

HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

14 JANUARY 2019

CUSTOMER COMMENTS UPDATE REPORT

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to appraise the Committee on the type of customer comments received.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Council encourages and welcomes all feedback, complaints and compliments. These are dealt with as part of the customer feedback procedure. It is important for the Council to receive feedback as it assists in providing the quality service our citizens deserve.

2.2 Customer feedback can be submitted by letter, verbally, email, or online. [Customer Feedback | Newark and Sherwood District Council](#). The customer feedback policy is not intended to cover issues where there is an alternative process to report a matter to or have a statutory right of appeal. These include:

- Requests for a service e.g. reporting a missed bin collection
- Reporting anti-social behaviour e.g. a noise or a nuisance neighbour
- Requests for information or an explanation of council policy or practice
- An objection to a planning application or a planning enforcement issue
- Complaints about formal decisions taken by a committee for which there is an existing right of appeal (either within the council itself or to an independent tribunal)
- The outcome of an application for benefit or the council tax banding of a property.
- Complaints regarding councillors.
- Safeguarding.

3.0 Customer Comments

3.1 There are three stages to the complaints procedure:

- Stage 1 – the complaint is investigated by the relevant business manager within 10 working days.
- Stage 2 – if the customer is not satisfied with the response to the stage 1 complaint then it can progress to stage 2. The review is carried out by a director and a response provided within 10 working days.
- Stage 3 - Ombudsman - in the majority of cases the Local Ombudsman will usually only investigate complaints that have been through the council's complaints system first, in order that the council has had a fair chance to investigate first.

3.2 Customers are encouraged to submit their complaint via the customer feedback system. These complaints are received by customer services and logged onto the corporate system. Inevitably some complaints are sent directly to Business Units and CMT and these are not always registered onto the corporate system.

- 3.3 During the period 1 April 2018 – 30 November 2018, 43 stage 1 complaints were submitted via the customer feedback system. 96% of the complaints received were responded to within the 10 working day timescale. During 2017/18 the total number of complaints received was 110. The table below summarises the number of complaints received for each area for 2018/19.

Asset Management	1
Revenues & Benefits	9
Car Parks	2
Development Control	1
Environmental Health	6
Licensing	1
Palace Theatre	2
Waste Management	21
Total	43

- 3.4 Only 2 complaints have progressed to stage 2 – 1 for Council Tax/Benefits and 1 for Environmental Health. The Environmental Health complaint progressed to the Ombudsman which, following initial enquiries, was dismissed by the Ombudsman as they found insufficient evidence of fault by the Council.
- 3.5 The number of Ombudsman complaints received is reported to Policy & Finance Committee each autumn following the Ombudsman publishing its annual review letter.
- 3.6 As previously mentioned the customer feedback policy is not intended to cover issues where there is an alternative process to report a matter to or have a statutory right of appeal. This explains why the number of complaints is relatively low. For example, if a customer reports a missed waste collection it is classed as a service request. Likewise complaints regarding planning or enforcement decisions tend to be captured as part of the planning process.
- 3.7 All complaints are analysed to identify any trends and performance issues. For example, if information provided to customers is not clear and requires amending.
- 3.8 The analysis of the complaints received shows that very few complaints are upheld.

4.0 Equalities Implications

- 4.1 All complaints received are reviewed to identify any potential equality issues. Should any complaint relate to a potential equality issue these are then reported to the Equalities Working Group.

5.0 Impact on Budget/Policy Framework

- 5.1 As this report is for information only there is no impact on the budget.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the content of the report be noted.

Reason for Recommendations

This report is to appraise Members on the volume and nature of complaints received.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Jill Baker, Business Manager - Customer Services & External Communications on ext. 5810.

Matthew Finch
Director – Customers