

# Forest Heath District Council

**PERFORMANCE AND  
AUDIT SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**28 NOVEMBER 2013**

**PAS13/020**

(This report is not a key decision. This report has been subject to appropriate notice of publication under the Council's Access to Information Rules)

## **Report of the Head of Policy, Communications and Customers**

### **BIANNUAL CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS DIGEST (APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2013)**

#### **1. Summary and reasons for recommendation**

- 1.1 Attached is the Biannual Corporate Complaints Digest covering the period from 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2013.
- 1.2 The aim of the digest is to provide an overview of the number and range of corporate complaints (complaints monitored by the Policy Team) that the council receives, as well as monitoring our effectiveness at responding and learning from any mistakes that have been made.
- 1.3 18 complaints were received between April and September this year. No comparable data is available as this is the first full year of reporting using this system. This process was introduced in November 2012.
- 1.4 The report sets out the number of corporate complaints received, details of our response times to those complaints, a breakdown of the complaints by service and also details of the complaints received.
- 1.5 In addition, the report highlights the 19 compliments which have been received across the authority during the reporting period (April to September 2013).

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the latest digest and make any recommendations to Cabinet arising from the information in this report.

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### **3. How will the recommendations help us meet our strategic priorities?**

- 3.1 The authority has a strategic priority to be an efficient and effective Council. One way to inform the provision of Council services and help shape improvement is through capturing feedback. Only by monitoring and reviewing complaints and issues raised can the council be sure it is taking the right steps to secure this improvement.

### **4. Introduction**

- 4.1 The aim of the digest is to provide an overview of the number and type of corporate complaints that the council receives, as well as monitoring effectiveness at responding and learning from any mistakes that have been made.
- 4.2 Corporate complaints are co-ordinated and monitored by the Policy Team. The Team is supported in this work via a network of service complaints co-ordinators who are responsible for ensuring responses within their service areas are made in accordance with the council's complaints procedure.
- 4.3 The council operates a two step complaints procedure. Step 1 involves a complainant who is dissatisfied with any part of the council's service, or wishes to point out a fault, making a complaint by email, telephone, and letter or via one of the feedback forms available and on-line. Complainants receive confirmation within five working days which provides them with the name of the person dealing with the complaint and either responds to the complaint and explains how the situation has been dealt with or lets them know that the complaint will require more investigation and advises when they can expect to receive a full reply.
- 4.4 If a complainant is not satisfied with the response received under Step 1 of the procedure, they can request that the complaint moves to Step 2. This involves the complaint being investigated by Legal and Democratic Services who will provide an explanation of how the situation has been handled, the investigations that have taken place and whether the response provided is reasonable and fair.
- 4.5 The council aims to fully respond to 90% of Step 1 and Step 2 complaints within 20 working days. However, it is recognised that some complaints, and particularly at Step 2, can involve complex investigations and can take longer than 20 working days to complete. If additional time is required, this is agreed with the complainant.
- 4.6 The report also includes details on the number of compliments that the council receives. The monitoring of compliments is important to the authority as it provides an opportunity to recognise services, teams or individual members of staff who have been praised by the customer for delivering an excellent service.

### **5. Local Government Ombudsman report 2012-2013**

- 5.1 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Review for 2012-2013 summarises the complaints it investigated about the council for the year ended 31 March 2013. This year the LGO have only presented the total number of complaints received and have not provided the more detailed information offered in previous years showing their investigative team's decisions. This is due to changes in the LGO's business processes during the course of 2012-2013. This has meant the LGO is

not able to provide a consistent set of data for the entire year. It is hoped that the LGO will publish more detailed information next year.

- 5.2 In 2012/13 LGO received 3 complaints about Forest Heath District Council (these were not upheld). This compares to the average for district councils of 10 complaints each year.

## 6. Complaints

### 6.1 Complaints received and speed of response

18 complaints were received between April 2013 and the end of September 2013. The table below shows how this compares with the previous year.

	Total number received and completed	Number responded to within target of 20 working days (or within extension agreed with complainant)	Percentage responded to within target of 20 working days
<b>April 2013 – October 2013</b>			
Step 1	9	5	66%
Step 2	9	8	89%
<b>November 2012 – March 2013</b>			
Step 1	3	3	100%
Step 2	1	1	100%

Analysis of corporate complaints received by Head of Service

<b>Service</b>	April 2013	May 2013	June 2013	July 2013	Aug 2013	Sept 2013	<b>Total complaints received</b>
Housing					1		1
Planning and Regulatory Services	1	1		1	2	2	7
Resources and Performance (including ARP)	1	1		2		2	6
Waste Management and Property Services	1	2		1			4
<b>Monthly Totals</b>	3	4		4	3	4	<b>18</b>

A breakdown of Corporate complaints in the period April 2013 to September 2013 - outcomes and lessons learned can be found at **Appendix A**.

## 7. Compliments received between April and September 2013

- 7.1 As part of the monitoring of feedback from our customers, the Policy Team maintains records of compliments received for particular services or individuals. Services are asked to pass on positive feedback in order to promote a culture which acknowledges and celebrates excellent customer service and also provides an opportunity to share that learning with other staff members.

7.2 Between April and the end of September 2013, 19 compliments were received.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Total written compliments received</b>
Planning and Regulatory Services	11
Policy, Communications and Customers	1
Waste Management and Property Services	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>

7.3 More information about these compliments is contained in **Appendix B**.

## **8. Other options considered**

8.1 Not applicable

## **9. Community impact**

### **9.1 Crime and disorder impact** *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)*

9.1.1 None

### **9.2 Diversity and equality impact** *(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)*

9.2.1 None in relation to this report. Diversity and equality information is an optional disclosure for complainants completing one of the Council's feedback forms.

### **9.3 Sustainability impact** *(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)*

9.3.1 None

### **9.4 Other impact** *(any other impacts affecting this report)*

9.4.1 None

## **10. Consultation** *(what consultation has been undertaken, and what were the outcomes?)*

10.1 None.

## **11. Financial and resource implications** *(including asset management implications)*

11.1 None

## **12. Risk/opportunity assessment** *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk (before controls)</b>	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk (after controls)</b>
Failure to record complaints and use feedback to inform service delivery	<b>Medium</b>	Complaints procedure in place and regular reporting to management and members	<b>Low</b>

**13. Legal and policy implications**

13.1 None in this report. Individual complaints may highlight legal implications and these are addressed in any responses.

**14. Wards affected**

14.1 All

**15. Background papers**

15.1 None

**16. Documents attached**

16.1 Appendix A – Corporate Complaints (April – September 2013)

16.2 Appendix B – Compliments (April – September 2013)