

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8 JULY 2014

REPORT BY HEAD OF INFORMATION, PARKING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

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REVIEW OF COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS APRIL 2013 TO MARCH 2014

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WARD(S) AFFECTED: None.

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**Purpose/Summary of Report:**

- To provide a summary of comments, compliments and complaints received between April 2013 and March 2014.
- To highlight the key issues, remedial action and learning arising from these comments, compliments and complaints.
- To note the updated Corporate Complaints Procedure.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY:**

**That:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>The report and actions on ‘Comments, Compliments and Complaints’ be scrutinised and the Executive be advised of any recommendations.</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>The updated Corporate Complaints Procedure be noted.</b>

1.0 Background

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

1.2 Following the implementation of the Regulator’s Code in April 2014, the Corporate Complaints Procedure has been reviewed to ensure clear and accessible complaints and appeals processes for the Council and others regulated by local authorities. processes.

1.3 On 14 July 2009, Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee 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 2013 to 31 March 2014 is summarised in the chart below:

Performance Indicator	Performance 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014 (2012/13 figures in brackets)
EHPI 5.1, % of complaints resolved in 14 days or less  2013/14 Target = 70%	79.2% (62.5%)  Customer and Community Services – 85.3% (89.5 %) Internal Services – 93.5% (80%) Neighbourhood Services – 73.3% (58.3%)*  <i>*The slightly lower resolution rate in Neighbourhood Services reflects the additional time required in handling planning complaints. (7 cases escalated to Stage 2 and 3 dealt with within target). All cases received acknowledgements and updates within the Council's Customer Service Standards.</i>
EHPI 5.2a, % of complaints about the Council and its services that are upheld: 1 <sup>st</sup> Stage  2013/14 Target = 30%	32.3% (36.5%) (33/102 Stage 1 complaints)  Customer and Community Services – 42.8% (38.4%) Internal Services – 64.5% (85.7%) Neighbourhood Services – 17.3% (14.2%)
EHPI 5.2b, % of complaints about the Council and its	11.1% (0%) (2/18 Stage 2 complaints)

<p>services that are upheld: 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage – appeal</p> <p>2013/14 Target = 25%</p>	<p>Customer and Community Services – 18.1% (0%)</p> <p>Internal Services – 0% (0%)</p> <p>Neighbourhood Services – 0% (0%)</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>2013/14 Target = 0%</p>	<p>0%</p> <p>6 (12) complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman. None were upheld. 2 cases were not investigated, 2 were deemed to be outside the jurisdiction of the LGO, one found no maladministration and one was presented prematurely.</p>

Customer and Community Services (C and CS) and Internal Services have not met the target for the percentage of complaints upheld. There is no significant trend within C and CS as the cases upheld cover a variety of matters. The reason for the number of complaints being upheld in Internal Services continues to 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.

## 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 (1)	1 (0)	0 (1)	1 (2)	3 (4)
Compliments	28 (19)	39 (46)	21 (19)	28 (10)	116 (94)
Complaints Stage 1	12 (15)	29 (35)	24 (13)	19 (6)	84 (69)

Complaints Stage 2	4 (9)	3 (4)	7 (7)	4 (2)	18 (22)
3Cs (all of above)	45 (43)	72 (85)	52 (40)	52 (20)	221 (188)

2012/13 figures in brackets

Please note that the Stage 1 figures also include the complaints that were escalated to Stage 2.

The large number of compliments recorded continues to reflect that Building Control record their post visit survey results – 63 compliments logged. Housing, Development Management, Environmental Services and Customer Services have also received and logged a number of compliments from customers.

The number of Stage One complaints the Council received this year increased by 21% over last year. Stage Two complaints fell slightly. 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. The reason for the slight dip in PIs within the Waste service would be attributable to the new Recycling Scheme. No single specific issue was identified in any of the other 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 (28%). There is little change from last year. The same percentage of people chose to contact us by email whilst the number of people writing in fell slightly from 31% to 28%.

### 2.4 Action taken following 3Cs

Improvement actions in response to issues raised in 2013/14 are shown in **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**. The key areas of complaint upheld were service delivery, staff training and service provided by a contractor. This reflects the fact that high volumes can have a detrimental effect on the service provided to customers as well as impact on training time for staff.

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) has been publishing all the decisions on complaints on its website. They consider this to be an important step in increasing transparency and accountability.

The LGO did not produce an annual review of complaints last year. This year’s review is due in early summer. To coincide with their publication the LGO is also publishing an in-depth report about local government complaints. This report will feature some of the statistics in the annual letters.

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

<b>Decision</b>	<b>No of cases</b>	<b>Service</b>
Not investigated	1 1	Housing Options Development Management
Premature complaint	1	Housing Benefits
Not in jurisdiction and discretion not exercised	2	Development Management
No maladministration	1	Development Management

## 2.6 2013/14 Actions Completed

<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Commission audit by Shared Internal Audit Service to review use of 3Cs system in services and to request	Based on the work performed during the audit process, SIAS provided Full Assurance that there are effective controls in operation for those elements of the risk

recommendations for actions based on review.	management processes covered. There were no recommendations arising from this review.
Staff briefing on trends, to promote recording of 3Cs, compliments as well as complaints. Publicise results to all staff, promote use of procedure.	Quarterly health check feedbacks are provided to Directors and Heads of Service giving statistics and information on topics of concern. These are cascaded in team meetings to line managers and staff.
Workshop with 3Cs Champions. Refresher on role. Discussion on use of 3Cs. Promote work of champions in Team Brief and Update.	Training workshops were run for 3Cs champions on how to use Infreemation. The opportunity was taken to remind champions of what needs to be recorded.
Refreshed intranet section on Handling Difficult Customers. Make supporting policy and forms easier to use for staff.	The 3Cs section of the intranet was reviewed and updated.

## 2.8 Actions 2014/15

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Source a temporary replacement system to operate the Council's 3Cs database which is currently on Lagan CRM. The Council is looking to replace Lagan during 2014/15.	The Council's provider, Infreemation, who currently manages Freedom of Information, Environmental Information Regulations and Data Protection Subject Access requests can also supply the added functionality for 3Cs cases. As from 1 April 2014, 3Cs cases have been recorded on Infreemation. This temporary arrangement will continue until a decision is made regarding the replacement for Lagan.

Arrange refresher training for 3Cs champions.	Workshops will be arranged to ensure champions are confident with the new database
Review supporting 3Cs documents on the internet/intranet	Ensure that this documentation provides assistance and guidelines in line with the recently reviewed Corporate Complaints procedure..
Ensure 3Cs database complies with the council's retention policy of keeping details of complainants for two years.	Liaise with IT to delete complainants' personal details from comments, compliments and complaints.

### 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 Committee Report – 3Cs Update 2 July 2013.

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