

Complaints and Compliments Digest

1. Number of complaints received and speed of response

26 corporate complaints were received between 1 April to 30 September 2014. The table below shows how this compares with the previous six months and full year at both councils.

Level of complaint	Total number of complaints 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 – September 2014 (half year)						
	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC
Step 1	6	12	4	9	67%	75%
Step 2	1	7	1	6	100%	86%
October 2013 - March 2014 (half year)						
	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC
Step 1	4	13	4	10	100%	77%
Step 2	5	9	4	9	80%	100%
April 2013 – March 2014 (full year)						
	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC
Step 1	13	31	9	23	69%	74%
Step 2	14	18	12	16	86%	89%

2. Monthly analysis of corporate complaints received by Head of Service

Service	Month										Totals
	May		June		July		August		September		
	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	
Housing				1						1	2
Legal and Democratic Services						1					1
Leisure Culture and Communities	1		1	2	1						5
Planning and Regulatory Services			1	1		4			1	1	8
Policy Communications and Customers		1		1							2
Resources and Performance (including ARP)		1		1					1	1	4
Waste and Property Management				2	1			1			4
Monthly totals	1	2	2	8	2	5		1	2	3	26

No complaints were received in April.

3. Corporate Complaints – April to September 2014

Service	Specific service area	Council	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Housing	Housing Options	SEBC	Dissatisfaction with response to Freedom of Information request seeking clarification from Council regarding time dog can be left alone	Complaint not upheld. No information recorded by the Council which meets the request made
	Housing Options	SEBC	Visit by council staff causing undue distress as visit unannounced and complainant felt intimidated by the officers.	Complaint not upheld. Information obtained as result of council staff visit has resulted in further action
Legal and Democratic Services	Legal	SEBC	Handling of covenant on land sold by Council.	Complaint not upheld. Council prepared to release covenant for a fee.
Leisure Culture and Communities	Parks	FHDC	Contractors parking on grass verge	Complaint not upheld. Satisfied that the Council has taken all reasonable and proportionate action within its power to address this issue.
	Parks	FHDC	Unhappy with handling of an enquiry to buy/lease some Council land which was subsequently leased to a local business	Council's position was clarified regarding land designated as public open space.
	Parks	FHDC	Tree adjoining property not removed as promised by Council.	Clarified Council's position – two trees felled near property in 2010. Copies of subsequent correspondence supplied to complainant.
	Parks Step 2	SEBC	Dissatisfaction with process used to renew sponsorship.	Complaint upheld and sincere apologies given. Procedure reviews to be undertaken in relation to how sponsorship is marketed.

Service	Specific service area	Council	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Leisure Culture and Communities	Parks	SEBC	Response to concerns raised previously regarding visibility issues on a roundabout and a tree belt at the rear of a property.	Complaint not upheld. An investigation had found no significant obscurity issues with the planting on the roundabout. It was agreed that no action would be taken at this time.
Planning and Regulatory Services	Licensing	FHDC	Response to email about licence application.	Complaint not upheld. Council could not give an opinion. To do so would have potentially undermined and prejudiced the application process. Apology given that this was not communicated.
	Planning	FHDC	Lack of communication and transparency regarding planning application for neighbouring property.	Complaint not upheld. Clarified and confirmed planning processes for considering applications. All relevant documentation available on website.
	Planning	SEBC	Complaint regarding application for dwellings, conduct of the Borough and officers, threat to a Scheduled Ancient Monument and treatment of archaeological issues before and after a meeting of Development Control Committee	Complaint not upheld. Archaeological matters dealt with to the satisfaction of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service. Satisfied that the Council maintains a proper public record. The process is considered to be open and accountable.
	Planning	SEBC	Lack of response to emails in relation to complainant's neighbouring property.	Planning and enforcement procedure explained and apologies given for lack of response to emails.
Planning and				

Service	Specific service area	Council	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Regulatory Services	Planning	SEBC	Lack of response to emails regarding a development site and unacceptable level of service.	Complaint upheld, apology given and pre-application fee returned.
	Planning	SEBC	Use of adjoining property and impact on neighbourhood and privacy. Details of the planning application should have been notified to ward members and neighbouring properties.	Complaint not upheld. It is considered the purchaser's responsibility to satisfy themselves as to lawful use of properties in the vicinity.
	Planning Step 2	SEBC	Lack of enforcement action for neighbouring business.	Complaint upheld The Council cannot take retrospective action and compensation to be discussed with the resident.
	Planning Step 2	SEBC	Request to escalate to a Step 2 as not satisfied with the investigation and answers to Step 1 complaint relating to planning application.	Complaint not upheld. No evidence to support allegations that the Council and its staff have failed to deal with planning application other than in accordance with legislative requirements and national guidance.
Policy Communications and Customers	Customers	SEBC	Surcharge levied for payment by credit card.	Complaint not upheld. The surcharge passed on to credit card customers brings St Edmundsbury in line with other councils and service providers. Other free payment options are available.
	Customers Step 2	SEBC	Request to review Step 1 response relating to surcharge levied for payment by credit card.	Complaint not upheld. The decision to pass on a credit card surcharge to customers was reached correctly and in accordance with legislative and constitutional requirements. There are alternative methods of payments available which will not incur a charge.

Service	Specific service area	Council	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Resources and Performance (including ARP)	Anglia Revenues Partnership	FHDC	Business rates for industrial unit which had been split into separate units – confusion over amounts payable.	Complaint upheld. Apology given and repayment method suggested.
	Anglia Revenues Partnership	SEBC	Increased Council Tax payment whilst property is empty due to care issues.	Resolved to the satisfaction to the complainant. Exemptions apply due to the circumstances of the case and any refund due would be made.
	Anglia Revenues Partnership	SEBC	Housing benefit being paid directly to tenant instead of agent.	Complaint not upheld. Entitlement of housing benefit belongs to tenant not landlord.
	Anglia Revenues Partnership	SEBC	Behaviour of staff to current occupier. Previous tenant had moved some years ago.	Complaint upheld. Reassured that no further contact will be made. Apology given and staff reminded of expectations and procedures.
Waste Management and Property Services	Waste	FHDC	Incident with refuse freighter driver.	Clarification of incident, actions taken and confirmed incident was reported to police.
	Car Parks	SEBC	Appeal to car parking fine and signage relating to blue badges.	Further information given on car parking fine and explanation of policy for blue badge parking.
	Car Parks Step 2	SEBC	Car parking fine – escalated to Step 2 as not satisfied with response to Step 1 and other letters.	Complaint not upheld. Satisfied sufficient information was available. Do not accept assertion that these rules only came into force following a change to the parking charges.

Service	Specific service area	Council	Complaint regarding	Outcomes and lessons learned
Waste Management and Property Services	Property Services Step 2	SEBC	Request to review Freedom of Information (FOI) response relating to wheelie bin noise and drop kerbing.	Review of issue relating to the wheelie bin concluded this was dealt with correctly. Regarding the drop kerbing, apologies were given for oversight on search. FOI coordinators will be briefed on ensuring extensive searches are carried out covering old/new processes and manual/computerised information in future.

4. Compliments received between 1 April – 30 September 2014

Service	FHDC	SEBC	Total compliments received
Legal and Democratic Services	1		1
Leisure Culture and Communities		2	2
Planning and Regulatory Services	1	3	4
Policy Communications and Customers		1	1
Waste and Property Services	13	38	51
Total	15	44	59

Compliments – April 2014 and September 2014

Service	Council	Compliment / Comment Details
Legal and Democratic Services	FHDC	Thank you to you and your planning colleague for your assistance with the application for our certificate.
Leisure, Culture and Communities	SEBC	Thank you for making our event a special day. Please thank others that helped.
		Thank you very much for your recent email informing us of the actions you have taken in regard to our concerns. We very much appreciate the time and effort you have put into this and the personal actions you have taken, which should bring about the required improvements. The park is looking spectacular at the moment and we look forward to visiting there as often as possible and therefore we are grateful for your speedy response.
Policy Communications and Customers	SEBC	Customer rang to say that the service she received was fantastic and that everyone learnt something about on line services.
Planning and Regulatory Services	FHDC	Thank you for pushing these searches through so quickly. This really helps as one of the searches was very urgent. Much appreciated.
	SEBC	Many thanks for your assistance and for your advice on the project to date. I genuinely believe that your comments have resulted in a better scheme overall.
		Thank you to you and your team for getting the search out for the above property in good time. It can be stressful implementing a new piece of software and doing the day job.
		I am incredibly grateful to you for turning this search around so quickly for me – it has probably saved my clients losing their property tomorrow, so thank you.
Waste and Property Services	FHDC	I would like to thank your team for a swift response, and in future I will not hesitate to contact you again if it happens again.

Service	Council	Compliment / Comment Details
Waste and Property Services	FHDC	Please pass on thanks for speedy clearance and for all helpful phone calls and advice – wonderful.
		Resident called to say how helpful staff were today, thank you for advice.
		Thank you again for coming on base and educating the base population about recycling. I think you made a positive impact today. Please pass on my thanks.
		Thank you for clearing the fly tipping so efficiently.
		Customer wished to pass on her compliments to the waste collection crew, in particular one young gentleman who is always polite and courteous.
		Thank you for replacing damaged bin and to keep up the good work.
		Thanks to the service for 240L brown bin.
		Thank you very much for delivery of new brown bin.
		Assisted collection – A compliment for the crew member on the domestic crew who collects and empties her bin. He is always helpful and friendly which makes a big difference to someone who spends a lot of time at home.
		Thank you very much, your efforts at clearing the mess and sweeping have certainly been appreciated.
		Resident phoned in to say thank you for returning to cut the grass and the guys did a lovely job.
		Thank you to the crew for making a good job of clearing the fly tip.

Service	Council	Compliment / Comment Details
Waste and Property Services	SEBC	Resident says thank you very much for wonderful service for bulky collection and in the past her bin service. She is now moving north and hopes they will have the same standard there.
		Phoned in to say thank you for the sacks we posted out and the bin delivered today.
		Thank the waste collection operatives for providing an excellent, efficient and courteous service.
		Resident rang to express her thanks to the crew that delivered her replacement bin, for a speedy and efficient service.
		For the whole team involved in replacing a missing brown bin.
		Compliment for delivering a new bin and is very happy with the service provided.
		Resident called to thank the crew for returning to empty the brown bins after access problems yesterday.
		Thank you for returning to empty missed black bin so quickly. Please pass on thanks to the crew.
		Really pleased with the work you and your colleagues are doing for the school. The standard and efficiency is far superior to the service we were receiving in the past.
		Thanks for sorting orchard mow - its amazing - those guys could not have done more to help; they really gave it 110%. They took brambles and dead wood from trees and removed metal etc which they uncovered.
Thanks for a job well done.		

Service	Council	Compliment / Comment Details
Waste and Property Services	SEBC	Customer reported missing blue bin and replacement delivered first thing. Wished to pass on compliments and gratitude for prompt service.
		Customer wanted to pass on some positive feedback. Waste team collected some heavy doors from her shed. The crew were very helpful, quick and nice people.
		The green looks the best it has ever looked, the man on the machine took the trouble to do in between the bollards, didn't use spray weed killer close proximity to the bollards and even finished off areas with shears.
		Various compliments on the underpass near multi-storey car park - planting, watering, new bins etc. □ Absolutely stunning progress has been made on this initiative. What a team for making our town look and feel environmentally so much better!
		Thank you to the crew that took his bin back in for him today.
		Customer wished to pass on her compliments to the grass cutting team who completed the work.
		Resident called to thank the authority for changing the bin so quickly and the crew for changing the bin over so quietly.
		Thank you for repairing his Brown bin so quickly.
		A customer called to say he was very happy with the service we provided this week while emptying the brown bins, as they were put back in the correct place.
Customer had a bulky collection today and would like to thank the crew for their help and says that they were very professional.		

Service	Council	Compliment / Comment Details
Waste and Property Services	SEBC	I'm pleased to report your new road sweeper is amazing. I have since heard it, but it's not as noisy. It even came down our street this morning and right outside our house, it wasn't as noisy as the previous sweeper when it went down Camps Road.
		For removing the fly tipped items.
		For attending so quickly and doing such a good job.
		For cutting the grass at Natters Wood as such short notice.
		Many thanks for all your help and for your team who do a great job in all weathers for us.
		I just wanted to say WOW the brown bin turned up this morning by two lovely men, what prompt service.
		Thanks for the prompt responses and site meeting. It was really good to work together with people with a "can do!" attitude to progress this potentially problematic repair for us. I can see from the picture you've sent me that this has been achieved.
		Phoned to thank the team for coming out to cut the hedge today. They are doing a great job.
		Resident is very pleased with how the bins are put back in the right place after being emptied and very happy with the fortnightly service.
		I would like to take the opportunity to praise and thank skip driver for his exceptionally helpful manner and the way he applies himself. I've never ever found him to be rude or too busy to help and he always returns my calls.

Service	Council	Compliment / Comment Details
Waste and Property Services	SEBC	Thank you for talking to resident and advising him which department / Council does what.
		Visitors from Utah searching for historic family graves - we were so fortunate to run into staff who did everything they could to help us locate the graves. We really appreciated their friendliness and willingness to help.
		Thank you to the landscape team for cutting the hedge back so quickly.
		Thank you for the recent good work done on the estate.
		Young Green Fingers Presentation - compliment for staff for being part of a very informative evening.
		Just wanted to say a quick thank you for getting the pitches ready for the new term. Our Principal is most impressed by your team so far.
		Compliment for attending and clearing away a fly tip so quickly.