

Complaints and Compliments Quarter 4 2021/2022 (Law and Governance, Clare Pinnock)

Synopsis of report:

To provide Members with a summary of the complaints and compliments received from 1 January – 31 March 2022 (Quarter 4 of the KPI reporting structure), and report any matters that have arisen since the meeting of the Committee in January 2022.

Recommendation(s):

None. This report is for information.

1. Context of Report

- 1.1 The Council maintains a spreadsheet of formal complaints which have been recorded (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 and there is an overdue complaints register which helps us keep track of unresolved complaints.

2. Report

- 2.1 The Council's Complaints Procedure regards complaints as '*an expression of dissatisfaction about a Council service (whether the service is provided directly by us or by one of our partners/contractors) which requires a response.*' This is in line with the definition of a complaint that the Ombudsman recommends.
- 2.2 Corporate Heads are responsible for ensuring that complaints are dealt with and compliments recorded in a timely way and that entries on the central registers are accurate and comply with the General Data Protection Act. Service Requests, and people seeking information and explanations of Council policy are not generally regarded as complaints. Nevertheless, they should still be dealt with in a timely manner, be as helpful as possible to avoid a complaint being lodged subsequently and to maintain a high standard of customer service to our residents, businesses and visitors to the borough.
- 2.3 There were 17 entries in the complaints register and 26 compliments recorded in Quarter 4 of 2021/2022.
- 2.4 **Complaints Quarter 4 2021/2022**

The table below sets out the figures for Quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 of 2021/2022:

Business Centre	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Commercial Services	0	0	0	0
Community Development	6	4	0	0
Community Services	2	0	0	0
Corporate Services	0	1	0	0
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	3	0	1	0
Development Management and Building Control	3	1	3	1
Economic Development and Planning Policy	0	0	0	0
Environmental Services	8	4	4	9
Financial Services	4	0	0	0
Housing	8	8	12	7
Human Resources	0	0	0	0
Law and Governance	1	0	0	0
Total	35	19	20	17

- 2.5 Of the 17 complaints recorded, so far 1 has been upheld, 1 partly upheld, 3 not upheld and 4 are in progress or have not yet reached the deadline to respond fully to the complaint. However, there were 8 complaints for which a response is overdue in Quarter 4, and the relevant Officer has been asked for an update.
- 2.6 The complaint upheld came under the remit of Housing Maintenance and was regarding a tenant's property. This is being remedied through the provision of new facilities in liaison with the Contractor.
- 2.7 The partly upheld complaint concerned Development Management where we failed to notify a resident about their neighbour's planning application. This was most probably a technical fault which occurred when the notification radius was plotted around the application property.

Lessons Learned

- 2.8 Members have requested some analysis of complaints and compliments and how service improvements can be made using the data available and for this

section on lessons learned to be reinstated into this report. The following has been identified from information provided in the registers:

- To deal with service requests in a timely way to avoid delays
- Attention to detail and importance of dealing with complex enquiries in a clear way
- Responding to changing circumstances by reviewing decisions regularly
- Review notification procedures in Planning to identify any further checks/processes that could be put in place to prevent problem re-occurring

2.9 Compliments Quarter 4 2021/2022

Business Centre	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Commercial Services	0	0	0	0
Community Development	8	14	13	11
Community Services	1	0	2	2
Corporate Services	1	0	0	0
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	4	9	6	4
Development Management and Building Control	0	0	0	2
Economic Development and Planning Policy	0	0	0	0
Environmental Services	5	5	2	2
Financial Services	0	0	0	0
Housing	0	2	0	5
Human Resources	0	0	0	0
Law and Governance	0	0	0	0
Total	19	30	23	26

2.10 There were 26 compliments received for Quarter 4 2021/2022. The details, where staff were named or identifiable from the information provided, are set out in Exempt Appendix 'A'.

2.11 There were some compliments that were shared between teams such as Customer Services and the DSO, and the DSO and Community Development.

2.12 The breakdown of complaints and compliments in Quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 for 2021/2022 by Ward is set out below (- denotes complaints and + compliments)

Ward	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4	
	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
Addlestone North	11	1			1	2	2	1
Addlestone South	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	4
Chertsey Riverside	2		3		1	4	2	4
Chertsey St Ann's	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1
Egham Hythe	2	1	1	2	4		1	
Egham Town	3	2	2	2	2		1	1
Englefield Green East	3	1		2	1	1		
Englefield Green West	2	2	1	2	2			2
Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South		1	3					
New Haw	2		1	1			2	
Ottershaw	1	1	1	3	2	1	3	1
Thorpe	1	1		1				
Virginia Water	4			1	2	1	1	
Woodham and RowTown						2	2	
Out of Borough	2	7	1	9	2	6		7
Unrecorded	0	0	2	3		4	1	5
Totals	35	19	19	30	20	23	17	26

2.13 The year end total number of complaints is 91 compared with 118 in 2020/2021 and we recorded 98 compliments compared with 184 in 2020/2021. Over the two years 43 complaints (36%) were upheld or partly so in 2020/2021 and this has fallen to 23 (25%) for 2021/2022. We have implemented changes to processes and procedures which have led to improvements. For example streamlining forms and upgrading software.

2.14 Recording complaints and compliments is a valuable tool for the Council to review performance and improve the delivery of services.

2.15 Since the last meeting, there has been some interest from the Communications team in re-modelling the emails we send to staff receiving compliments. The Communications team has created a template certificate for us to use which would be also be accompanied by a letter to the staff/team on behalf of the Committee (to replace the current emails), which would be copied to HR so it can go on their file if they wish.

3. Policy framework implications

3.1 The Complaints policy and procedures are reviewed regularly to provide up to date guidance to staff completing the registers and to ensure reporting is accurate.

4. Resource implications

4.1 The registers are co-ordinated by an Officer in Law and Governance; on behalf of the Monitoring Officer, but time is also spent by other Officers, particularly in Housing whose input is much appreciated.

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) to 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 and procedures and interactions with people.

5.2 In the last reporting period there were 3 compliments which can be considered relevant to the protected characteristics of age and/or disability and religion and belief, and 1 complaint that could be identified as relevant to race.

(For information)

Background papers

The Complaints and Compliments Registers held on the Council's feedback drive and relevant (part exempt) emails on the Council's outlook system.