

Forest Heath District Council

**PERFORMANCE AND
AUDIT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

29 MAY 2014

PAS14/036

(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 COMPLIEMENTS DIGEST OCTOBER 2013 TO MARCH 2014

1. Summary and reasons for recommendation

- 1.1 Attached is the Biannual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Digest covering the period from 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2014.
- 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) and compliments that the council receives, as well as monitoring our effectiveness at responding and learning from any mistakes that have been made and sharing good practice.
- 1.3 9 corporate complaints were received between October 2013 and March 2014. 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 digest 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 15 compliments which have been received across the authority during the reporting period.

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 Monitoring complaints and compliments supports the delivery of the West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014-2016.

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. Monitoring complaints allows us to respond to issues that arise and learn from mistakes that have been made.
- 4.3 The council operates a two step corporate complaints procedure which is implemented if complaints are not resolved by the services. 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 letter or via one of the feedback forms available on-line. Complainants receive a response 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 (from the date of acceptance of the complaint at each step). 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 Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of our Step 1 and 2 procedures they can ask the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) to investigate the matter.
- 5.2 The LGO informs us of the outcomes of individual complaints submitted to them (ie whether the matter was upheld, not upheld or partly upheld).
- 5.3 Between October 2013 and March 2014, the LGO received 2 complaints about Forest Heath District Council. The LGO had no jurisdiction in one complaint and

the other was not upheld. More detailed information relating to these outcomes will be provided in the LGO's Annual Review due in May.

6. Complaints

6.1 Corporate complaints received and speed of response are shown attached at **Appendix A**.

6.2 A breakdown of Corporate complaints in the period October 2013 to March 2014 outcomes and lessons learned can be found at **Appendix B**.

7. Compliments

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. Between October 2013 and the end of March 2014, 15 compliments were received. A breakdown of compliments received by service is attached at **Appendix C**.

7.2 Further information about these compliments is contained in **Appendix D**.

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)

9.1.2 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)

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

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 – Speed of response

16.2 Appendix B – Corporate Complaints – Outcomes and lessons learned

16.3 Appendix C – Compliments by service

16.4 Appendix D – Compliment details