

### Complaints and Compliments Quarter 1 2023/24 (Law and Governance, Clare Pinnock)

#### Synopsis of report:

To provide Members with a summary of the complaints and compliments received from 1 April – 31 June 2023 (Quarter 1 of the KPI reporting structure) and report any matters that have arisen since the last meeting of the Committee in May 2023.

#### 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. 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 corporate 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 38 entries in the corporate complaints register and 18 compliments recorded in Quarter 1 of 2023/24.
- 2.4 **Complaints Quarter 1 2023/24**

The table below sets out the figures for quarter 1 of 2023/24:-

| <b>Business Centre</b>                    | <b>Quarter 1</b> |
|---|------------------|
| Assets and Regeneration                   | 1                |
| Community Services                        |                  |
| Corporate Services                        |                  |
| Customer, Digital and Collection Services | 2                |
| Environmental Services                    | 27               |
| Financial Services                        |                  |
| Housing                                   | 6                |
| Human Resources                           |                  |
| Law and Governance                        | 1                |
| Planning, Economy and Built Environment   | 1                |
|   |                  |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>38</b>        |

- 2.5 An analysis of the 38 complaints recorded shows that communication and delays in updating people with their service requests continues to be a theme.
- 2.6 Six complaints were upheld. A further 4 cases (across different business centres) were partly upheld, 5 cases were not upheld. This leaves 23 cases that are either overdue, still in progress or at the time of writing this report had not yet reached their deadline. The majority of these cases relate to Refuse and Recycling and Grounds Maintenance. Officers are working with relevant staff to improve the way complaints are dealt with, reduce the backlog, and improve the information on our website. It is fair to say however that some of the issues recorded as complaints were borderline service requests, so this is being monitored.
- 2.7 If Members have any queries regarding particular service areas these can be referred to the relevant Corporate Head.
- 2.8 **Compliments Quarter 1 2023/24**

The table below sets out the figures for quarter 1 2023/24:-

| <b>Business Centre</b>                    | <b>Quarter 1</b> |
|---|------------------|
| Assets and Regeneration                   |                  |
| Community Services                        | 4                |
| Corporate Services                        | 1                |
| Customer, Digital and Collection Services | 3                |
| Environmental Services                    | 5                |
| Financial Services                        |                  |
| Housing                                   | 4                |
| Human Resources                           |                  |
| Law and Governance                        |                  |
| Planning, Economy and Built Environment   | 1                |
|   |                  |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>18</b>        |

- 2.9 The details, where staff were named or identifiable from the information provided, are set out in Exempt Appendix 'A'.
- 2.10 Compliments for staff across the Council demonstrated where they went above and beyond to help our residents, some of whom were in very challenging circumstances. Others were grateful for help received, praised the quality of work and highlighted examples of joint working between Business Centres. and with partner agencies. One of these was reported via a Member of this Committee for repairs to Hummer Road Car park, for which a local business was very grateful.
- 2.11 At the last meeting, Members asked if we could publicise compliments on social media to balance any negative feedback. Officers in Communications have taken this on and from June they started posting compliments, naming members of staff who had given their consent. Not everyone is happy about being named; in this instance Communications have referred to their department.
- 2.12 Since the last meeting there has been a re-organisation in the Planning Business Centre, following the departure of the Corporate Head of Economic Development. The Business Centre, headed up by Ashley Smith, is now called Planning, Economy and Built Environment. The corporate registers have been amended accordingly.
- 2.13 Officers in Customer Services have now created a standard form to record complaints made over the phone. This ensures all the information needed to resolve the issue is taken and passed to the relevant service area promptly as well as to Democratic Services for inclusion on the corporate register.

- 2.14 The breakdown of complaints and compliments for Quarter 1 of 2023/2024 by Ward is set out below (- denotes complaints and + compliments)

| Ward                               | Quarter 1 |    |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----|
|                                    | -         | +  |
| Addlestone North                   | 4         | 3  |
| Addlestone South                   | 2         | 2  |
| Chertsey Riverside                 | 2         | 1  |
| Chertsey St Ann's                  | 5         | 1  |
| Egham Hythe                        | 3         | 1  |
| Egham Town                         | 2         | 3  |
| Englefield Green East              | 1         |    |
| Englefield Green West              | 2         | 1  |
| Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South | 1         |    |
| New Haw                            | 1         | 1  |
| Ottershaw                          |           | 1  |
| Thorpe                             | 2         |    |
| Virginia Water                     |           |    |
| Woodham and RowTown                | 5         |    |
| Out of Borough                     | 2         | 3  |
| Unrecorded                         | 6         | 1  |
| Totals                             | 38        | 18 |

- 2.15 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 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 Council is going to be looking at the corporate complaints process in the forthcoming months, led by Digital Services. This should not affect the policy

but will hopefully improve the process for both the customer and ourselves and provide staff with a comprehensive central database to manage complaints, service requests and other areas of work.

#### **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 were four complaints that could be identified as relevant to age, one to age and disability, and two compliments relevant to age and 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.