

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2 JULY 2013

REPORT BY HEAD OF INFORMATION, PARKING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

8. REVIEW OF COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS APRIL 2012 TO MARCH 2013

WARD(S) AFFECTED: N/A

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- To provide a summary of comments, compliments and complaints received between April 2012 and March 2013.
- To highlight the key issues, remedial action and learning arising from these comments, compliments and complaints.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION: That:

(A)	The report be received; and
(B)	The actions detailed in the report be approved.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Council implemented the current corporate comments, compliments and complaints system (3Cs) in January 2009.

1.2 Corporate Business Scrutiny on 14 July 2009 resolved to receive an annual analysis of the 3Cs managed by the Council.

2.0 Report

2.1 Performance

The Council's performance 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 is summarised in the chart below:

Performance Indicator	Performance 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013 (2011/12 figures in brackets)
EHPI 5.1, % of	79.4% (62.5%)

<p>complaints resolved in 14 days or less</p> <p>2012/13 Target = 70%</p>	<p>Customer and Community Services – 89.5% (96.2%) Internal Services – 80% (83.3%) Neighbourhood Services – 58.3% (51%)*</p> <p><i>*The lower resolution rate in Neighbourhood Services reflects the additional time required in handling planning complaints. (10 cases escalated to Stage 2). All cases received acknowledgement and updates within the Council's Customer Service Standards.</i></p>
<p>EHPI 5.2a, % of complaints about the Council and its services that are upheld: 1st Stage</p> <p>2012/13 Target = 25%</p>	<p>36.5% (21.9%) (31/85 stage 1 complaints)</p> <p>Customer and Community Services – 38.4% (33.3%) Internal Services – 85.7% (69%) Neighbourhood Services – 14.2% (15%)</p>
<p>EHPI 5.2b, % of complaints about the Council and its services that are upheld: 2nd Stage – appeal</p> <p>2012/13 Target = 25%</p>	<p>0% (13.0%) (0/14 stage 2 complaints)</p> <p>Customer and Community Services – 0% (17%) Internal Services – 0% (50%) Neighbourhood Services – 0% (11%)</p> <p><i>Please note: All complaints progressed to Stage 2 (appeal) have already passed Stage 1 of the complaint process.</i></p>
<p>EHPI 5.4, % of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman that are upheld</p> <p>2012/13 Target = 0%</p>	<p>0%</p> <p>12 (17) complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman. None were upheld. 11 cases were not investigated, and one was deemed to be outside the jurisdiction of the LGO.</p>

The biggest increase in complaints upheld was within Internal Services. These reflect the significant increase in volumes of calls and correspondence within the Revenues and Benefits service

related to the welfare reforms. The increased volume has caused some delays due to longer processing times. A welfare reform action plan was implemented by Revenues and Benefits supported by Customer Services which significantly improved enquiry handling capacity.

2.2 Volumes

The volumes of comments, compliments and complaints recorded are shown below (please note that Stage 2 complaints are previously handled at Stage 1):

	April – June	July – Sept.	October – December	January – March	Total
Comments	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	2 (0)	4 (0)
Compliments	19 (21)	46 (20)	19 (22)	10 (31)	94 (94)
Complaints Stage 1	15 (19)	35 (11)	13 (17)	6 (15)	69 (62)
Complaints Stage 2	9 (3)	4 (7)	7 (3)	2 (8)	22 (21)
3Cs	44 (43)	85 (38)	40 (42)	20 (54)	189 (177)

2011/12 figures in brackets

The large number of compliments recorded reflects the use of the 3Cs system by Building Control to record their post visit survey results – 57 compliments logged. Housing have also had and logged number of compliments from clients.

The number of complaints the Council received this year increased slightly on last year. Customer and Community Services recorded a larger number of complaints in the first half of the year compared to the previous year. On investigation the number of complaints received within Waste and Recycling, Grounds Maintenance, Parking and Customer Services were higher than previously experienced. No single specific issue was identified as the cause for this in any of the services.

2.3 Source of Complaints

The chart, **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**, shows that customers prefer to raise complaints by e-mail (57%) and letter (31%). This is

a change from last year when more people chose to contact us by letter (45%) than email (40%).

2.4 Action taken following 3Cs

Improvement actions in response to issues raised in 2012/13 are shown in **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**. The key areas of complaint upheld were service delivery, when provided by a contractor (14 out of 43 complaints), followed by when provided by the Council. This reflects the fact that our high volume services are contracted out.

A summary of cause of complaints upheld and outcomes is shown by directorate in **Essential Reference Paper 'D'**.

2.5 Local Government Ombudsman

From April 2013 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) will publish all of the decisions on complaints on its website.

The LGO will not be producing an annual review of complaints this year as the way in which complaints are managed by the LGO has significantly changed. The Council is due to receive some high level information in July which will be distributed to members through the Members' Information Bulletin.

12 cases were decided during this period. No cases of maladministration were identified. The decisions made have been classified as follows:

Decision	No of cases	Service
Not to initiate an investigation	1 4 1 1 1	Housing Benefits Development Control Parking Grounds Maintenance Markets
Discontinue investigation	1 2	Democratic Services Development Control
Not in jurisdiction and discretion not exercised	1	Development Control

2.6 2012/13 Actions

Action	Outcome
<p>Trial the logging of complaints received via the authority's 'enquiries' email box to ensure the Council maximises the logging of complaints.</p>	<p>Complaints are logged from enquiry email inbox whenever possible.</p> <p>Customer Service staff were trained on inputting feedback on the 3Cs database but most Stage One complaints are received directly within the relevant service.</p>
<p>Refresh the website pages and customer feedback forms as these are the most popular way for customers to raise a complaint.</p>	<p>Improvements made to the feedback pages on the website</p>
<p>Remind staff of the importance of collating 3Cs information by putting an article in Team Update.</p>	<p>Staff were reminded of the importance of collating 3Cs information</p>
<p>Produce a retention procedure for the personal information held on the 3Cs database in line with council's Data Protection Policy.</p>	<p>Guidance was sought from the FOI Manager regarding a retention policy for 3Cs data. It was decided that data relating to personal details of a complainant would be deleted after two years but the topic of the comment, compliment or complaint would be retained to provide comparative data.</p>

2.8 Actions 2013/14

Objective	Actions
<p>Identify actions to increase use:</p> <p>Review Use of 3Cs procedure, its application in services</p>	<p>Commission audit by Shared Internal Audit Service to review use of 3Cs system in services and to request recommendations for actions based on review.</p>

Identify actions to increase use: Publicise results to all staff, promote use of procedure	Staff briefing on trends, to promote recording of 3Cs, compliments as well as complaints.
Identify actions to increase use: Workshop with 3Cs Champions	Refresher on role Discussion on use of 3Cs Promote work of champions in Team Brief and Update.
Support colleagues more: Refreshed intranet section on Handling Difficult Customers	Make supporting policy and forms easier to use for staff.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

Corporate Business Scrutiny Report – 3Cs Update 29th May 2012.

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