

Complaints and Compliments Quarter 2 2022/2023 (Law and Governance, Clare Pinnock)

Synopsis of report:

To provide Members with a summary of the complaints and compliments received from 1 July – 30 September 2022 (Quarter 2 of the KPI reporting structure), and report any matters that have arisen since the meeting of the Committee in September 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 29 entries in the complaints register and 30 compliments recorded in Quarter 2 of 2022/2023.
- 2.4 **Complaints Quarter 2 2022/2023**

The table below sets out the figures for Quarters 1 and 2 of 2022/2023:-

Business Centre	Quarter 1	Quarter 2
Assets and Regeneration	0	0
Community Development	0	1
Community Services	1	0
Corporate Services	0	0
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	2	3
Development Management and Building Control	0	0
Economic Development and Planning Policy	0	0
Environmental Services	8	12
Financial Services	0	2
Housing	16	11
Human Resources	0	0
Law and Governance	0	0
Total	27	29

- 2.5 Of the 29 complaints recorded, 5 were upheld, 6 partly so, 10 were not upheld, 7 are overdue, for which an update has been sought, and the remaining one is in progress and has not yet reached the deadline for a response to be made.
- 2.6 In terms of identifying trends, within the Refuse and Recycling Service there is a continuing theme of multiple missed bin collections and disagreements with crews out on the streets as well as challenging the Council's Recycling Policy. One complaint was upheld where damage had occurred to a bin store. However, because this was dealt with promptly by the Supervisor who arranged for repairs to be made the next day the resident was satisfied their complaint was resolved. Of the remaining 4 complaints, one was not upheld at Stage 2 but an apology was issued for the delay, another 2 were upheld and partly upheld and resolved by Customer Services, and the last complaint concerned a decision made by the Engineering team which has now been reversed, when appealed.
- 2.7 Housing had 7 complaints from customers regarding staff or contractors, one was partly upheld and an apology issued for unintentionally offending the person making the complaint. The other 4 complaints related to property, one of which was partly upheld, but was multi-faceted with a number of issues to

deal with. As previously stated, Housing complaints do tend to have a number of factors involved and can be very emotive.

- 2.8 Human error led to two data breaches in the same section (in a different business centre), which were reported to the Data Protection Officer as required and no further action was necessary with the mistake being discovered very quickly and resolved.
- 2.9 The complaint handled by Community Development was not about that department, but they were responsible for the site and the problems were caused by third parties to residents and our Officers from Green Space assisted where they could.
- 2.10 Financial Services fielded a complaint involving an external third party, a delay in communication owing to various factors was a relevant element.
- 2.11 If Members have any queries regarding particular service areas these can be referred to the relevant Corporate Head.
- 2.12 **Compliments Quarter 2 2022/2023**

Business Centre	Quarter 1	Quarter 2
Assets and Regeneration		
Community Development	5	5
Community Services	1	3
Corporate Services	4	
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	4	10
Development Management and Building Control		1
Economic Development and Planning Policy		
Environmental Services	2	7
Financial Services		
Housing	8	3
Human Resources		
Law and Governance		1
Total	24	30

- 2.13 There were 30 compliments received for Quarter 2 2022/2023. The details, where staff were named or identifiable from the information provided, are set out in Exempt Appendix 'A'.
- 2.14 Compliments were for efficiency, helpfulness, and care shown to residents and customers and quality of service provision.

- 2.15 The breakdown of complaints and compliments in Quarters 1 and 2 for 2022/2023 by Ward is set out below (- denotes complaints and + compliments)

Ward	Quarter 1		Quarter 2	
	-	+	-	+
Addlestone North	4	3	1	3
Addlestone South	3	3	4	3
Chertsey Riverside	2		2	4
Chertsey St Ann's	3	2	4	2
Egham Hythe	4	4	4	
Egham Town	4	1	1	1
Englefield Green East				
Englefield Green West	1			1
Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South			1	1
New Haw	2	1	4	3
Ottershaw		1	3	
Thorpe		2	1	2
Virginia Water	2		2	
Woodham and RowTown		1		
Out of Borough	1	6	1	7
Unrecorded	1		1	3
Totals	27	24	29	30

- 2.16 Recording complaints and compliments is a valuable tool for the Council to review performance and improve the delivery of services.
- 2.17 Departments are improving in terms of copying us into their responses to customers which makes having a good overview easier. This also provides an insight into the way complaints are dealt with and if best practice is being followed.
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 Since the last meeting, the Chief Executive has asked his Executive Assistant to organise an Officer Working Party to review complaint handling along with

some other service areas. Officers in Law and Governance have requested the opportunity to contribute to the review.

- 3.3 The new Corporate Business Plan 2022 – 2026 is relevant to this process as handling complaints is at the Corporate 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.
- 3.4 The final changes have now been made to the structures of Community Services and Environmental Services. As a business Centre, Community Development will no longer appear in the register but remains a discreet function within Community Services.

4. **Resource implications**

- 4.1 The Council does not have a complaints team. Work is co-ordinated within Business Centres by individuals with whom Officers in Law and Governance maintain a close working relationship to try and ensure complaints are dealt with in a timely manner and reporting of compliments is also promoted.

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 2 compliments which can be identified as relevant to the protected characteristic of age, 2 complaints that could be identified as relevant to race, and another 2 to disability. No complaints relevant to protected characteristics were upheld.

(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.