



Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee 29 April 2013

Biannual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Digest

1. Summary and reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 Attached is the Biannual Corporate Complaints Digest covering the period from 1 October 2012 to 31 March 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 36 complaints were received between October and March this year. This compares to 25 during the same period last year. In total 58 complaints were recorded for 2012/13.
- 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 80 compliments which have been received across the authority during the reporting period (October to March) and outlines the teams and services who have received them. In total 168 compliments were recorded during 2012/13.

2. Purpose of the report

- 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. Introduction

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.

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.

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 from reception and on-line. Complainants receive a letter 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.

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. All complaints dealt with at Step 1 and Step 2, are logged for the purposes of this report.

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 complete investigations and can take longer than 20 working days to complete. If additional time is required, this is agreed with the complainant.

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.

4. Complaints received and speed of response

36 complaints were received between October 2012 and the end of March 2013. The table below shows how this compares with the previous year.

	Total number received and completed	Number responded to within target of <i>20 working days</i> (or within extension agreed with complainant)	Percentage responded to within target of <i>20 working days</i>
April 12 – September 12 (half year)			
Step 1	14	11	79%
Step 2	7	5	71%
October 12 – March 13 (half year)			
Step 1	23	15	65%
Step 2	13	9	69%
April 12 – March 13 (full year)			
Step 1	37	26	68%
Step 2	20	14	70%

5. **Analysis of corporate complaints received by Head of Service**

Service	Oct 2012	Nov 2012	Dec 2012	Jan 2013	Feb 2013	Mar 2013	Total complaints received
Housing	1	3	4	2		1	11
Leisure, Culture and Communities			1			1	2
Policy, Communications and Customers			1				1
Planning and Regulatory Services	6	2	3	4	3	1	19
Resources and Performance			1	1			2
Waste Management and Property Services					1		1
Monthly Totals	7	5	10	7	4	3	36

6. Corporate complaints in the period October 2012 to March 2013 - outcomes and lessons learned

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Planning and Regulatory Services	Environmental Health	Treatment by Environmental Health Officer in relation to father's grant	Apologies given after a difficult telephone conversation. Grant procedure explained in writing to assist father.
	Environmental Health	Not taken concerns over glass incident seriously enough and rude telephone manner	Complainant satisfied that the complaint was being handled correctly and was advised of options open to him.
	Environmental Health Step 2	Failure to respond to questions raised in correspondence with Environmental Health Officers.	Complaint partly upheld as some FOI information was not supplied. Information supplied under Environmental Information Regulations. However three other issues not upheld.
	Environmental Health Step 2	Noise complaint investigation.	Complaint not justified - the council has delivered a satisfactory service, however opportunity taken to review procedures.
	Environmental Health Step 2	Original complaint not resolved. Department closed the case without permission.	Complaint partly upheld. Procedures to be amended to ensure individuals are informed in writing when an investigation has been closed.
	Environmental Health Step 2	FOI Complaint request: food safety officer's inspection report of local establishment	Complaint upheld. A scanned copy of the officer's report released. The information supplied has had personal information redacted otherwise would breach a data protection principle.
	Environmental Health Step 2	Adaptations to property and a request to move without paying back Disabled Facilities Grant.	Insufficient evidence provided to support the request for legal charge to be waived; officers have correctly applied the legislation.
	Planning	Unhappy with handling of planning issues	Comments made in connection with neighbours are a civil matter and therefore unable to comment.
	Planning	Planning permission	Complaint not upheld. Considered within provisions of the Council's Development Plan Policies; planting and landscaping.
	Planning	Council's handling of listed building application	The development has been built in accordance with the approved plan and that the materials used are considered to be appropriate in the context of the host dwelling.
Planning	Letter not answered in full, classification of points, ongoing enforcement and civil issue.	Tree planting screen, not a conditional requirement so no timetable for commencement of work. Restrictive covenants - a civil matter between complainant and	

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
			landowner.
	Planning	Complaint about procedures of planning department.	Complaint not upheld.
	Planning	Clarification why the case officer was replaced and further issues.	Apologies given for administrative delays and unclear correspondence.
	Planning	Complaint – issue of lawful development certificate/handling by officers.	Complaint upheld. Complainant not consulted although no statutory obligation. In addition non-compliance with a condition was not fundamental to the development.
	Planning	Handling of planning application which has been totally inconsistent and extremely unprofessional.	Apologies given. A meeting was arranged with stakeholders to discuss an acceptable scheme for the application site.
	Planning Step 2	Complaint re handling of planning application.	Complaint not upheld. Allegations of improper behaviour against a professional officer of the Council not substantiated.
	Planning Step 2	Planning Permission	Complaint not upheld. The council did properly consider the proximity of development to complainant's property before and after planning application revision including landscaping.
	Planning Step 2	The issue of a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of Planning Application	Complaint partly upheld. Officers properly considered all evidence provided. However, enforcement action could have been undertaken more swiftly.
	Planning Step 2	Conversion of a house to a house of multiple occupation.	Complaint not upheld. The Council has acted professionally and expediently in responding to the complainant's request.
Policy, Communications and Customers	Communications	Inaccuracies in media alert	A correction was issued on the following working day. All those who received the incorrect alert were therefore made aware of the error. This correction included an apology.
Leisure, Culture and Communities	Parks	Nuisance experienced on and around local amenity land.	Letter circulated asking local residents to be mindful of restrictions to the amenity land and consideration of neighbours. No more nuisance complaints received.
	Cemeteries	Haverhill cemetery closing times causing undue stress at being accidentally locked in.	Apologies given and reassurance that accurate times are clearly displayed.
Resources and Performance	Council Tax	Council Tax collection.	Complaint not upheld. Complainant not owed any refund or repayment for Council Tax.

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
	Council Tax Step 2	Council Tax queries.	Complaint not upheld. All properties correctly assessed.
Waste Management and Property Services	Car Parks	Complaint re Parking Fine and length of time taken to respond to e-mails.	Apologies given for delays in responding, fine cancelled and money credited back to account as goodwill gesture.
Housing	Housing	Medical evidence ignored when given housing banding.	Complaint not upheld; the banding allocation decision had taken medical evidence into consideration.
	Housing	Complainant uncomfortable with Housing attitude particularly how his review was handled as he has a physical disability.	The Council has acted appropriately in dealing with housing issues.
	Housing	Home-Link application banding.	Banding reviewed earlier in the year. Advised to start bidding for properties.
	Housing	Complainant spoke to various officers and felt she received conflicting advice.	Apologies given for any misunderstanding.
	Housing	Breach of Human Rights and being treated in a sexist manner.	Banding awarded appropriately no evidence to substantiate claim that complainant has been treated in a sexist manner.
	Housing	Welfare of daughter with medical needs.	The Council has correctly assessed the housing application. This case has shown that the Council could be more proactive in dealing with customers now that this has been identified this will be fed into the process.
	Housing	Lack of response after requesting a copy of Home-Link application.	Discussions of a practical way forward regarding the family's application for re-housing have taken place and addressed.
	Housing	Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator and housing issues.	Complaint not upheld. The officer acted at all times in a professional manner.
	Housing Step 2	Home-Link application and treatment by officers.	Complaint is partly upheld. Apologies have been given for oversight in failing to provide information requested sooner; libellous allegations unfounded.
	Housing Step 2	Home-Link Housing Needs Priority Banding.	Complaint not upheld. Housing need correctly assessed in accordance with Council policy
	Housing Step 2	Actions regarding the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator.	The complaint has been dealt with in a professional manner and in accordance with procedure. Agency and case notes with redactions provided.

7. Compliments received between October 2012 and March 2013

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.

This section of the report provides a breakdown of the number of compliments received during the year by service and provides details of the individual compliments.

7.1 Analysis of number of compliments received by service from October 2012 to end of March 2013

Between October 2012 and the end of March 2013, 80 compliments were received.

Service	Total written compliments received
Economic Development and Growth	1
Legal and Democratic Services	2
Leisure, Culture and Communities	20
Planning and Regulatory Services	2
Policy, Communications and Customers	1
Waste Management and Property Services	54
TOTAL	80

7.2 Breakdown of compliments received from October 2012 to March 2013

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
Planning and Regulatory Services	Environmental Health	Thank you for the help extended to myself and my wife. You have made a difference to our lives.
	Environmental Health	Successful liaison between local business, deliveries and resident – well done.
Economic Development and Growth	Economic Development	Thanks to SEBC for supporting us this year. Thank you so much, without your grant we couldn't have made this possible, the new equipment is fantastic. We have had lots of positive feedback from the community and group users.
Policy Communications and Customers	Reception	I feel that I received extremely good service when I came to West Suffolk House. Business concluded with planning, highways and ability to talk to an officer via phone link to sort out my tax. In all cases the help was professional, efficient and quick.
Leisure, Culture and Communities	Apex	Thanks to all staff, very nice and helpful.
	Apex / Athenaeum	Thank you for organising both venues for the graduation. Everything ran smoothly with so many numbers. The layout was successful, numbers in and out were staggered, the room was busy but everything worked comfortably.
	Apex	Thank you lots for getting us (performer) into the local magazine feature on the apex. Thank you for making us feel so welcome, all the staff work really hard to keep things smooth. (I've managed to get a few Radio Interviews recently, and have plugged the apex as a venue and the personnel as wonderful...just so you know, I am genuinely grateful).
	Apex	Thanks very much for a great venue and staff! The way it should always be done.
	Apex	The Apex is a new building and it is a pleasurable experience to be there. The staff were friendly and polite, the facilities excellent and there is a well stocked bar and café. The hall itself is beautiful and the seats comfortable.
	Apex	It's a fabulous venue; the staff were superb - professional and efficient, and very friendly. Please pass on our thanks. We really enjoyed the experience.
	Apex	Please thank all your staff for looking after us so well.
	Apex	Thank you so much for all your hard work leading up to the concert at the apex and for your support and hard work on the night. The general view, from my very critical family members, is that it was our best carol concert yet and, with ten years worth to choose from, that is quite a feat! Please pass our thanks on to everyone at the apex... the stage team, admin, the box office and the front-of-house staff. They were unfailingly helpful and pleasant to all.

Service	Compliment / Comment Details	
Apex	I just wanted to let you know how much my six year old son and I enjoyed this event on Sunday evening. The staff running the event were very friendly and helpful. We will definitely be coming again next year - please run an event like this again!	
Apex	We had a brilliant night. The atmosphere in the room was electric and made for an incredible first show of the tour for us. Everyone was great. The staff were so helpful and we are really looking forward to coming back.	
Apex	Thank you again for having us. We've had some wonderful feedback, and again can I thank your staff please; they were really great to work with.	
Apex	Well done for booking such a good musical event and one which we would highly recommend to anyone.	
Apex	Thanks to all that assisted with putting our public meeting on.	
Apex	A huge thank to you to everyone involved in making sure our day was stress free and smooth running. A fantastic group of people to work with and I look forward to working with you all again in the future.	
Apex	It was an absolute pleasure to arrive with everything set up and ready to go; an instant 'calmer' as we readied ourselves for the rehearsals and concert! Please pass on our massive thanks to staff.	
Apex	Workshop was a success – many thanks to all staff for all their hard work before hand and during the session.	
Parks	Thanks for allowing us to take photographs for our forthcoming production, in the sensory garden within the Abbey Gardens.	
Parks	Thank you for swift assessment and removal of tree!	
Parks	West Stow – a well run establishment and should be an example for others. Enjoyed once a week for the last year and will continue. Notice that numerous children and visitors have enjoyable time with all on offer.	
Parks	Thank you very much for sorting out the trees and - very happy with the work they are carrying out.	
Legal and Democratic Services	Legal	There aren't the words to fully express my gratitude to the four of you for getting the loan over the line. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!!
	Legal	Proof of Life doc. "I much appreciated your understanding with regard to my paperwork".
Waste Management and Property Services	Refuse	Thank you for emptying dog bins on the banks of the river linnet so promptly.
	Refuse	Thank you, resident's keys retrieved from drain.
	Refuse	Thanks to crew from resident who we had long email exchanges with but all items collected okay on the day.
	Refuse	Thank you for your excellent collection service of larger waste items. It was quick,

Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	courteous and efficient.
Refuse	Letter expressing gratitude to very helpful lady for getting bin emptied for son.
Refuse	Mum of resident phoned in to thank you for removing the waste and upsizing the bin.
Refuse	Resident rang to thank office for arranging the removal of cuttings from around their property so promptly.
Refuse	Special mention - brown collection excellent also very happy with black and blue.
Refuse	Email from resident thanking us for removing a mattress the following day.
Refuse	Thank you for changing over the bins for new/different sizes as requested.
Refuse	(Havebury) the clearance of the property would've been no easy task but the two gentlemen were relentless in their efforts to clear the property and worked endlessly.
Refuse	Resident phoned in to say that you for the prompt response to clear away the polystyrene in the road.
Refuse	Resident would like to thank the refuse guys for picking up the sacks that were missed last week, he thinks they do a wonderful job.
Refuse	For the crews who empty in this area for being patient and polite when other road users are often impatient and mount the pavement to get past.
Refuse	Collection of confidential waste bag - thank you for such an excellent speedy service.
Refuse	Thank you for clearing leaves - sweeper did a fantastic job and for giving residents bags to help collect leaves.
Refuse	Resident would like to thank the crew for a quick repair on their bin.
Refuse	The bin men this morning were superb when we fetched our bin in and looked up the street, each bin was so neatly placed against the garden walls and anyone with a pushchair would have had no trouble in getting past while staying on the pavement.
Refuse	Resident phoned in to say thank you for doing such a good job of sweeping and clearing away the leaves etc.
Refuse	Would like to thank everyone for the prompt service in replacing his blue bin.
Refuse	Resident would like to thank the blue and brown crews for the empty of bins in such icy conditions.
Refuse	Resident has called back to say what wonderful service, the dog mess was all gone the next time she looked.
Refuse	Thank you very much - Dettingen way has been de-littered!! - only the bits they couldn't reach high up in brambles remain. Much improved.
Refuse	Thank you for the prompt action taken with regard to insurance claim on damaged brick pillar.
Cleansing	Thank you and pass on my appreciation for the excellent service we received from the Trade Refuse department today. Our large wheelie bin was set on fire over the weekend

Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	and our collection was due this morning.
Cleansing	I refer to my telephone call yesterday about the amount of rubbish in the York Road. It was cleaned today. I congratulate you on your very efficient response.
Cleansing	Many thanks the hill looks much better this morning, just one jewelled bottle of something glinting in the grass. Thank your team for their efforts.
Landscapes	Thank you both for your active assistance in attempting to halt progress of asphalt in Haverhill - your very rapid responses were much appreciated
Landscapes	Just moved into the area and very impressed with the grass cutting.
Landscapes	Thank you for the beautiful work carried out the area always looks lovely.
Landscapes	Thank you so much for chasing up delivery of Christmas tree it was beyond the call of your remit and much appreciated.
Landscapes	The hanging baskets look really great.
Landscapes	Thank you for sorting out the cutting of the hedge yesterday.
Landscapes	The guys did a great job removing all the garden waste. Thank you.
Landscapes	Thank you and your workers for cutting back the shrubs next to my house. They worked extremely hard and were polite and efficient. I was very impressed with the standard of their work.
Landscapes	Thank you for your quick response.
Landscapes	Clearing leaves off footpath - thank you so much for your prompt response.
Landscapes	Thank you for clearing the leaves so promptly - they are doing a good job.
Landscapes	Thank you very much for clearing the undergrowth around the car park. They have done a very good job and cleaned up the leaves as well!
Landscapes	The banners look great - thanks - all credit you.
Landscapes	Thanks to all the team for a magnificent effort over the weekend.
Landscapes	Hospital employed the services of The Landscapes Team a number of times over the last year. I just wanted to highlight to you I am extremely pleased with the level of service I receive, the leader and his team always have Health and Safety as a priority and the workmanship is to a high standard.
Landscapes	Many thanks for your prompt action - this is much appreciated.
Landscapes	Thank you so much for clearing the ivy off the footpath.
Landscapes	A lady who regularly visits the cemetery coming from Sudbury, said she was very impressed with the appearance of the grounds that the operatives must work very hard.
Landscapes	Resident phoned in with thanks and was very impressed with quick action taken.
Landscapes	Thank you for arranging the work. The gang were wonderful and the work carried out was excellent. Nothing was too much trouble and they were a pleasure to have on site.

Service	Compliment / Comment Details
Landscapes	What a great job the men did in the cemetery this morning clearing the roads and making a pathway to the graves. Both the funeral director and the minister commented on how well the area had been cleared - the minister even mentioned it as the beginning of his service to the family. Please pass on my thanks to all involved.
Landscapes	Once again thank you for your swift response in lowering the gate.
Landscapes	Thank you so much for your investigations into this matter and getting back to me so quickly and keeping me informed.
Landscapes	Thank you for cutting it is much appreciated.
Landscapes	Your assistance is very much appreciated.
Landscapes	Thank you so much for sending this over so quickly, I wish all my clients were so efficient when it comes to raising p/o numbers!
Landscapes	Delighted that Landscapes operatives acted so promptly and retrieved his glasses from the drain.