

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 11 January 2017

BY: Depute Chief Executive – (Resources and People Services)

SUBJECT: Customer Complaints and Feedback - Q1 and Q2 2016/2017

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report on the use of the Council's Complaints Handling Procedure for Q1 and Q2 (1 April to 30 September 2016).
- 1.2 To bring awareness to implemented and planned improved processes.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the report and where appropriate highlight areas for further consideration.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 East Lothian Council complies with the model complaints handling procedure (CHP) for local authorities introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO):

Stage 1 (Frontline Resolution) - Complaint dealt with at point of service within 5 working days

Stage 2 (Investigation) – Complaint investigated; acknowledged within 3 working days and response provided within 20 working days

If complainants remain dissatisfied after completing this process they have a legal right of appeal to the SPSO. Those complaining about social work issues at present have the option of asking for their complaint to be referred to a Social Work Complaints Review Committee (SWCRC).

- 3.2 Customer feedback is recorded on the Council's Customer Relationship Management system (CRM), which provides data on the types of complaints customers make about Council services, as well as complaint

handling performance. This system also records comments and compliments from customers.

- 3.3 The Council records and reports on complaints received by the Contact Centre, local area offices and the Customer Feedback Team. Service areas are encouraged to report complaints they receive through these channels to ensure recording is as accurate as possible.

This report covers all council services.

3.4 Q1 AND Q2 OVERVIEW 2016/2017

- 3.4.1 During Q1 and Q2, East Lothian Council received **626** feedback cases

This was made up of:

Stage	Complaint Q1	Complaint Q2	Compliment Q1	Compliment Q2	Comment Q1	Comment Q2
1	156	150	64	70	23	15
2	89	59				

- 3.4.2 Complaint **response times** were as follows:

Stage 1: 79% (124 of 156) responded to within 5 working days- **Q1**

66% (99 of 150) responded to within 5 working days- **Q2**

Stage 2: 92% (82 of 89) acknowledged within 3 working days –**Q1**

43% (38 of 89) responded to within 20 working days–**Q1**

57% (51 of 89) customers needed updated that we required more time to investigate their complaint however only **23%** (12) were advised this-**Q1**

80% (47 of 59) acknowledged within 3 working days –**Q2**

44% (26 of 59) responded to within 20 working days–**Q2**

56% (33 of 59) customers needed updated that we required more time to investigate their complaint however only **10%** (6 of 59) were advised this-**Q2**

- 3.4.3 Response times in 2016/2017 have not been as high as would be expected. Resource issues in the Customer Feedback Team have led to acknowledgements not being sent within 3 working days. It is expected a

steady increase in response times will be seen in Q3 and Q4 onwards now these issues have been resolved. Improved communication and working relationships are being embedded between Customer Feedback and Service Areas with a view to ensure more customers do receive a timely response in line with the CHP and their expectations.

- 3.4.4 Long-term it is planned that the CRM can be utilised to send automated reminders for open cases which further improves efficiencies and communication. Expected timeline for this is implementation is Q4.
- 3.4.5 Currently the volume of complaints taking more than 20 days to respond to is too high. If there are clear and justifiable reasons for an extension, this should be agreed with the customer and a revised timescale given. This decision should be taken by a senior officer. If the customer does not agree, the relevant Head of Service can approve an extension and set a new time limit, giving clear reasons for this to the customer.
- 3.4.6 **Appendix 1** shows examples of when an extension to timescale might be required.

3.5 Q1 and Q2 2016/2017 ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Complaint **outcomes** were as follows:

Stage 1: Q1 156 complaints

Not Upheld	31% (48)
Upheld	43% (67)
Partially Upheld	24% (38)
Moved to Stage 2	2% (3)

The service areas driving the volume of **Stage 1** complaints in **Q1** were:

Waste Services 29% (46)

Property Maintenance 15% (23)

Community Housing 12% (19)

Stage 1: Q2 150 complaints

Not Upheld	27% (40)
Upheld	45% (67)
Partially Upheld	25% (37)
Moved to Stage 2	3% (6)

The service areas driving the volume of **Stage 1** complaints in **Q2** were:

Waste Services 19% (28)

Community Housing 18% (27)

Transportation 13% (20)

Property Maintenance 12% (18)

Whilst **Waste Services** have a high volume of Stage 1 complaints this is a very small number in relation to the 130,000 customer service visits per week. Overall the complaints relate to bins not being uplifted or awaiting delivery of new bins longer than expected. **Waste Services** only had 1 complaint Stage 2 complaint in Q1 and Q2 combined. This reflects a positive handling of Stage 1 complaints. A review of how Stage 1s are handled will be actioned to see if any learning can be taken and shared with other service areas to improve front-line resolution.

Property Maintenance saw a decrease in complaints from Q1 to Q2. Complaints range from missed appointments to waiting for parts.

Community Housing has seen an increase in complaints from Q1 to Q2. Key drivers include the lack of housing and timescales as well as appointment times and updates for repairs. Further analysis is underway to address service improvements.

Transportation saw an increase from 3 Stage 1 complaints in Q1 to 20 in Q2. A deep-dive has shown there was no particular driver. Complaints ranged from parking to drain cleaning.

Please note the current process doesn't allow for the accurate recording of Stage 1 complaints that escalate to Stage 2. A process improvement is being implemented in Q4. Reported figures in 2017/2018 will have a confirmed accuracy as a result.

3.5.2 **Stage 2: Q1 89** complaints

Not Upheld	37% (34)
Upheld	21% (19)
Partially Upheld	36% (40)

Stage 2: Q2 59 complaints

Not Upheld	31% (18)
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Upheld	24% (14)
Partially Upheld	45% (27)

Economic Development saw an increase from 9 complaints in Q1 to 11 in Q2. 1 was upheld and 10 partially upheld. This reflects complaints received in relation to a project involving external contractors.

Engineering Services including Gas team received 13 complaints in Q1 with a decrease to 4 in Q2. Of the total 17, 12 were upheld. Repeating types of complaints are in relation to gas charges, failed appointments and level of service. Further reporting will be created to give further insight on the customer feedback with a view to create recommendations to improve the customer experience and reduce upheld complaints.

Property Maintenance received 16 complaints in Q1: 5 were upheld and 8 partially upheld. Issues raised by customers range from outstanding day to day repairs to level of service. A significant decrease was seen in Q2 with 2 complaints received though both were upheld.

Community Housing Stage 2 complaints are focused on the lack of housing and timescales as well as appointment times and updates for repairs. It is worth noting that the majority of the complaints in Q1 and Q2 are either not upheld or partially upheld. A further piece of analysis is underway to understand what parts of complaints are being partially upheld and look to reduce the complaint volume.

Property Maintenance, Community Housing and Engineering Services including Gas team are often interlinked. Customer Feedback is working closely with management of all 3 areas to improve processes with a view to give customers clear expectations from the beginning and reduce upheld or partially upheld complaints where possible.

3.5.3 **A table of all Service Area Complaints in Q1 and Q2 is shown in Appendix 2**

3.5.4 **64 compliments were received in Q1**

The following Service Area received a high percentage of compliments:

Customer Services 25% (16)

Adult Wellbeing 23% (15)

Property Maintenance 11% (7)

70 compliments were received in Q2

The following Service Area received a high percentage of compliments:

Customer Services 37% (26)

Adult Wellbeing 24% (17)

Property Maintenance 10% (7)

- 3.5.5 **23** comments were received for **Q1**
15 comments were received for **Q2**
There is no trend of comments specific to any one service area

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Financial - None
5.2 Personnel - None
5.3 Other - None

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix 1 CHP Extension to Timescale
7.2 Appendix 2 Breakdown by Service Area Table

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Appendix 1

Extension to the timescale - Not all investigations will be able to meet this deadline. For example, some complaints are so complex they require careful consideration and detailed investigation beyond the 20-day limit. However, these would be the exception and every effort should be made to deliver a final response within 20 working days. If there are clear and justifiable reasons for an extension, this should be agreed with the customer and a revised timescale given. This decision should be taken by a senior officer. If the Customer does not agree, the relevant Head of Service can approve an extension and set a new time limit, giving clear reasons for this to the customer. Examples might include:

- Essential accounts or statements, crucial to establishing the circumstances of the case, are needed from staff, customers or others but they cannot help because of long-term sickness or leave.
- You cannot obtain further essential information within normal timescales.
- Operations are disrupted by unforeseen or unavoidable operational circumstances, for example industrial action or severe weather conditions.
- The customer has agreed to mediation as a potential route for resolution.

Taken from Complaint Handling Procedure:

http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5896/complaints_procedure

Appendix 2: Customer Feedback Breakdown by Service Q1 2016

Directorate	Service Area	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Compliments	Comment
Health & Social Care Partnership	Adult Wellbeing	5	7	15	1
Partnerships & Community Services	Building Maintenance	1			
	Building Standards			1	
	Community Housing	19	15	2	2
	Community Housing Homelessness	2	5		
	Corporate Policy & Improvement	1		1	
	Corporate Policy Improvement Customer Feedback	1			
	Corporate Policy Improvement Web	1			
	Customer Services	5	2	16	8
	Economic Development		9		
	Engineering Services Incl. Gas Team	12	13		
	Environmental Services	3		1	1
	Facilities Management	2	2	2	
	Planning	2			
	Property Maintenance	23	10	7	
	Sport Countryside & Leisure	13	5	1	
	Transportation	8	4	2	1
	Waste Services	46		6	10

Resources & People Services	Children's Wellbeing		5	1	
	Council Tax	3		3	
	Education	4	11		
	Finance	1			
	IT			1	
	Legal & Procurement	1			
	Licensing Administration Democratic Services	1			
	Revenues & Benefits	2	1	5	

Customer Feedback Breakdown by Service Q2 2016

Directorate	Service Area	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Compliments	Comment
Health & Social Care Partnership	Adult Wellbeing	12	5	17	
Partnerships & Community Services	Building Maintenance	3			
	Building Standards	1			
	Community Housing	27	10	3	2
	Community Housing Homelessness		4		
	Corporate Policy & Improvement			1	
	Corporate Policy Improvement Customer Feedback				
	Corporate Policy Improvement Media	1			
	Corporate Policy Improvement Web				

	Customer Services	6		26	3
	Economic Development	2	11		
	Engineering Services Incl. Gas Team	10	6		1
	Environmental Services	2		1	
	Facilities Management	1	2		
	Planning		1		
	Property Maintenance	18	2	7	
	Sport Countryside & Leisure	14	4	4	
	Transportation	20	1	3	1
	Waste Services	28	1	4	3
Resources & People Services	Children's Wellbeing	1	3		
	Council Tax	3		1	1
	Education		8		1
	Finance				
	Legal & Procurement				
	Licensing Administration Democratic Services	1			
	Revenues & Benefits		1	3	1