



Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee 21 May 2014

Biannual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Digest

1. Summary and reasons for recommendations

- 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 22 corporate complaints were received between October 2013 and March 2014. This compares to 36 during the same period last year.
- 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 60 compliments which have been received across the authority during the reporting period.

2. Recommendations

- 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. Strategic priorities

- 3.1 Monitoring complaints and compliments supports the delivery of the West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014-16.

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 corporate complaints procedure which is implemented if complaints are not resolved by 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 3 complaints about St Edmundsbury Borough Council. None of these were 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 received between October 2013 and March 2014

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, 60 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

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

9.1 None

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

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

Sustainability impact (including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)

9.3 None

Other impact (any other impacts affecting this report)

9.4 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.

14. Ward(s) 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

Appendix A

Complaints received and speed of response

22 corporate complaints were received between October 2013 and the end of March 2014. The table below shows how this compares with the previous six months and full 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
October 2013 – March 2014 (half year)			
Step 1	13	10	77%
Step 2	9	9	100%
April 2013 – September 2013 (half year)			
Step 1	18	13	72%
Step 2	9	7	78%
April 2013 – March 2014 (full year)			
Step 1	31	23	74%
Step 2	18	16	89%

Analysis of corporate complaints received by Head of Service

Service	Oct 2013	Nov 2013	Dec 2013	Jan 2014	Feb 2014	Mar 2014	Total complaints received
Housing and Environmental Health		1	1	1	1	1	5
Legal and Democratic Services					1		1
Leisure, Culture and Communities				2			2
Planning and Regulatory Services	1	2		4	3	2	12
Resources and Performance (including ARP)					1		1
Waste and Property Management					1		1
Monthly Totals	1	3	1	7	7	3	22

Appendix B

Corporate Complaints – October 2013 to March 2014

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Housing and Environmental Health	Housing	i) request for documents ii) correspondence posted to complainant and iii) rehousing issue	Complaint not upheld regarding i) and iii). Complaint partly upheld in respect of ii) where it was accepted it would have been beneficial for a covering note to have been enclosed
	Housing	Unhappy with the way housing application bid was processed	Complaint not upheld. Council responded appropriately to request for housing assistance.
	Housing Step 2	Consideration of claim for homelessness	Complaint not upheld. Satisfied that officers' correctly considered a claim for homelessness.
	Housing Step 2	Complainant unhappy with response to Step 1 and also issue of officer putting down phone and managers not being available	Complaint not upheld. Satisfied complainant being treated appropriately in relation to housing application and contact with the team
	Environmental Health Step 2	Environmental health department	Complaint not upheld. Satisfied that officers carried out all such reasonable and practicable steps during their investigation. Matters dealt with at Step 1 considered proportionate and appropriate
Legal and Democratic Services	Legal	Officer's behaviour at Development Control Committee on 2 January	Complaint not upheld. Correct procedure was followed. Explanation given of procedure.

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Leisure, Culture and Communities	Communities	Actions taken by the Anti-Social Behaviour team/Officer	Complaint not upheld although apology given where an explanation provided could have been clearer.
	Culture	Damage sustained to jacket in cloakrooms	Complaint upheld. Apology given. Procedures will be reviewed.
Planning and Regulatory Services	Planning	Handling of a planning application	Complaint not upheld regarding the various issues raised although apologies given for lack of response to a letter.
	Planning	Length of time taken on planning enforcement matter	Complaint partly upheld. Procedures and process explained, apologies given for delays and assurance that matter is being progressed.
	Planning	Planning application and query regarding planning permission for structure on site	Complaint not upheld. Planning processes explained to complainant.
	Planning	Officer's behaviour at SEBC Development Control Committee held on 2 January	Complaint not upheld and policy/process explained
	Planning	Unhappy with response to previous complaint regarding planning application	Complaint partly upheld. Apology given for the delay in initial response. Procedures and processes explained and confirmation that issue of website failure had been addressed.
	Planning	Planning Enforcement issue	Complaint not upheld. Each point of concern addressed. Matter handled in accordance with legislative requirements and powers.

	Service	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
	Planning Step 2	Breach of planning consent and failure of planning to deal with issues raised previously.	Complaint not upheld. The case Officer correctly considered the impact of the development on the residential amenity.
	Planning Step 2	Deficiency in the procedures used for planning applications	Complaint not upheld. Legal obligations and duties have been carried out.
	Planning Step 2	Unhappy with response received regarding single storey extension to neighbouring property	Complaint not upheld. Satisfied that case officer complied with all required legislation and procedures but a letter apologising for delay in response should have been sent.
	Planning Step 2	Officer's behaviour at Development Control Committee held on 2 January	Complaint not upheld. General planning advice supports the Council's procedures.
	Planning Step 2	Unhappy with Step 1 response relating to planning and enforcement	Complaint not upheld. Satisfied officers have acted professionally & competently & council has not acted ultra vires in seeking advice.
	Regulatory Services Step 2	Requested review of the Freedom of Information response that withheld personal information	Satisfied information was correctly considered in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.
Resources & Performance (including ARP)	Resources	Policy on charging 90% Council Tax for empty properties	Complaint not upheld and process explained.
Waste Management & Property Services	Waste Management	Street Cleaning in Haverhill before 7.00am	Complaint partly upheld. Apologies given for delay in dealing with customers issues. Agreement to run the cleansing route in a different order for a trial period.

Appendix C

Compliments received between October 2013 and March 2014

Service	Total compliments received
Housing	2
Legal and Democratic Services	1
Leisure, Culture and Communities	21
Planning and Regulatory Services	4
Waste Management and Property Services	32
TOTAL	60

Compliments – October 2013 to March 2014

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
Housing	Housing	Thank you for your help on the phone yesterday
	Housing	Very impressed with service. Received excellent advice and wanted to personally thank the adviser and congratulate the team.
Legal and Democratic Services	Legal	Customer admired how quickly the request was dealt with.
Leisure, Culture and Communities	Culture	A huge thank you – band singing the Apex’s praises for treating them so well
	Culture	Thank you so much for arranging the use of Studio 2 in the Apex .The workshop was a great success.
	Culture	Everyone was very impressed with the venue and thank you all for your work
	Culture	The programme range at the Apex is excellent. Thanks to all involved in making the venue such a pleasant place to visit.
	Culture	Thank you for hosting us at the Apex and for all the help and advice in the run-up to the event. Greatly enjoyed the experience of performing in the Apex – it’s a fantastic venue
	Culture	A huge thank you to the Apex. Due to age and incapacity I am unable to drive long distances. The varied shows at the Apex have been life blood to me. My musical experience has expanded as I will now often see acts on the off chance and have not been disappointed yet. The staff are so lovely and courteous to us older citizens. Keep up the good work and thanks again
	Culture	Letter of thanks to staff at the Apex for skilful and sympathetic dealing with first aid and also enjoyment of the concert and comfort of the venue.
	Culture	Thank you for everything at last Friday’s event, it ran smoothly, our thanks to the staff.
	Culture	Email of thanks to the Apex for great success of the customer’s event, thanks to staff for all their help.

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	Culture	A superb concert at the Apex, great atmosphere and large appreciative audience. The whole day ran smoothly due to the professionalism and helpfulness of all the Apex staff.
	Culture	A big thank for all you and your staff did to make the concert so effortless at the Apex. Nothing was too much trouble.
	Culture	Many thanks for your help and assistance. I have always found the Apex staff to be very helpful and look after their customers well.
	Culture	A huge thank you, you have very polite staff who are exceptionally helpful - much appreciated.
	Parks	The work in the woods has made such a difference to this area. Thank you very much it's looking good.
	Parks	A 'stonking' good job is being done by parks services at Clare Castle Country Park. Impressed with speed of response to requests
	Parks	Letter of compliment to staff on 'magnificent display of flowers in Abbey Gardens'
	Parks	Letter of thanks for dealing with diseased tree with respect
	Parks	(Abbey Gardens) A big thank you for all your help leading up to the event and of course on the night! Financially, this enables us to help more good causes and charities
	Parks	Letter of thanks for excellent improvement by parks service to footpath in the Great Churchyard 'an excellent job'
	Parks	Thank you for your help with advising us on the correct procedures to follow in order to manage the trees. Your visit was most informative.
	Parks	Thanks to ranger at Clare Castle Country park who helped clear a footpath so elderly Godmother could use it to get to church. Thanks to colleagues for quick action and helpful manner.
Planning and Regulatory Services	Planning	Thank you for pulling out the stops on this.... very much appreciate your co-operation
	Planning	Thank you again for your help and support on the application for the replacement dwelling
	Planning	Email expressing gratitude to two members of staff for the helpful and efficient manner in which they dealt with customer's planning application
	Regulatory Services	Customer thanked team for help and support over the years. 'it really has been a pleasure working with you and I believe it to have been a model industry-regulator relationship'
Waste Management & Property Services	Property Services	Email complimenting us on easy use of website for locating toilets plus high standard of cleaning at Abbey Gardens toilets. Further compliment for Jubilee toilets in Haverhill where attendant on duty was extremely helpful with disabled member of the group.

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	Property Services	Letter expressing appreciation for standard of cleanliness and condition of toilets at Haverhill bus station and East Town Park.
	Waste Management	Resident wished to thank the staff and operative who cleared the rubbish from the pavement in front of his house.
	Waste Management	Many thanks for arranging to collect my 'missed' blue bin today - great service.
	Waste Management	Resident very happy with her new blue bin delivered so quickly.
	Waste Management	Well done, on a very windy day with gale force winds, both blue and brown bins have both been emptied. Operative put the bin against a little wall to stop it blowing over. They are to be commended.
	Waste Management	Email saying thank you to the crew for leaving the bin that little bit further back from the road edge as requested.
	Waste Management	Thank you for the replacement bin and the service given by the Administration staff.
	Waste Management	Very pleased how quickly we came to pick up dead deer.
	Waste Management	Thank you for replacing black bin
	Waste Management	Thank you for arranging assisted collection - it all went smoothly.
	Waste Management	Resident has spoken to many councils and waste management had been the most helpful.
	Waste Management	Thank you for sweeping the yard so well and so quickly.
	Waste Management	Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year to you all. BIG THANK YOU for a year of great service!
	Waste Management	Thank you for attending so quickly and doing such a good job of clearing the lay by
	Waste Management	Very impressed with how quickly the area was swept and a good job was done
	Waste Management	Email received "I would like to take this opportunity to say that we are delighted with the collection service and support the drive to recycle as much waste as possible"

	Service	Compliment / Comment Details
	Waste Management	Thank you for clearing the big fly tip of bags so well.
	Waste Management	For taking all the sacks when the bins were emptied, thank you very much.
	Waste Management	Email received to say "Many thanks for an excellent job." (when paths swept)
	Waste Management	Thanks for the effort made to clear the footpath. It is much better & other residents have also commented.
	Waste Management	Thank you for the quick removal of the 'wandering' bollard.
	Waste Management	An excellent service from the skips. Can always rely on them to empty the skips, etc., with no fuss, and a brilliant service. It would be good to get service like this from all suppliers.
	Waste Management	Thank you for delivering the new bin so quickly.
	Waste Management	Thank you to the crews for coming back to empty brown bin
	Landscapes	Thank you very much for clearing the tree and other debris out of the River Linnet
	Landscapes	Thanks to the guys for the fantastic job that they did clearing the litter from Shakers Lane to the River Lark.
	Landscapes	A big thank you for removing bags of rubbish for a house bound resident.
	Landscapes	Thank you for the good job done on tidying the foliage
	Landscapes	Thank you for cutting the hedge back so quickly, it looks great
	Landscapes	Good job done on repairing the verge
	Landscapes	Thanks for clearing around our premises(trade) when we moved in