

Complaints and Compliments Quarter 3 2022/2023 (Law and Governance, Clare Pinnock)

Synopsis of report:

To provide Members with a summary of the complaints and compliments received from 1 October – 31 December 2022 (Quarter 3 of the KPI reporting structure), and report any matters that have arisen since the last meeting of the Committee in November 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 21 entries in the complaints register and 17 compliments recorded in Quarter 3 of 2022/2023.
- 2.4 **Complaints Quarter 3 2022/2023**

The table below sets out the figures for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2022/2023:-

Business Centre	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3
Assets and Regeneration	0	0	0
Community Development	0	1	
Community Services	1	0	0
Corporate Services	0	0	0
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	2	3	2
Development Management and Building Control	0	0	4
Economic Development and Planning Policy	0	0	0
Environmental Services	8	12	5
Financial Services	0	2	0
Housing	16	11	9
Human Resources	0	0	0
Law and Governance	0	0	1
Total	27	29	21

- 2.5 Of the 21 complaints recorded, 6 were upheld, one partly so, 9 were not upheld, 3 are overdue, for which an update has been sought, one is assumed withdrawn as the complainant did not provide any further information for us to review it properly and the remaining one had not yet reached the deadline for a full response to be made at the time of preparing this report.
- 2.6 Refuse and Recycling related to two cases of multiple missed bin collections and three service requests which became complaints regarding grounds maintenance.
- 2.7 Housing complaints related to the condition of a property, four were (including partly so) upheld; the remedy being to bring forward some improvement works. These were dependent on parts and contractor availability. The other Housing complaints were more complex and involved third parties; none have been upheld so far.
- 2.8 Human error led to a complaint regarding someone's record in Law and Governance; no further action was necessary with the mistake being discovered very quickly and resolved on the day it was raised.

- 2.9 None of the complaints regarding Development Management (Planning) were upheld. These concerned the outcome of planning applications being objected to and emphasise the importance of engaging with Planning at an early stage to avoid misunderstandings later on in the process.
- 2.10 The issues raised regarding Housing Benefits and Parking Enforcement were also not upheld as proper procedures and policies had been followed in both cases.
- 2.11 If Members have any queries regarding particular service areas these can be referred to the relevant Corporate Head.
- 2.12 **Compliments Quarter 3 2022/2023**

The table below sets out the figures for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2022/2023:-

Business Centre	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3
Assets and Regeneration			
Community Development	5	5	(now part of Community Services)
Community Services	1	3	
Corporate Services	4		
Customer, Digital and Collection Services	4	10	4
Development Management and Building Control		1	1
Economic Development and Planning Policy			
Environmental Services	2	7	7
Financial Services			
Housing	8	3	5
Human Resources			
Law and Governance		1	
Total	24	30	17

- 2.13 As with Complaints there were fewer compliments for the quarter. There were 17 compliments received for Quarter 3 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 staff across the Council showing compassion and being helpful to customers, many of whom were in difficult circumstances and/or dealing with distressing events. Some residents took the trouble to send in thank you cards and messages for individuals and were keen that they received some recognition for their hard work.

- 2.15 The breakdown of complaints and compliments in Quarters 1, 2 and 3 for 2022/2023 by Ward is set out below (- denotes complaints and + compliments)

Ward	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3	
	-	+	-	+	-	+
Addlestone North	4	3	1	3	1	
Addlestone South	3	3	4	3	4	3
Chertsey Riverside	2		2	4	1	1
Chertsey St Ann's	3	2	4	2	1	
Egham Hythe	4	4	4		3	2
Egham Town	4	1	1	1	3	
Englefield Green East						1
Englefield Green West	1			1	1	
Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South			1	1	2	1
New Haw	2	1	4	3	1	
Ottershaw		1	3			1
Thorpe		2	1	2		1
Virginia Water	2		2			1
Woodham and RowTown		1				
Out of Borough	1	6	1	7	3	2
Unrecorded	1		1	3	1	4
Totals	27	24	29	30	21	17

- 2.16 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 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.

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, recorded accurately and that reporting 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 was one complaint that could be identified as relevant to disability. This was not upheld. There was one compliment also relevant 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.