



Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee 27 November 2013

Biannual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Digest

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 27 complaints were received between April and September this year. This compares to 21 during the same period last year.
- 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 73 compliments which have been received across the authority during the reporting period (April to September).

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. Corporate priorities

- 3.1 The recommendation meets the following, as contained within the Corporate Plan:

Corporate priority 3: 'Working together for an efficient council'

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 2012/13 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 2012/13. 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 2012/2013 the LGO received 12 complaints about St Edmundsbury Borough Council (nine were not upheld and three were partly upheld). This compares to the average for borough councils of 10 complaints each year.

6. Complaints

- 6.1 Complaints received and speed of response:

27 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
April 2013 – September 2013 (half year)			
Step 1	18	13	72%
Step 2	9	7	78%
October 2012 – March 2013 (half year)			
Step 1	23	15	65%
Step 2	13	9	69%
April 2012 – March 2013 (full year)			
Step 1	37	26	68%
Step 2	20	14	70%

Analysis of corporate complaints received by Head of Service

Service	April 2013	May 2013	June 2013	July 2013	Aug 2013	Sept 2013	Total complaints received
Housing	1				1		2
Legal and Democratic Services	1		1		1		3
Leisure, Culture and Communities		1			1		2
Planning and Regulatory Services	6	3		2	1	2	14
Policy, Communications and Customers			2				2
Resources and Performance (including ARP)		1	1		1	1	4
Monthly Totals	8	5	4	2	5	3	27

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, 73 compliments were received.

Service	Total written compliments received
Housing	1
Legal and Democratic Services	1
Leisure, Culture and Communities	32
Planning and Regulatory Services	5
Policy, Communications and Customers	1
Waste Management and Property Services	33
TOTAL	73

- 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)*

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

Appendix A – Corporate Complaints (April – September 2013)

Appendix B – Compliments (April – September 2013)

APPENDIX A

Corporate Complaints – April to September 2013

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Housing	Housing	Actions of housing officers on the telephone	Complaint not upheld. Housing Officers acted correctly on both occasions. Offer of assistance to support complainant with the bidding process.
	Housing	Dissatisfied with application for housing.	Complaint not upheld. Home-link application actioned when received.
Legal and Democratic Services	Legal	Accuracy of a committee minute.	Complaint not upheld, an accurate and correct record of the meeting was noted and ratified.
	Legal Step 2	Requested a review of a response to various issues relating to councillors, committees and policies	The complaint is not upheld. Satisfied that no intention to mislead or sway the views of individuals at meeting.
	Democratic Services	Dissatisfied with Councillor's response to letter and Council's failure to consider residents views in consultation document	An apology given for late response, but data provided was accurate and procedures correctly followed.
Leisure, Culture and Communities	Culture	Abbeyfest and refusal by promoter of entry into the Abbey Gardens	Complaint upheld and apology given to complainant. Procedure clarified with the promoter.
	Culture Step 2	Local Amenity Land in Bury St Edmunds	Complaint not upheld. Adequate information given regarding restrictive covenants.
Planning and Regulatory Services	Planning	Information supplied by Enforcement Officer	Apologies given for the length of time taken to respond to complaint. Clarity given regarding the legislation and the basis on which decisions are made.
	Planning	Process of uploading planning application documents to council website.	Complaint upheld and apologies given. Errors occurred at the scanning process, checks were made and no other incorrectly filed documents.
	Planning	Lack of information relating to planning application of an adjoining property.	Complaint not upheld. There was also no requirement for a site notice to be posted in this particular case.
	Planning	Responses to Rural Vision 2031 document	Complaint not upheld but explanation provided as to

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
			the consultation process and feedback. Role of the Planning Inspector also explained.
	Planning Step 2	Council's handling of listed building application	Complaint partly upheld. Acknowledged that the response to the step 1 had been brief and failed to advise complainant of policies and/or guidelines against which conclusions reached.
	Planning Step 2	Planning application decision	Complaint not upheld, decision based on sound planning grounds.
	Planning Step 2	Review of Freedom of Information (FOI) decision	FOI request reviewed and considered in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.
	Planning Step 2	Actions of the planning department	Complaint not upheld. Council has acted professionally
	Planning	Lack of advice regarding conservation issues.	Complaint not upheld, advice provided was appropriate.
	Regulatory Services	Complaint against action of an Environmental Health Officer	Complaint not upheld. However, apologies given for late response to issues
	Regulatory Services Step 2	Review of FOI decision to withhold information regarding restaurant	Request for information was correctly considered in accordance with the requirements of the Act.
	Regulatory Services Step 2	Safety of electrical installation	Complaint not upheld. Satisfied inspections have been carried out by persons who are competent to do so in accordance with the current relevant statutory requirements
	Regulatory Services	Enquiries relating to Animal Welfare Act	Complaint upheld in regard to lack of response from Licensing Team and apology given. However, concerns regarding licensing conditions not upheld.
	Regulatory Services	Administration of a taxi license.	Complaint partly upheld as some potential inconsistency has arisen in respect of permissible passenger numbers in multi-passenger vehicles. Complaint not upheld in relation to re-issuing licence for six passengers.

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Policy, Communications and Customers	Customer Service	Failure to respond to Step 2 complaint within timescale/breach of internal complaints procedures	Complaint partly upheld. Acknowledged that no confirmation received from the complainant regarding extension of deadline. Confirmed that procedures have been reviewed.
	Communications	Complaint about signage at Low Emissions Car Park	Complaint not upheld. Signs are adequate and the car park's status as a low emission car park are clear.
Resources and Performance (including ARP)	Resources	Council Tax Billing reminder	Complaint not upheld. Reminder notices include a statement that reminder may have coincided with payments being received.
	Resources	Payment of Housing Benefit to tenant and not a landlord	Complaint not upheld. Tenant is responsible for making payment to the landlord, not the Council.
	Resources	Payment of a benefit to an ex-tenant	Complaint not upheld. This is a tenancy matter between tenant and landlord.
	Resources Step 2	Requested a review of an FOI response relating to national non-domestic rate information	Satisfied that the information requested is no longer held by the Council or Anglia Revenues Partnership.

APPENDIX B

Compliments – April to September 2013

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
Housing	Housing	Customer rang thanking everyone concerned as her grand-daughter has been rehoused.
Legal and Democratic Services	Legal	Thank you for the prompt amendment to the agreement and for expediting payment.
Leisure, Culture and Communities	Culture	Customer wished to say what an excellent evening they had.
	Culture	Thank you to staff from performers for making them feel very welcome and for advice given.
	Culture	Big thanks to all the staff there for a fantastic and really successful evening.
	Culture	Performer really enjoyed playing at Apex and wouldn't have come out and sung if he hadn't had such a good time. Felt really looked after and commended security for being "incredible".
	Culture	Thank you we all thoroughly enjoyed the concert
	Culture	Can I congratulate you for the booking for last Sunday evening. It was a superb gig. The advent of The Apex has made a big improvement to the quality of my life.
	Culture	Congratulations on your excellent facility and also the charming and helpful reception staff. We enjoyed the show on Saturday evening. It was a wonderful evening, with great music and dance. Thank you.
	Culture	My wife, sister, and I enjoyed a great evenings entertainment.
	Culture	Thank you again for helping me with the vinyl record after the show. You helped making a good evening into a fantastic evening for my wife and I. The vinyl will go in my collection.
	Culture	A huge thank you to you and your staff for allowing us to use the Apex for our music event. It was very successful and well received by our audiences.

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	Culture	Thank you for a lovely time and for the donation of a raffle prize.
	Culture	We were very impressed with the theatre and thoroughly enjoyed the concert.
	Culture	We went to the music recital and all came away really buzzing and uplifted. A great success all round and a brilliant idea to have a short morning taster session for the forthcoming season.
	Culture	Huge thanks to whole team and compliments on the venue.
	Culture	We were very impressed by the beautifully designed and functional amenity.
	Culture	I would like to thank you and your team for looking after us yesterday. The room was perfect and hope we can come back again in the future.
	Culture	We had a visit to the Abbey Gardens today and I just had to pass on congratulations to all involved on a truly magnificent display. We regularly visit and each time we are amazed at the display. The hanging baskets in the town also enhance the pleasure of a visit to a lovely market town. Congratulations and keep it up.
	Culture	We really enjoyed the Gardens. Thank you also for taking the trouble to email regarding the name of the tree.
	Culture	Congratulations to your department on once again making a beautiful flower display in the Abbey Gardens.
	Culture	Beautiful gardens - well done.
	Culture	Thank you for the work you have done to fence off the park and for the work you are doing to plant more trees in the park. It is definitely going to enhance the area. Many thanks indeed.
	Culture	I would like to thank you again for the support shown to us, and the things that are being done to improve the area for everyone, it is very much appreciated.
	Culture	Thank you for taking on board my comments. Two of your men came out this morning and moved the sign. They were very pleasant and worked well.
	Culture	I can't thank you enough for Parks Officer and Councillor attending our open garden event. Thank you! Thank you!

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	Culture	Wanted to say a massive thank you for getting this [signs] finally sorted out.
	Culture	Please pass on my thanks for the Abbey Gardens team. The flower borders looked amazing, the Abbey ruins are of course impressive, but what really impressed us are the new developments there. The revamped kids' play area, with water pump, sand pit, cycle merry-go-round etc is just brilliant, but also the natural features like the willow arches, log pile wall and seaside planting round the sand area, wonderful.
	Culture	We had a wonderful day at the park yesterday. Thank you for all the thought and effort that went in to making the day so special.
	Culture	Congratulations to your department on once again making a beautiful flower display in the Abbey Gardens.
	Culture	Wanted to say a massive thank you to for allowing us to use the park on Sunday. I would be very grateful if you could pass my thanks on.
	Culture	My concerns about the security of an area of park were well handled and steps were speedily taken to secure the area. The area was secured using sympathetically styled measures. I think the council dealt brilliantly with the whole situation.
	Culture	I was absolutely amazed at the very fine display of flowers, the finest I have ever seen there over several years.
	Culture	For this park event staff are always there with a friendly smile and will go out of their way to answer all questions. Thank you St Edmundsbury for giving us the chance for a very enjoyable day out.
Planning and Regulatory Services	Regulatory Services	Thank you very much for all the help you have given me over the past months regarding issues with noisy neighbours.
	Regulatory Services	Thank you for your assistance with regard to the funding for my new wet room. It has made a tremendous difference to my life.
	Planning	Thank you for your very helpful reply and well done for making sense of my vague descriptions.
	Planning	Your officer was very helpful in enabling us to find what we needed. Please pass on our thanks.
	Planning	Thank you so much for the information which helps greatly. Your prompt assistance has been really appreciated by myself and the purchasers.
Policy	Customer Services	Thank you for the excellent service received from all the front facing staff in reception.

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
Communications and Customers		
Waste Management and Property Services	Waste Management	Resident was very concerned when needles found in a bush. Officer who called was very helpful and a credit to the council.
	Waste Management	Thanks for siting of much needed dog bin and also to member of staff for taking time to do this. It was much appreciated.
	Waste Management	Thanks for an extraordinary trade waste service. Appreciation for you taking the trouble to call in.
	Waste Management	Letter thanking us regarding recycling and confirming commitment at all levels to recycling.
	Waste Management	Email received praising trade waste.
	Waste Management	Company sent e-mail praising trade waste.
	Waste Management	Thank you to the two men from Haverhill who collected a dead badger and fox.
	Waste Management	Resident wished to thank us for the prompt service in changing his damaged bins.
	Waste Management	Thanks for the skip service and cleansing crews.
	Waste Management	Resident phoned in to say thank you to every one involved in collecting the dead deer so quickly.
	Waste Management	Resident would like to thank the crew for mending his bin.
	Waste Management	Thank you for clearing one of the traveller sites - it reminds us how much we need and appreciate you.
	Waste Management	Thanks to the brown bin crew's help, it was much appreciated.
	Waste Management	Thank you for prompt and courteous service in relation to the removal of a black bin.
Waste Management	Resident phoned requesting that their thanks go to brown bin crew for being so helpful.	

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	Waste Management	Resident wanted to thank the crew who carried out her bin exchange.
	Waste Management	Brown bin was emptied on Friday. Many thanks to you and your team.
	Waste Management	Thanks from resident for friendly assistance received from crew in giving directions. They should be commended.
	Waste Management	Resident from Hardwick Lane wished to thank the crew member who handed his remote control for the garage into a shop in the street.
	Waste Management	Thank you to your wonderful team for going out of their way to empty my bin. Keep up the good work and put council tax up so you all get a pay rise.
	Waste Management	Would like to thank department for quick and positive response, and bin has now been emptied. Thank you.
	Landscapes	The grass edges look beautiful. My weekend visitors commented how beautiful the area looked.
	Landscapes	Re: broken hanging basket. Thanks for a great, very speedy reply and sorting out the problem.
	Landscapes	Thank you so much for arranging the grass cutting so quickly the area looks lovely.
	Landscapes	Thank you so much for cutting the hedge.
	Landscapes	Grass and strimming looks beautiful. The village looks wonderful.
	Landscapes	Thanks for cutting back the trees so quickly.
	Landscapes	Thanks for cutting the grass and hedge so quickly.
	Landscapes	Very pleased with the mowing of the Bat Field, thank you ever so much!
	Landscapes	Thanks to the team that quickly tidied up the hedge. Really appreciate your assistance.
	Landscapes	Writing to commend you on the courtesy and efficiency of your staff. I was so impressed by the efficient way you dealt with a potentially dangerous situation with the utmost courtesy and consideration. Well done to all your staff. Please pass on my thanks.

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	Landscapes	A big thank you for the work you have put into the displays in Haverhill. They are always good but this year they are better than ever.
	Landscapes	Thank you for putting in posts and gate so quickly.

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