

CABINET

31 AUGUST 2017

Annual report on complaints, comments and compliments

Cabinet Member: Cllr Margaret Squires

Responsible Officer: Liz Reeves, Head of Customer Services and ICT

Reason for Report: Annual report on complaints, comments and compliments received as part of our 1.4 million contacts with customers in 2016/17.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. To note the record of complaints, comments and compliments
2. To note the recommendations on continued improvement on recording and responding to complaints.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: To ensure that people have access to the services they need, particularly those on low incomes and those who are sick or disabled. People also need easy access to information about services at the right time and in the right place whether that is by telephone, digital or face-to-face.

Financial Implications: None

Legal Implications: None

Risk Assessment: Accurate recording and monitoring of complaints is good practice and ensures that we are open and accountable to all of our customers.

Equality Impact Assessment: Complaints are accepted by a variety of means which ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all customers. In addition, where appropriate, Customer First staff will assist staff to record information and there is a language line facility.

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 and compares the position as at last year.

	2015/16	2016/17
Number of visitors to the office making payments or for enquiries	99,739	71,968
Telephone payments	Information not recorded	36,538
Calls answered in the call centre	487,248	139,630
Calls to direct lines (not including calls to mobiles)	Information not recorded	217,912

	2015/16	2016/17
Emails received	843,725	865,943
Digital payments	Information not recorded	32,848
On-line forms	29,053	33,562
Planning apps via portal	858	998

- 1.2 Additional contact is also received via social media (Facebook and Twitter) and more traditionally by post, giving overall contacts with the Council in excess of 1.4 million during the year.
- 1.3 This report provides a summary of the number of complaints, compliments and comments received for each service from 1/4/2016 to 31/3/2017 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 issue 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.
- 1.4 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 2016-17 can be found at appendix 1.
- 1.5 This 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 a member Management/Leadership Team.
- 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 monthly on Spar.net.
- 2.4 There has been an issue with reporting the number of complaints resolved within the target set for the year. The calculation on Spar.net shows the percentage resolved on time for the month and does not show this as an average for the year. In 2016-17, 92% of complaints were resolved within the agreed the timescale.
- 2.5 A review of the complaints monitoring system was carried out in 2015-16 and an action plan was put together to improve recording and monitoring of complaints. An update of the action plan is included at appendix 3.

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; these changes are 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 7 complaints to the Ombudsman during 2016-17.
- 4.2 A summary of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman 2016-17 is provided at appendix 4.
- 4.3 The Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review letter for 2017 is provided at Appendix 5.

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Circulation of the Report: Cllr Margaret Squires, Group Manager for Legal Services/Monitoring Officer, Leadership Team.

Feedback 1.4.2016 to 2017	2015/16	2016/17
Complaints received	289	300
Invalid or withdrawn complaints		
Comments received	116	101
Compliments received	238	229
Total	527	630
Number of complaints at level 2	35	32
Number of complaints at level 2 upheld	4	8
Number of complaints at level 1 upheld	40	45
Number where a change was made to the service procedures as a result of the complaint	27	27

Service 2016-17	complaint	comment	compliment
Affordable housing	1		
Business rates	1		
Car parks	10	2	
Community alarms	1		1
Community development		1	
Council tax	15	4	
Council tax recovery	1		1
Council tax reduction scheme	1		
Customer services	17	9	15
Dogs strays or fouling	2		1
Elections	1		
Environmental services	2	1	2
Fly tipping	1	1	2
Garden waste	5	10	2
Grass cutting	8		
High hedges	1		
Homelessness			1
Housing benefits	11		8
Housing repairs	37	18	135
Housing tenancy (& other housing services)	34		15
Human resources	1		
Leisure	18	28	2
Licensing	1		
Markets	1		
Parks and flower beds	2		1
Planning	27		7
Play areas	3		
Private sector housing	1		
Property services	8	3	1
Public toilets	1	1	
Recycling	50	14	23
Refuse collection	37	7	12
Street cleansing	1	2	
Total	300	101	229

Customer First service request logged on the CRM via the phone 2016-17

Service	Volume
Abandoned vehicles	174
Benefits	1173
Building control	99
Building maintenance	4547
Bulky waste service requests (WEE and fridges)	994
Cadavers	46
Care services (service requests and reporting faults)	187
Car park faults	12
Clinical waste service requests	1496
Communications logs from media	108
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council tax Discounts General enquiries Moving home Refunds Recovery Business rates 	687 2471 2788 618 213 158
Corporate	1995
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dogs Dangerous dogs Dog fouling Lost found dogs 	42 131 179
Street scene -Graffiti, flooding, pests, fixed penalty notice, permits	953
Electoral services	1288
Environmental services	722
Fly tipping	390
HR & legal	214
ICT	227
Housing , tenancy, housing needs, other	1903
Leisure	41
Licensing	115
Parking fines	67
Payments (telephone)	36,538
Planning & forward planning	785
Property services	408
Street cleaning requests	81
Trade waste	513
Waste & recycling - missed collections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycling & refuse total recorded (includes total valid missed waste and recycling collections) Waste & recycling general enquiries Garden waste renewals and replacements Garden waste sales (not including on line) Bin collection Collection day look up Waste container sales Assisted collections 	422 8013 1313 1589 655 789 125 304
Welfare assistance	220
Total	75,793

Switch board transactions and calls made direct to officer's 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.

Update on complaints review action plan

Recommendations	Update
1. Ensure services are logging complaints (in all cases)	Improved awareness of when to record complaints
2. Ensure services are acknowledging complaints within 3 working days	Improved percentage acknowledged from 61% to 85.5%
3. Ensure the customer is notified if the complaint cannot be resolved in 10 working days and extend the deadline	Customer Services team leader monitors complaints system monthly
4. Ensure reporting data is accurate	Monthly validation completed by Customer Services team leader
5. Ensure documentation relating to the complaint is stored securely and there is a clear audit trail	Documents can be attached to the complaint using the corporate Document Management System (DMS)
6. Ensure letters include standard template paragraphs in relation to time scales, appeals etc. letters	Templates on the complaints system include information on time scales, PIs and other information

Ombudsman complaints

Appendix 4

	Authority	Category	Decision date	Decision
1	Mid Devon District Council	Planning & Development	12.4.2016	not upheld
2	Mid Devon District Council	Planning & Development	6.6.2016	not upheld
3	Mid Devon District Council	Planning & Development	27.6.2016	not upheld
4	Mid Devon District Council	Planning & Development	7.12.2016	not upheld
5	Mid Devon District Council	Planning & Development	27.4.2016	closed after initial enquiries
6	Mid Devon District Council	Planning & Development	27.9.2016	closed after initial enquiries
7	Mid Devon District Council	Planning & Development	14.11.2016	referred back for local resolution