)	2097
Leisure	40
Licensing	118
Parking fines	21
Parking permits (business and residential)	43
Payments (telephone)	38660
Planned maintenance	273
Planning and Forward Planning	1191
Property Services	351
Public Health	851
Street cleaning requests	86
Trade waste	538

<b>Service</b>	<b>Volume</b>
Waste and Recycling	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missed collections (recycling and refuse total recorded) 1227</li> <li>• Waste and Recycling general enquiries 6726</li> <li>• Garden waste renewals and replacements 4510</li> <li>• Garden waste sales (not including on line) 1233</li> <li>• Bin collection 495</li> <li>• Collection day look up 1738</li> <li>• Waste container sales 424</li> <li>• Assisted collections 131</li> </ul>	
Welfare assistance	304
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,512</b>

Switch board transactions and calls made direct to officers' extensions are not included in the table.

Missed waste collections are those reported to Customer First over the phone.

Visitor contacts and other various contacts are not recorded on the CRM.

## Ombudsman Complaints 2017/18

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Decided</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	Planning & Development	27/04/2017	Upheld
2	Planning & Development	22/01/2018	Upheld
3	Planning & Development	12/06/2017	Closed after initial enquiries
4	Corporate & Other Services	08/08/2017	Closed after initial enquiries
5	Housing	22/06/2017	Referred back for local resolution
6	Benefits & Tax	27/11/2017	Referred back for local resolution
7	Planning & Development	05/02/2018	Closed after initial enquiries
8	Highways & Transport	19/03/2018	Referred back for local resolution

Local Government &  
Social Care  
**OMBUDSMAN**

18 July 2018

*By email*

Stephen Walford

Chief Executive

Mid Devon District Council

Dear Stephen Walford,

**Annual Review letter 2018**

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2018. The enclosed tables present the number of complaints and enquiries received about your authority and the decisions we made during the period. I hope this information will prove helpful in assessing your authority's performance in handling complaints.

**Complaint statistics**

In providing these statistics, I would stress that the volume of complaints does not, in itself, indicate the quality of the council's performance. High volumes of complaints can be a sign of an open, learning organisation, as well as sometimes being an early warning of wider problems. Low complaint volumes can be a worrying sign that an organisation is not alive to user feedback, rather than always being an indicator that all is well. So, I would encourage you to use these figures as the start of a conversation, rather than an absolute measure of corporate health. One of the most significant statistics attached is the number of upheld complaints. This shows how frequently we find fault with the council when we investigate. Equally importantly, we also give a figure for the number of cases where we decided your authority had offered a satisfactory remedy during the local complaints process. Both figures provide important insights.

I want to emphasise the statistics in this letter reflect the data we hold, and may not necessarily align with the data your authority holds. For example, our numbers include enquiries from people we signpost back to the authority, some of whom may never contact you.

In line with usual practice, we are publishing our annual data for all authorities on our website, alongside an annual review of local government complaints. The aim of this is to be transparent and provide information that aids the scrutiny of local services.

**Future development of annual review letters**

Last year, we highlighted our plans to move away from a simplistic focus on complaint volumes and instead turn focus onto the lessons that can be learned and the wider improvements we can achieve through our recommendations to improve services for the many. We have produced a new corporate strategy for 2018-21 which commits us to more comprehensively publish information about the outcomes of our investigations and the occasions our recommendations result in improvements to local services.

We will be providing this broader range of data for the first time in next year's letters, as well as creating an interactive map of local authority performance on our website. We believe this will lead to improved transparency of our work, as well as providing increased recognition to the improvements councils have agreed to make following our interventions. We will

therefore be seeking views from councils on the future format of our annual letters early next year.

### **Supporting local scrutiny**

One of the purposes of our annual letters to councils is to help ensure learning from complaints informs scrutiny at the local level. Sharing the learning from our investigations and supporting the democratic scrutiny of public services continues to be one of our key priorities. We have created a dedicated section of our website which contains a host of information to help scrutiny committees and councillors to hold their authority to account – complaints data, decision statements, public interest reports, focus reports and scrutiny questions. This can be found at [www.lgo.org.uk/scrutiny](http://www.lgo.org.uk/scrutiny) I would be grateful if you could encourage your elected members and scrutiny committees to make use of these resources.

### **Learning from complaints to improve services**

We share the issues we see in our investigations to help councils learn from the issues others have experienced and avoid making the same mistakes. We do this through the reports and other resources we publish. Over the last year, we have seen examples of councils adopting a positive attitude towards complaints and working constructively with us to remedy injustices and take on board the learning from our cases. In one great example, a county council has seized the opportunity to entirely redesign how its occupational therapists work with all of its districts, to improve partnership working and increase transparency for the public. This originated from a single complaint. This is the sort of culture we all benefit from – one that takes the learning from complaints and uses it to improve services.

### **Complaint handling training**

We have a well-established and successful training programme supporting local authorities and independent care providers to help improve local complaint handling. In 2017-18 we delivered 58 courses, training more than 800 people. We also set up a network of council link officers to promote and share best practice in complaint handling, and hosted a series of seminars for that group. To find out more visit [www.lgo.org.uk/training](http://www.lgo.org.uk/training)

Yours sincerely,

Michael King  
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman  
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

**Local Authority Report:** Mid Devon District Council  
**For the Period Ending:** 31/03/2018

For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our website:  
<http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/interpreting-local-authority-statistics>

### Complaints and enquiries received

Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
0	2	1	0	1	1	1	3	0	9

### Decisions made

Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed After Initial Enquiries	Detailed Investigations			Total
				Not Upheld	Upheld	Uphold Rate	
0	0	3	3	0	2	100%	8

#### Notes

Our uphold rate is calculated in relation to the total number of detailed investigations.  
 The number of remedied complaints may not equal the number of upheld complaints. This is because, while we may uphold a complaint because we find fault, we may not always find grounds to say that fault caused injustice that ought to be remedied.

#### Complaints Remedied

by LGO	Satisfactorily by Authority before LGO Involvement
2	0