

## **CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 17/18**

<b>Head of Service/Contact:</b>	Damian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer
<b>Urgent Decision?</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	N/A
<b>Annexes/Appendices (attached):</b>	<b>Annex 1</b> – Complaints received 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018
<b>Other available papers (not attached):</b>	None

### **Report summary**

This report summarises the volumes and reasons for stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3 complaints received from customers between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

### **Recommendation (s)**

- (1) That the Committee considers the findings of the annual report of customer complaints, which details complaints received between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

## **1 Implications for the Council’s Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy**

- 1.1 This reports details dis-satisfaction expressed by customers through formal complaints received between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. It relates to the Council’s Key Priority of “supporting our community” and Core Value of “customer focus”.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Council’s complaints process is underpinned by its Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that is used to log and provide an audit trail for all complaints received, case updates and responses provided to customers.

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- 2.2 Within the CRM system, all complaint cases are assigned to the appropriate department for resolution. Notification emails are then sent to the department to make them aware that a complaint has been logged for investigation and update as appropriate. This will result in either a direct response to the customer via email, phone or letter or a case update which Customer Services will then take ownership of, providing the customer with the department's response.
- 2.3 Until complaint cases are closed, the CRM system generates reminder emails which are sent to the responsible department and also to the department's Head of Service. Unresolved complaint cases will escalate to the next complaint stage if the relevant time scale is not met, or the respondent does not accept the Council's response.
- 2.4 On 3 January 2018, changes were introduced to EEBC's Complaint Process. These were a reduction of stages, from a 3 stage to a 2 stage process and an increased response time to 15 working days (it was previously 10 working days) for both of the 2 stages. The overall response time for complaints process remains at 30 days. Residents can escalate their complaint directly to the Local Authority Ombudsmen if they feel it has not been resolved at stage 2.
- 2.5 The Council's definition of a complaint is correspondence or contact that suggests that we have:
- Failed to provide a satisfactory level of service
  - Done something that we should not have done
  - Done something badly
- 2.6 Our customers are encouraged to give us feedback as this will help us to improve our services. Information about the Complaints Process can be viewed on EEBC's website and in paper format for staff and customers.
- 2.7 The Internal Auditor's audit of Corporate Governance (reported to this Committee on 19 April 2018) included a recommendation that an annual report on complaints received by the Council be presented to the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee. This report is presented to the Committee in line with that recommendation.

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## 3 Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that an annual report is presented to the Audit Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee detailing volumes, reasons for dissatisfaction and trends related to volumes. A quarterly report detailing this information and additional information related to average time to resolve covering all stages of the Complaint Process and enquiries received from the Local Authority Ombudsmen will be presented to the Council's Leadership Team.
- 3.2 Throughout 2017/18, there have been changes to the monthly reporting methodology for complaints which has resulted in some inconsistencies for the data recorded. Compiling consistent data monthly, quarterly and annually will provide an accurate picture of customer feedback (complaints, compliments and comments).
- 3.3 **Annex 1** shows the volumes of stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3 complaints by month, by stage, by service area and by reason recorded.
- 3.4 Information about enquiries received from Local Authority Ombudsmen is not included in this report as comprehensive data is not available for 2017/18. However, recent changes and improvements to the data recording process will lead to the information for 2018/19 being included in next year's annual report (and in a year-on-year basis thereafter).

## 4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 None for the purposes of this report
- 4.2 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

## 5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 5.1 None for the purposes of this report.
- 5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

## 6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 There are no particular community safety implications for the purpose of this report.

## 7 Partnerships

- 7.1 None for the purposes of this report.

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## 8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 Complaints monitoring provides a key monitoring indicator and assurance function that the Council is delivering effective and quality services to residents and businesses so there is a risk that if monitoring is not carried out service delivery could be unsatisfactory.
- 8.2 Detailed analysis of complaints received from customers will help the Council identify where service provision can be improved for all our customers. If this analysis is not carried out there is a risk that Service areas will not be able to identify areas of customer dis-satisfaction, ensure delivery of satisfactory services and prevent similar issues re-occurring in the future.

## 9 Conclusions

- 9.1 Looking at the information provided in **Annex 1**, there were a total of 1,103 complaints received during 2017/18, across all complaint stages, with 97% resolved at stage 1 of the process. This shows that Service Areas are dealing with their complaints successfully at stage 1.
- 9.2 Operational Services received 82% (902) of all complaints, mostly related to the area of refuse and recycling. It should be noted that last Summer a new collection service was introduced to properties throughout the Borough and this resulted in a temporary increase in complaints (175 in June and 141 in July) being received. However, the number of complaints has been reducing throughout the remainder of 2017/18.
- 9.3 The main reason recorded for customer dis-satisfaction is due to service delivery (79% of stage 1 and 84% of stage 2 complaints).
- 9.4 The recording of complaints on CRM currently has a category reason listed as "other", and clarity is needed to understand the use of this category. This understanding will allow improved data about the reasons for a complaint to be recorded.
- 9.5 Using the data held within CRM, clear reports detailing customer feedback/complaints will be passed to Heads of Service regarding performance of their Service areas on a quarterly basis during 2018/19. This will assist in identifying trends and areas of concern, particularly those related to repeat complaints/service failure. It will also enable a review of processes/procedures.
- 9.6 During 2017/18, a process was put in place within the Contact Centre to monitor the CRM complaint cases and prompt service areas to respond to the complainant within time scales. This was initially to assist service areas with the change of Complaint Process (3 stage to 2 stage), but will continue in 2018/19.

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- 9.7 During 2017/18, due to volume of complaints related to Operational Services (Refuse and Recycling) the Contact Centre introduced active monitoring of missed collection reports, liaising closely with Operational Services colleagues. This monitoring of missed collections is carried out for individual addresses for a period of 3-6 weeks. This process has helped towards reducing reports of missed collections becoming formal complaints. This monitoring will continue in 2018/19 and it is hoped that the downward trend will also continue.

**10 Recommendations**

- 10.1 It is recommended that the Committee receives and considers the annual report on complaints received by the Council during the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.
- 10.2 For the next annual report (covering 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, and to be presented to this Committee in June 2019), information detailing enquiries received from the Local Authority Ombudsmen and responses within the 15 working day target will also be included.

**Ward(s) Affected:** (All Wards);