

Report for: Scrutiny

Date of Meeting:	18 December 2023
Subject:	Annual Report Compliments, Comments & Complaints
Cabinet Member:	Cllr J Lock, Working Environment
Responsible Officer:	Lisa Lewis, Corporate Manager for Business Transformation & Customer Engagement
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendices 1 to 5

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

Annual report on compliments, comments and complaints received as part of our 2 plus million contacts with customers in 2022/23.

Recommendation(s):

To note the record of compliments, comments and complaints

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council receives contact from customers in a variety of ways for all services. The table below shows the overall number of contacts into Customer Services for each method for the last 12 months covering 01/11/22 to 31/10/23. Included are the previous year’s numbers for comparison.

Contact Method	01 November 2021 – 31 October 2022	01 November 2022 – 31 October 2023
Number of visitors to the office for enquiries	4,865	6,129
Telephone Payments (including automated) *	67,221	70,177

Contact Method	01 November 2021 – 31 October 2022	01 November 2022 – 31 October 2023
Calls to call centre	95,896	86,184
Digital Payments	103,240	111,784
Online- forms submitted	55,762	81,287

- 1.2 This report provides a summary of the number of complaints, compliments and comments received for each service for the last 12 calendar months (see **Appendix 1**). Please be aware that the discrepancy between the figures provided here and the Ombudsman report below are due to the rescheduling of this report for higher priority items for the committee.
- 1.3 An official complaint is recorded when a customer expresses dissatisfaction with a service they have received. In some instances customers use the complaints system prior to requesting a service. These requests are triaged accordingly where we are aware and re-logged as service requests.
- 1.4 Compliments, comments and complaints are recorded on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system 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 all recorded.
- 1.5 Feedback recorded is not the totality of the expression of dissatisfaction with service delivery. For example, Customer Services record many service requests and services also record contacts/service requests in their own ICT systems. These include routine enquiries, requests for service and logging service failures which can be resolved quickly to the customers' satisfaction.
- 1.6 Members are provided with performance statistics for complaints via the six weekly PDG Performance Management reports and as part of the Audit cycle.
- 1.7 Housing complaints are now reported separately via the Homes PDG. Figures are included here only as a corporate oversight across all services.

2.0 Performance Statistics

- 2.1 Feedback is recorded on the CRM, based on the information recorded we are able to extract the number of complaints raised at each level. Level 1 complaints are investigated by the Service Manager and Level 2 Complaints are investigated by Operational/Corporate Managers or member of Leadership Team.
- 2.2 Numbers of complaints upheld is recorded within the CRM.

2.3 As a measure of performance with complaint handling, the number acknowledged within 3 working days and resolved within timescales is recorded and reported on monthly as mentioned at 1.5.

3.0 What does the feedback tell us?

3.1 As a result of complaints made, service managers are able to make changes to the working practices within service areas. These are also recorded in the CRM. Feedback where a change can be identified is an excellent way to improve services and respond to the needs of our customers.

3.2 Compliments received are often for members of staff who customers feel have done a good job. These are fed back to staff by line managers and where appropriate in staff communications. A sample of these can be found at **Appendix 5**.

3.3 What are the numbers telling us? We are actively encouraging feedback from customers and as a result we have seen an increase in the number of complaints, comments and compliments from last year.

3.4 The context of the environment in which we are all working is important. Staffing issues such as retention and staff savings targets, which Members are aware of, have affected services across the organisation and means there is a continuing need to review and revise how we provide some services which can lead to gaps between our ability to deliver and customer expectations.

3.5 We have seen an overall 44% increase in Complaints, and a 16% and 10% increase in Compliments and Comments respectively. The primary increases in complaints can be found in the following areas.

Service	Increase from 21/22
Housing Repairs	36%
Housing Tenancy	17%
Recycling	175%
Refuse	139%

3.6 Housing Complaints are reported via the Homes PDG and were shared at the [Homes PDG on 13 June 2023](#) for the financial year 21/22. Please refer to that report for further information on how Mid Devon Housing have changed their complaint practices as per their Ombudsman guidelines.

3.7 The refuse and recycling increase can be explained in part due to the timing of this report. Monitoring would have begun less than four weeks after the implementation of BinIt 1-2-3. This was a significant change for our residents and crews alike, so change of this nature requires some time to settle down.

3.8 Samples of compliments received can be found at **Appendix 5**.

4.0 **The Future for Customer Feedback at MDDC.**

- 4.1 The authority is currently migrating the customer feedback process to the new CRM self-serve portal which went live in October 2023. Once migrated customers will have greater visibility of their complaint progress.
- 4.2 As part of the migration process we will be revisiting training with officers and reviewing performance reporting to improve escalation of complaint responses and adequately monitor actions and learning as outcomes of customer feedback.
- 4.3 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) has recently closed a consultation to determine whether to create a joint Complaints Code. More information can be found [here](#). Should a joint code be adopted, the council will be obliged to review and amend current policies and procedures. The current policy is due for review but is awaiting the migration of the process to a new system should amendments to the published process be required, or a joint code is adopted whichever is the sooner.

5.0 **Referrals to the Ombudsman Complaints Service 2022-2023**

- 5.1 12 complaints were made to the ombudsman by residents. The majority were closed after the initial enquiry not requiring further investigation.
- 5.2 Only one of the Ombudsman cases was upheld. This matches the Ombudsman outturn for 21/22 and is a testament to staff robustly applying processes and procedures in the delivery of services. A summary of complaints to the Ombudsman 2022-23 (the latest available) is provided at **Appendix 2**.
- 5.3 The Local Government Ombudsman Annual review letter is provided at **Appendix 3**.
- 5.4 For comparison, a table of neighbouring authorities and their ombudsman cases has been provided at **Appendix 4**.

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.

Impact on Climate Change: None

Equalities Impact Assessment: Compliments, comments and 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 Services staff will always assist in the recording of these communications and complaints. There is also an interpretation service available.

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.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151
Date: 5 December 2023

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leiburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 5 December 2023

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director
Date: 5 December 2023

Performance and risk: Steve Carr
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager
Date: 6 December 2023

Cabinet member notified: yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Lisa Lewis, Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement
Email: llewis@middevon.gov.uk
Telephone: 01884 234981

Background papers:

Appendix 1 – Summary and Totals of Feedback
Appendix 2 – Summary of Complaints to Ombudsman
Appendix 3 – Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2022-23
Appendix 4 – Ombudsman Local Authority Benchmarking
Appendix 5 – Sample of Compliments