

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director Environment and Economy

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date:	23 July 2018
Subject:	Annual Report on Corporate Complaints and Compliments

Summary:

This report provides an update on Corporate Complaints and Compliments, a description of performance data and what it is telling us, including improvement actions. There has been an increase in the number of complaints that reflects an increase in business, particularly for Adult Care and Community Well Being services, and also reflects particular activities in other areas, including the development of a new hazardous waste recycling unit and changes to Telecare charging. Complaints handling is improving, with good progress made against the new corporate indicator of responding within one day (previously within five days). Lessons are being learned from complaints and improvement actions implemented. Work is still underway with a single system for handling complaints. This report builds on the annual report presented to Audit Committee in November 2017. Future reports will align with July Audit Committee meetings.

Recommendation(s):

That Audit Committee consider, note and comment on the report.

Background

The Corporate Complaints & Compliments Policy and its supporting Procedure underpin our work to continually improve services, putting things right where it is needed and providing prompt and effective responses to assure people who use those services. The Corporate Complaints & Compliments Policy and Procedure are currently under review and will include an update to the Equalities Impact Analysis (EIA) (with feedback from people with protected characteristics and organisations supporting them) and ongoing work to create a single reporting system. A Corporate Audit has also been completed.

Update

Facilitated by the Community Engagement Team, three working groups have been meeting to ensure robust processes are followed. The groups involve service area leads with particular responsibility and expertise and the Customer Relationship & Complaints Manager.

- **The Data Group's** role is to oversee the creation of a single database where all complaints and compliments data will be logged, held and reported from. However, corporately there have been delays with delivering this system. In the meantime, all data has been captured manually, with some elements reportable from IMP. Due to delayed launch and delivery, this became an IMT project in January 2018. All reporting requirements have been captured in IMT project documentation. Serco have appointed a project manager to deliver the single system required. A Systems Architect has reviewed requirements against what Lagan can provide and is due to report to Council Officers, recommending a solution by the end of June 2018. A timeline for delivery is expected soon after recommendations are made and agreed.
- **The Training Group's** role is to develop an e-learning and face to face training package to ensure officers dealing with complaints adhere to the new Policy and Procedures. To date, 100 employees have completed the e-learning package. It was agreed by CMB that face to face training would be offered to those directly managing and handling complaints; 79 employees have completed the course with feedback suggesting that it was highly relevant. A further 4 half day courses are being provided in May/June 2018 to make sure the target of 100 staff directly managing and handling complaints receiving face-to-face training is achieved. Training packages are reviewed and updated on a two yearly cycle. The next training review commences in September 2018 and will be informed by participant feedback and the current review of policy and procedure.
- **The Quality Assurance Group** meets quarterly on an ongoing basis to identify what is working well for customers and the organisation, and what is not. Each quarter a redacted 10% sample of stage 1 complaints from across the organisation is examined with a short report produced each quarter by the chair for group members that can be shared by service area reporting leads with their own operational managers, SMTs and DMTs for learning and development purposes. Since November 2017, there have been clear examples of excellent, good and occasional poor practice. A 'do's and don'ts' good practice information sheet, capturing learning from the last four quarters, is provided as supplementary information to the face-to-face complaints handling trainer to share with course participants.

A review of the Corporate Complaints & Compliments Policy and Procedure started on 8th May 2018 and is anticipated to be a three month process. The review will identify any changes needed to the Policy and Procedures, and assign actions

required to achieve them. An internal audit was recently undertaken and has been completed. Learning will be shared between review and audit processes.

Performance Narrative

Below is a summary narrative of complaints performance from key areas of the Council for 2017-18:

- *Environment and Planning* - There was a significant increase in the number of complaints for the Environment & Planning services during quarters 2 & 3 of 2017/18 compared to the previous year. This was largely due to over 70 complaints in relation to the planning proposals for the hazardous waste recycling at South Hykeham (Lincoln). None of these complaints were substantiated.
- *Highways and Planning* - Highways and Planning received a similar number of complaints compared to the previous year. However, subject matter shifted from street lighting to grass cutting for some. Other subjects remained the same with roadworks, road condition, school transport and parking. The vast majority of complaints related to the Highways & Planning Policy. An appropriate communication strategy is being used to inform customers. Around 5% of complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman and none were upheld.
- *Public Protection and Communities* - Public Protection and Communities complaints were largely about Registration, Celebratory and Coroner's Services, which are mostly around staff conduct/ attitude/ treatment of the public; this is followed by Fire and Rescue, then Trading Standards and one libraries complaint. There is also a healthy level of compliments which outweigh the complaints figures. Fire and Rescue provided the following narrative:

Fire and Rescue have seen an increase in the number of formal complaints with 4 being received in 2017/18, compared to 1 in the previous year. Of these four, 1 was partially founded, 1 was not founded and 2 have resulted in formal HR investigations being initiated. As the numbers are very small in relation to the amount of contact with members of the public, it is difficult to analyse any trend, however, the Service monitors complaints on an ongoing basis and reports to Service Management Board regularly

- *Children's Services* - There were 162 complaints in total, up by 35 on last year's (2016-17) 128. A fairly even split each across each quarter reflects a consistency in complaints management. Overwhelmingly, most complaints related to conduct and attitude of staff (the same key topic as in the previous year) and the next highest issue was about procedure.

The total number of substantiated complaints was 17, 46 were partially substantiated and 98 unsubstantiated. 6 complaints progressed to stage 2.

Children's Services has started to roll out restorative training to Children's Services staff. All managers have been trained and there is a

comprehensive programme in place for all other staff. The first programme runs from September 2017-18. A further one year programme is planned for September 2018-19. In addition 6 members of staff are to be trained as trainers to ensure that the quality of customer care training can be delivered in a sustainable way. Once further analysis of 2017/18 complaints has been completed, any specific areas identified as having significant numbers of complaints can be targeted with training. In addition there will be presentations and briefings to SMT and CSTM, and individual teams or service areas can be targeted and supported to improve as required.

- *Adult Care & Community Wellbeing* - There were a total of 220 formal complaints received by Adult Care during 2017/18, a 14% increase compared to 2016/17 where 193 complaints were received. 18 of these complaints progressed to Stage 2 of the complaints process. A further 119 queries were raised in the year, 52 of which were from Councillors or MPs.

The main area for complaint was around Adult Frailty & Long-Term Conditions, within which, the assessment process, homecare and finance were the primary topics for complaint.

As a general indication of the scale in Adult Care, 220 complaints represent less than 1% of the total of 28,000 adults who received funded long term support services during the year (11,800) or who made contact with the department and received an assessment and/or lower level support (16,200).

The increase from 2016/17, in part, can be explained by a 5% increase in customer interactions this year at the front door, as new requests for support have increased from 33,000 to 34,330, and the total number of reviews completed in the year has increased from 10,500 in 2016/17 to 14,850 this year, which is a 40% increase in reviewing activity, with most of this increase for adults aged over 65. The latter would naturally have an impact on assessment-related complaints, particularly within the Adult Frailty & Long Term Conditions Strategy.

Data and information gathered from quarterly reporting is fed into and triangulated with Workforce Development, Lead Professional and Quality Assurance teams to ensure the service is routinely targeting practice improvement in the areas most needed. New reporting and recording systems used across the service are now embedded, and Complaints training for Adult Care managers has been delivered.

In terms of the Public Health element of this service, significant recommissioning was undertaken during 2017/18 of Wellbeing and Telecare Services. This involved writing directly to over 7,000 service users and from these letters the service received 13 formal complaints regarding changes to the Telecare provision and charging.

- *Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO)* - Reviewing the annual letter on complaints is not possible to report on this year as the letter is not received

until late June/early July each year. The Community Engagement Team would be happy to provide a short update note to Committee once the annual letter has been received. Each year the Ombudsman acknowledges that some complaints may never have come to a local authority, which would have given them an opportunity to respond to some complaints earlier.

Performance Indicator Data

The performance data provided below includes some comparisons with the two previous years:

i. Total number of complaints

To note: Highways and Planning complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints process received 48 complaints in regard to the planning of the hazardous waste recycling plant in South Hykeham in Q3 of 2017/18.

2017/18	Corporate	Adults	Children's	TOTAL
Q1	69	43	45	157
Q2	112	68	37	217
Q3	144	57	39	240
Q4	74	82	41	197
TOTAL	399	250	162	811

2016/17	Corporate	Adults	Children's	TOTAL
Q1	77	59	32	168
Q2	55	51	26	132
Q3	73	34	33	140
Q4	76	50	36	162
TOTAL	281	194	127	602

2015/16	Corporate	Adults	Children's	TOTAL
Q1	52	36	44	132
Q2	64	75	39	178
Q3	48	103	26	177
Q4	67	79	50	196
TOTAL	231	293	159	683

ii. Percentage of Complaints responded to within one working day.

The table below provides a snapshot of the percentage of complaints (combined corporate and statutory figures) that were responded to against the new indicator of *"responding within one working day"* (the previous years' indicator had been within 5 working days). This suggests a consistently high compliance rate.

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
94.26%	90.32%	91.66%	94.41%

iii. **Percentage of Corporate Complaint responses given within agreed 10 working days timescale**

Total number of complaints received:

- Q1 – 69: 9 corporate complaints resolved outside of 10 business days (13%, which means 87% compliance with above indicator)
- Q2 – 112: 29 corporate complaints resolved outside of 10 business days (26%, which means 74% compliance)
- Q3 – 144: 30 corporate complaints resolved outside of 10 business days (21%, which means 79% compliance)
- Q4 – 74: 35 corporate complaints resolved outside of 10 business days (47%, which means 43% compliance) 8 of the corporate complaints requested longer investigation time.

iv. **Total number of cases closed within 10 working days**

2017/18 Corporate	Q1 Corp	Q2 Corp	Q3 Corp	Q4 Corp	Total
Substantiated	3	2	9	4	18
Partly substantiated	39	103	87	48	277
Unsubstantiated	27	7	47	16	97

2017/18 Children's/Adult	Q1 Child	Q1 Adult	Q2 Child	Q2 Adult	Q3 Child	Q3 Adult	Q4 Child	Q4 Adult	Total
Substantiated	4	8	5	11	6	7	3	16	60
Partly substantiated	9	9	9	13	13	12	12	28	105
Unsubstantiated	29	13	23	27	26	21	28	18	185

v. **Total number of Corporate cases resolved and closed within agreed timescale**

- Total number of cases resolved and closed at Stage1

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Stage 1	56	80	105	29

- Total number of cases resolved and closed at Stage 2

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Stage 2	9	15	31	11

vi. **Total number of unresolved open Corporate cases outside timescale (separating those at Stage 1 and Stage 2)**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Stage 1	7	27	27	30

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Stage 2	5	2	3	5

Figures provided at 'v' above show those acknowledged and closed within time scales. The information in IMP identifies when the complaint is closed on the system *not* when it was responded to; this could lead to a misinterpretation of performance. Addressing this will be explored as part of the Data Group work developing a single complaints system.

vi. **Percentage of feedback/lessons learned documentation completed**

The following table illustrates the feedback forms completed for Adults/Children's. Once the single complaints system is developed it will ensure that this feedback process is undertaken consistently across all service areas.

2016/17	Complaints	Feedback	%
Q1	88	73	82.9
Q2	105	89	84.7
Q3	96	89	92.7
Q4	123	113	91.8
TOTAL	412	364	88.3

Conclusion

Since the last Audit Committee report the Quality Assurance Group is now providing clear evidence for service area leads to address any particular concerns and to share broader learning at SMT/DMT level to help identify improvement activity. This will continue and should contribute to improved performance. The delayed development and delivery of a single complaints system has been challenging but will be a further positive step, resulting in a consistency of reporting. This will provide better data, in an efficient and effective manner (including trend analysis) to all committees and to CMB.

E-learning for all staff is regularly promoted and face to face training for 100 managers dealing with complaints was completed by June 2018. These training packages will be reviewed from September 2018 ready for a new cycle of training to commence during 2019.

Whilst increases in the number of complaints have been evident in some areas, these can be explained - for example the increase in Corporate Complaints is largely in relation to the planning proposals for the hazardous waste recycling at South Hykeham (Lincoln). It should be noted that none of these complaints were substantiated. The increases in complaints for Children's Services mostly related to conduct and attitude of staff (the same key topic as in the previous year). A robust improvement programme has now been established. It should be noted that 60% percent of children's complaints were found to be unsubstantiated and that fewer than 4% progressed to stage 2. For complaints for Adult Care & Community Well Being services, the majority concerned Adult Frailty & Long-Term Care, accounting for 81% of complaints. A significant number of complaints were upheld, and targeted improvement actions are in place.

With regard to '*responses within the agreed timescale*' for corporate complaints, there is poorer performance this year (Av 70.75%) than last year (Av 92.6%), with a significant dip in Q4, partly due to service area requests for more time to fully address more complex complaints. The Customer Service Centre notes that the information in IMP identifies when the complaint is closed on the system *not* when it was responded to, which could lead to a misinterpretation of performance. Once in place, the single reporting system should provide greater accuracy.

There has been a consistently high compliance rate against the new '*one-day response*' indicator (Av 92.6%). Although this is slightly weaker than last year's compliance performance against 5 days response rate (Av 97.1%), this is still high performance against a new and more challenging indicator.

More Corporate complaints reached Stage 2: 66 in 2017/18 against 35 in 2016/17. However, this equates to 16% of total complaints in 2017/18 against 16% in 2016/17, proportionately the same.

Of 399 Corporate (non -statutory service) complaints dealt with, 97 were found to be unsubstantiated, 277 partially substantiated and 18 substantiated. The percentage of feedback forms completed by Children's and Adults services has seen good progress and is 14% higher than last year. Learning captured in these forms feeds through to service and complaints handling improvements.

Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out??

Yes

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

EIA carried out on 10 August 2016 and is currently under review, available at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/complaints

EIA has been reviewed March-June 2018. Few potentially adverse impacts were

identified. Mitigating factors for action include; ensuring that there is a choice to engage with a same-gender complaints officer; and that easy-read versions of the policy are updated. Planned work with the Learning Disability Partnership will ensure this happens. A young person's version of how to make a compliment, comment or complaint will be developed with young people. We have already ensured that translated or alternative format versions can be made available by request; and that the public has the opportunity to engage by letter, telephone or on-line.

Background Papers

To background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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