

Report title	Complaints and Compliments Quarter 1 2024/25
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Department	Law and Governance
Exempt?	No

Synopsis of report:

To provide Members with a summary of the complaints and compliments received from 1 April – 31 June 2024 (Quarter 1 of the KPI reporting structure) and report any matters that have arisen since the last meeting of the Committee in July 2024.

Recommendation(s):

None. This report is for information.

1. Context of Report

1.1 The Council now maintains a database in Jadu recording formal complaints (and a separate register for those in which the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) has been involved), what they relate to and how they have been resolved. We maintain a similar spreadsheet for compliments. This report has been compiled largely with reference to the old corporate register as the new database deals with complaints registered from 24 June 2024 onwards. There is some data from the new software within the body of the report.

2. Report

2.1 The new Council's Complaints Policy as approved at the last meeting of this Committee defines complaints as ***'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.'***

2.2 Members will recall that service requests also have a new definition: ***A request that an organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision.***

2.3 Corporate Heads as our designated complaint handlers are responsible for ensuring that complaints are dealt with properly, consistently, in a timely way and that data is recorded accurately and in meaningful detail.

2.4 There were 39 entries in the corporate complaints register and 15 compliments recorded in Quarter 1 of 2024/25. From 24 June when Jadu went live we recorded a further 7 complaints, a further 9 that came in as complaints but were 'downgraded' to service requests, and one issue was dealt with by a 'general response' from Customer Services who answered the enquiry on behalf of the service area.

2.5 Complaints Quarter 1 2024/25

The table below sets out the figures for quarter 1 of 2024/25:-

Business Centre	Quarter 1
Assets and Regeneration	3
Community Services	1
Corporate Services	
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	6
Environmental Services	8
Financial Services	
Housing	26
Human Resources	
Law and Governance	
Planning, Economy and Built Environment	2
Total	46

- 2.6 An analysis of the complaints recorded shows that communication and delays in updating people with their service requests continues to be a theme.
- 2.7 The old Corporate Register shows 23 complaints were upheld or partly so and 9 cases were not upheld. This leaves 6 cases that are still in progress from the old regime or were dealt with but the register not updated as we moved into the new database. This should be less of a problem going forward with automated reminders from Jadu and escalations to the designated complaint handlers. One case was referred to another appeals process. The majority of cases related to Housing Repairs so a number involve the contractors.
- 2.8 Having more detail in Jadu should assist Members to have a better oversight of complaints and how they are handled. For Quarter 2 the format of reporting will be revised. In the meantime, the headlines for the short period from 24 to 30 June when Jadu went live shortly before the close of Quarter 1; are set out below (and included in the table at 2.4):

Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Service requests
6	1	8

The outcomes so far have been that responses have been provided in all of the cases; 3 upheld and 4 not upheld. There are no outstanding complaints from Quarter 1.

Upheld/partly upheld	Not upheld
Council Tax	Housing Repairs
Multiple missed bins on a new contract	Condition of property
Housing Benefit (Stage 2)	Fly tipping
	Housing Solutions

2.9 Members will see that the new ability to go down the service request route for something that comes in on the complaints form has been beneficial. To date, no cases have subsequently been re-activated as complaints. Service requests would only come back to this Committee's report if they were upgraded back to complaint status. It would be very time consuming to interrogate all the cases but an initial check shows that they do meet the definition of service requests.

2.10 If Members have any queries regarding particular service areas these can be referred to the relevant Corporate Head.

2.11 Compliments Quarter 1 2024/25

The table below sets out the figures for quarter 1 2024/25:-

Business Centre	Quarter 1
Assets and Regeneration	
Community Services	1
Corporate Services	
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	4 *1/3
Environmental Services	5
Financial Services	*1/3
Housing	4
Human Resources	
Law and Governance	*1/3
Planning, Economy and Built Environment	
Total	15

*One of the compliments was shared across departments.

2.12 The details, where staff were named or identifiable from the information provided, are set out in Exempt Appendix A.

- 2.13 Compliments for staff across the Council demonstrated helpfulness to residents, some of whom were in very challenging circumstances. Others praised the quality of work and highlighted examples of joint working between Business Centres and contractors.
- 2.14 The breakdown of complaints and compliments for Quarter 1 of 2024/25 by Ward is set out below (- denotes complaints and + compliments)

Ward	Quarter 1	
	-	+
Addlestone North	3	1
Addlestone South	5	1
Chertsey Riverside	2	
Chertsey St Ann's	6	
Egham Hythe	8	
Egham Town	2	
Englefield Green East		
Englefield Green West	2	1
Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South		
New Haw	1	5
Ottershaw	4	
Thorpe	2	1
Virginia Water	1	
Woodham and RowTown	2	2
Out of Borough	4	
Unrecorded	4	4
Totals	46	15

- 2.15 Recording complaints and compliments is a valuable tool for the Council to review performance and improve the delivery of services. Corporate Heads are encouraged to record compliments to provide a balance between positive and negative feedback.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The revised complaints policy was approved by this Committee in July and a review of the unreasonable complainant behaviour protocol is elsewhere on this agenda.
- 3.2 The Corporate Business Plan 2022 – 2026 is relevant to this process as handling complaints is at the centre of how we interact with the public. Our values include being customer focused, striving for excellence, improving services, promoting equality and diversity, and delivering excellent value for money. Our goals include

having satisfied customers. It is important that our processes are aligned with these strands of the plan.

- 3.3 The new Jadu software is an excellent tool for monitoring performance. Complaint handlers are encouraged to include notes to assist this process.

4. **Resource implications**

- 4.1 The Council does not have a complaints team. It is true to say that the workload has increased for complaint handlers and other trained staff that assist them. It is also important to acknowledge the significant contribution of colleagues in Digital Services to improving our processes.

5. **Equality implications**

- 5.1 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010. Section 149 of the Act provides that we must have due regard to the need to;

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- b) advance equality of opportunity
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share protected characteristics.

We should at all times act in a way that is non-discriminatory through our policies, procedures and interactions with people.

- 5.2 In the last reporting period there was one complaint that could be identified as relevant to age and disability and two where delays in processing applications or providing information where people had the protected characteristic of disability was identifiable from the information provided and two compliments where race and disability respectively were engaged.

- 5.3 Recent training from the Ombudsman clarified that we should record where reasonable adjustments have been made for people if they require them in order to resolve their complaint and this has been incorporated in the guidance to complaint handlers. A 'required' field has also been added to the complaint form to prompt both staff and customers to record this information.

- 5.4 Two training sessions with the Ombudsman have been held and positive feedback received by way of the 'Learning Evaluation Reports' produced by the Ombudsman after each event. Delegates mentioned the value of using a framework to respond to complaints which has been assisted well by the Jadu software. Delegates were reassured that as a Council we are moving forward positively in complaint handling.

6. **Legal, Environmental and Risk Implications**

- 6.1 None identified.

7. **Background papers**

- The Complaints and Compliments Registers and relevant (part exempt) emails on the Council's outlook system and anonymised information retrieved from Jadu.

8. **Appendices**

- Exempt Appendix A – Compliments received for individuals and teams