

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12 JULY 2016

REPORT BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGEMENT AND COUNCIL SUPPORT

REVIEW OF COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 1  
APRIL 2015 TO 31 MARCH 2016

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report:**

- To provide a summary of comments, compliments and complaints received between April 2015 and March 2016.
- To highlight the key issues, remedial action and learning arising from the comments, compliments and complaints.
- To note the updated Corporate Complaints Procedure.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY:**

**That:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>The report and actions in respect of ‘Comments, Compliments and Complaints’ be scrutinised; and</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>The Executive be advised of any recommendations.</b>

1.0 **Background**

1.1 The Council implemented the current Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints system (3Cs) in January 2009.

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

1.3 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.

- 1.4 The Council's Freedom of Information IT system, *Infreemation*, has been used to record Complaints since April 2014.
- 1.5 The Council continues to receive a very low number of formal complaints, 76 recorded in 2015/16. As a comparison the Council received 400,000 telephone calls in 2015.
- 1.6 Comments and Compliments were recorded separately to ensure there was disparity between the three types of contact.

## 2.0 Report

### 2.1 Revisions from previous year

There were no revisions to the previous year's method.

### 2.2 Performance

The Council's performance 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 is summarised in the chart below:

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Performance 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 (2014/15 figures in brackets)</b>
Total complaints recorded	76 (95) Broken down into: Customer and Community Services - 30 (36) Internal Services/Financial and Support services – 16 (24) Neighbourhood Services - 30 (35)
EHPI 5.1, % of complaints resolved in 14 days or less 2015/16 Target = 70% or higher	77.6% (77.9%) broken down into:- Customer and Community Services – 100% (93.3%) Internal Services/Financial and Support services – 93.8% (83.3%) Neighbourhood Services – 46.7% (64.3%)

<p>EHPI 5.2a, % of complaints about the Council and its services that are upheld: 1st Stage 2015/16 Target = 30% or less</p>	<p>24.6% (35.3%) 16 out of 65 upheld at Stage 1 (28/79) broken down into:  Customer and Community Services – 40% (34.6%) Internal Services/Financial Services – 30.8% (68.2%) Neighbourhood Services – 7.4% (12.9%)</p>
<p>EHPI 5.2b, % of complaints about the Council and its services that are upheld: 2nd Stage – appeal 2015/16 Target = 25% or less</p>	<p>18.2% (31.25%) 2 out of 11 upheld at stage 2 (5/16) broken down into:  Customer and Community Services – 40% (33.3%) Internal Services/Financial Services 0% (50%) Neighbourhood Services – 0% (27.3%)</p>
<p>EHPI 5.4, % of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman that are upheld 2015/16 Target = 0%</p>	<p>0%  10 (6) Complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman. None were upheld.</p>

- 2.3 Neighbourhood Services did not meet the target for the percentage of complaints resolved within 14 working days (EHPI 5.1). The nature of cases varied within Neighbourhood Services but many were complex cases which made it difficult to resolve within the working period. A particularly complex identical complaint was made by 6 different residents and this contributed heavily to the results. As a whole, the Council met its 5.1 target.
- 2.4 Customer and Community Services did not meet the 5.2a target and this was largely due to complaints regarding missed bin collections which were found in the resident's favour. Financial Services marginally missed this 30% target. As a whole, again, the Council sat within its target.
- 2.5 Although some complaints took longer to resolve than the 14 working day period within Neighbourhood Services, the number that were upheld at both stage 1 and 2 were well within desired targets. At stage 2, the target was missed within the Customer &

Community Services, failing to achieve the 25% target. As a Council though, the Complaints at Stage 2 was within set targets.

2.6 There were 10 complaints that were escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman, which is an increase on the previous year, however none of these were upheld.

## 2.7 Volumes

The volumes of comments, compliments and complaints recorded are shown below. Stage 2 complaints have all been subject to an initial complaint at stage 1.

2014/15 figures are in brackets

	<b>April – June (Q1)</b>	<b>July – Sept (Q2)</b>	<b>Oct – Dec (Q3)</b>	<b>Jan – March (Q4)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Comments	11 (0)	11 (0)	15 (0)	3 (1)	40 (1)
Compliments	0 (0)	2 (6)	1(0)	3 (1)	6 (7)
Complaints Stage 1	10 (15)	22 (34)	20 (20)	13 (10)	65 (79)
Complaints Stage 2	1 (2)	1 (7)	7(4)	2(3)	11(16)
<b>Total 3Cs logged</b>	<b>22 (17)</b>	<b>36 (47)</b>	<b>43 (24)</b>	<b>21 (15)</b>	<b>122 (103)</b>

2.8 There has been a significant increase in the number of comments reported to the Council from the previous year number. This reflects an improvement in the level of understanding of the new 3C's procedure with staff. The number of compliments about the Council remained relatively consistent with the previous year.

2.9 The number of Stage One complaints the Council received this year decreased by 17.2% over the previous year. Stage Two complaints also fell year on year (by 31.3%).

## 2.10 Source of Complaints

The chart, **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**, shows that customers prefer to raise complaints by e-mail (72%) and letter (18%). There has been a shift in complaints coming in via email, rising from 57% in 2013/14 to 72% this year with letters declining from 29% to 18% over the same period.

## 2.11 Action taken following 3Cs

Improvement actions in response to issues raised in 2015/16 are shown in **Essential Reference Paper 'C and D'**. The key areas of upheld complaints came from issues relating to Contractors.

## 2.12 Local Government Ombudsman

From April 2013 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) has been publishing all the decisions on complaints on its website. This is an important step in increasing transparency and accountability.

There was an increase in the number of complaints that were taken to the Local Government Ombudsman in the 2015/16 period. None of the complaints were upheld.

## 2.13 Actions Completed 2015/2016

Action	Outcome
Successful integration into the new version of Infreemation	The new version addresses many of the system error issues that were present in the old system. The reporting tool has more advanced functionality enabling a more efficient method of analysing information.
Continued refinement of 3C's procedure	Improved procedural documentation has been published on the staff intranet. Dedicated 3C's champions are responsible for recording and responding to complaints / compliments / comments. Infreemation is now a well - established reporting tool for complaints. Compliments and comments are logged in MS Outlook.

## 2.14 Actions 2016/2017

Action	Outcome
Management Restructure	A review of the 3C's champions will take place following the management restructure to ensure each service has a dedicated champion.
Infreemation review	A further review of how infreemation works for the Council needs to be conducted to ensure it is still fit for purpose.
Review of customer contact information	A review of other systems used by the Council e.g. 'Mayrise' (used by Environmental Services to record service requests and complaints). The review is to eliminate any duplication on complaint reporting and ensure that customer dissatisfaction is reported accurately.

## 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

None.

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