

Complaints and Compliments Quarter 1 2022/2023 (Law and Governance, Clare Pinnock)

Synopsis of report:

To provide Members with a summary of the complaints and compliments received from 1 April – 30 June 2022 (Quarter 1 of the KPI reporting structure), and report any matters that have arisen since the meeting of the Committee in May 2022.

This is the report which would have been considered at the July meeting of this Committee which was cancelled owing to the excessive heat at that time.

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 27 entries in the complaints register and 24 compliments recorded in Quarter 1 of 2022/2023.
- 2.4 **Complaints Quarter 1 2022/2023**

The table below sets out the figures for Quarter 1 2022/2023:-

Business Centre	Quarter 1
Assets and Regeneration	0
Community Development	0
Community Services	1
Corporate Services	0
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	2
Development Management and Building Control	0
Economic Development and Planning Policy	0
Environmental Services	8
Financial Services	0
Housing	16
Human Resources	0
Law and Governance	0
Total	27

- 2.5 Of the 27 complaints recorded, 10 were upheld or partly so, 9 were not upheld, 7 are overdue and the remaining 1 is in progress.
- 2.6 Members have requested some analysis of complaints and compliments and any emerging themes around complaints. There were 16 complaints about Housing related issues this quarter, which is higher than usual, but Members are asked to note that only 6 of these were upheld or partly so. These concerned the general condition of properties and after inspection remedial works were successfully undertaken and resolved. There were also issues relating to residential developments where residents in the vicinity have experienced noise and limited parking and the relevant contractors have been contacted to resolve accordingly.
- 2.7 Complaints that were not upheld also concerned the condition of properties, issues with neighbours and a number of Housing related policies and others where a third party was responsible.

- 2.8 There have been occasions where miscommunication between departments, has resulted in a complaint. For example, where each thinking the other had responded highlighting the importance of joined up thinking and clear communication with residents.
- 2.9 Complaints often arise because there has been a delay dealing with enquiries. This seems to be the case where teams are stretched owing to unfilled vacancies or other absences combined with the general volume of work experienced in business centres.
- 2.10 Other complaints were not about the team allocated on the register, but they were the main contact for the resident. In some cases the Council cannot resolve something until a third party has provided the information needed.
- 2.11 There were two complaints regarding the physical appearance of the borough, in places people thought they were looking tired and unloved, not being litter picked and lots of weeds growing in the drains. It is difficult to resolve these complaints with limited resources and shared responsibility with other bodies. However, Members will be aware that it is anticipated we will have more flexibility and joined up thinking once Grounds Maintenance is brought back in house.
- 2.12 If Members have any queries regarding particular service areas these can be referred to the relevant Corporate Head.
- 2.13 **Compliments Quarter 1 2022/2023**

Business Centre	Quarter 1
Assets and Regeneration	
Community Development	5
Community Services	1
Corporate Services	4
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	4
Development Management and Building Control	
Economic Development and Planning Policy	
Environmental Services	2
Financial Services	
Housing	8
Human Resources	
Law and Governance	
Total	24

- 2.14 There were 24 compliments received for Quarter 1 2022/2023. The details, where staff were named or identifiable from the information provided, are set out in Exempt Appendix 'A'.
- 2.15 There were some compliments that were shared between teams particularly Housing Maintenance and the Home Improvement Agency. It was positive to see Housing getting 8 compliments across the Business centre mainly for the care and attention paid by individuals and teams to our residents.
- 2.16 Because the scheduled meeting of this Committee was cancelled in July, all the compliments letters went out anyway with the approval of the Chairman to avoid a delay. We received some really positive feedback from staff and their managers who clearly appreciated being thanked for going above and beyond the normal day job.
- 2.17 The breakdown of complaints and compliments in Quarter 1 for 2022/2023 by Ward is set out below (- denotes complaints and + compliments)

Ward	Quarter 1	
	-	+
Addlestone North	4	3
Addlestone South	3	3
Chertsey Riverside	2	
Chertsey St Ann's	3	2
Egham Hythe	4	4
Egham Town	4	1
Englefield Green East		
Englefield Green West	1	
Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South		
New Haw	2	1
Ottershaw		1
Thorpe		2
Virginia Water	2	
Woodham and RowTown		1
Out of Borough	1	6
Unrecorded	1	
Totals	27	24

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

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.
- 3.2 A recent improvement to systems and procedures in Customer Services is the logging of complaints received via general enquiries to a case management software package. Staff then update this and share information with Officers who deal with complaints to provide an audit trail. This is useful when providing an update to the customer and issuing reminders on outstanding queries.

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 10 compliments which can be identified as relevant to the protected characteristics of age and/or disability, one complaint that could be identified as relevant to race, and another to disability.

(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.