

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MIDSUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Head of Corporate Resources	Report Number: JSC/13/13
To: Joint Scrutiny Committee	Date of meeting: 31 July 2013

CORPORATE COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To brief Members on the operation of the new joint system and procedures
- 1.2 To update Members on the Compliments, Comments and Complaints received since the new system came into operation on 2 April 2013

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the compliments and complaints activity since the new system was introduced on 2 April 2014, as shown in Appendix 1 attached, be noted.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no specific financial implications identified from this report. Any implications are picked up as part of the services operational issues.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 This report is linked to the service areas and any items of risk will be picked up by the Operational Delivery Teams (ODTs).

5. Consultations

- 5.1 These items are reported to the Heads of Service Team (HoST), and all Corporate Managers, on a quarterly basis so they can monitor and manage the issues being experienced by their particular services.

6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1 As part of the new systems/procedures, equality and diversity information has been added to all forms both hard copy and on-line. Individuals are given the option to complete, or not, and we have reported that information accordingly. This will allow services to identify if particular issues are arising in relation to equality and diversity.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 7.1 This report covers the full range of services for both Councils, including SRP.

8. Key Information

- 8.1 The new Joint Policy and Procedures state that officers should endeavour to resolve issues or requests for service at the first point of contact, to avoid them being escalated to a formal complaint.
- 8.2 If a formal complaint is received, it is logged and passed to the relevant Corporate Manager (CM) for investigation and response to the complainant; this should be completed within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint. If a CM is not able to respond within this period, because of investigation work required, then they can contact the complainant and negotiate a revised date.
- 8.3 If a complainant is not satisfied with the response from a Stage 1 complaint, they can request a Stage 2 Complaint. The Corporate Complaints Officer undertakes an independent investigation and report. The officer has 20 working days to complete and respond to the complainant.
- 8.4 The final stage, if the complainant is still not satisfied, is to refer the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, and the Corporate Complaints Officer ensures that as part of the reply they include all the relevant contact information including the website details.
- 8.5 As part of the new policy, and because complaints are in relation to the operation of the Council and its services, a quarterly report is produced and circulated to Heads of Service and Corporate Managers. This report is produced by a team including CM – Customer Services, Customer Transformation Officer, Corporate Complaints Officer and the three CMs – Business Improvement in order to ensure lessons learnt and actions are acted upon.
- 8.6 All Managers and Heads of Service have access to the electronic records that contain not only the summary/record sheets of all Compliments, Comments and Complaints but also all correspondence received and sent by those responding to the Complaints.
- 8.7 As agreed, it is planned that Joint Scrutiny will receive an Annual report on activity in this area.

9. Appendices

Title	Location
1 Quarterly Corporate Compliments, Comments and Complaints Report to HoST – 3/7/2013	Attached

10. Background Documents

None.

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APPENDIX 1

Compliments, Comments and Complaints - Summary for HoST – 3 July 2013

General

- In the planning for the new procedures for this service, estimates were made about the number of complaints that would be received. This figure was estimated at annually 250 for both Councils; however this is likely to be exceeded if the current level of complaints continues.
- These figures are the first time we are reporting on the joint system. The system was designed to reflect the new joined up ODT's and therefore are not recorded or attributed to either BDC or MSDC but to the joint service. Because of this it will not be possible to compare against previous performance.
- Slight changes have been made to the process after discussion with the Administration Team and consultation with Corporate Managers.
- Some CM's are not completing information on Lessons Learnt / Actions taken to rectify. This could be because the issue is a general one, but CM's should be reminded to complete this section if it is relevant, so that improvements can easily be identified and implemented either by themselves or by the Business Improvement Managers.
- The new system, and the requirement for CM's to update the Excel spreadsheet and saving documents into the files set up by the Administration Team appears to be working well, although all need to be reminded to do this. We are monitoring those who are experiencing problems using the system and working with them to ensure that they can see and access what is needed.
- SRP is not able to access the on-line files so are e-mailing information back for updating and storage.
- Comments, additional text and an opportunity for people to e-mail or complete a comments form have been added to both BDC and MSDC websites to allow individuals to make a comment, rather than a complaint, should they choose to do so.
- We are investigating whether there is any value to publishing Complaints information on the website.
- For the first 3 months we have not recorded, or asked CM's to identify, whether the result of the Complaint was "upheld" or "not upheld". From 1 July onwards we will ask CMs to record the outcome of the Complaint, so that HoST can see what the outcome was.
- It has been noted that some complainants are not aware that if they are not satisfied with the response to a Stage 1 Complaint that they have the right to progress this to a Stage 2 Complaint. We will be creating a standard paragraph that will be supplied to all CM's so that they can include this at the bottom of the communication/response to the complainant.

Compliments Information – 2/4/13 – 31/6/13

By Service

Service Area	No.	Service Area
Corporate Organisation	0	
Corporate Resources	4	2 Asset Utilisation 2 Customer Support – Money Matters
Housing	6	3 Housing Repairs 2 General 1 Tenant Services
Communities	0	
Environment	8	6 Waste & Recycling 2 Public Realm
Economy	1	Tourist Information Centre
SRP	0	

- The compliments received have come either directly through the website, or have been passed to the co-ordination team from individual services. If these have been received directly then once the compliment is logged it is passed to the relevant section, or individual and their manager. Some examples of these have been:
 - “Good information left in reception area”
 - “Wanted to thank officer very much for organising for someone to pop and see her as she needs help with her garden. Officer visited her today.”
 - “Wanted to thank Money Matters team for the helpful service and commended them for overall handling of case during his unhappy time and helping ease the stress of his situation.”
 - “Appreciates the swift response, subject Oak Crescent Eye, Water Main and Storm Sewer Location”
 - “Called to comment on how helpful the waste operatives in his area are. In the past he has struggled with getting procedure right, where he has made a mistake the refuse operative has provided information and even helped him decant waste from one bin into the correct receptacle before collecting.”
- We believe that more compliments are being received but are not being passed through to the team for recording. We will remind all services to do this so we have an accurate record.
- We have received very few compliments to date and consideration is being given to how these could be used on the website to promote positive services. Conversations are ongoing with the Communications Team to see how these can be used. If they are going to be published on the website they will need be sanitised, to remove any personal information.

Complaints information – 2/4/13 – 30/6/13

Stage 1 – Service Level Agreement (SLA) = Response within 10 Working Days

Service Area	Total No.	Service Manager	Met SLA Stage 1	SLA's not met	Still within SLA (ongoing or revised response date agreed)
Corporate Organisation	1	Legal	1		
Corporate Resources	1	Information Management & ICT	1		
Housing	21	Asset Management (Operations) Tenant Services Private Sector Housing Housing Revenue Housing options Supported Housing	11 3 1 1 1 1	3	
Communities	0				
Environment	8	Waste Public Realm	4 4		
Economy	18	Planning Development Planning Enforcement	6 6	4	2 - Still within SLA
SRP	19	Revenues & Benefits & Council Tax	17	1	1– Still within SLA

- As can be seen from the figures, there are some areas where the SLA was not met, however it should be noted that these mainly occurred when the new system was introduced in April 2013.
- Housing have received the highest number of complaints.
- SRP has received the second largest number of complaints.
- Some services have completed Learning / Action points as part of their investigation, and have noted these and passed information as required. However lessons learnt and shared is an important part of the system and CMs will need to ensure that they record them where relevant. Examples of these are:
 - Website information misleading and needs to be corrected.
 - Will discuss with team better communications with customers, especially if delays likely.
 - ODT restructure will help improve FOI team and provide more resilience
 - Apologies made by both the contractor and the council. Officers will now monitor responses to priority calls and follow up.

Stage 2 – Service Level Agreement (SLA) = Response within 20 Working Days

Service Area	Total No.	Service	Met SLA Stage 2	SLA's not met	Still within SLA (ongoing or revised response date agreed)
Corporate Organisation	1	Legal	1		
Corporate Resources	0				
Housing	2	General	1		1 – Still within SLA
Communities	0				
Environment	0				
Economy	6	Planning Development Planning Enforcement	3 1		2 – Still within SLA
SRP	1	Revenues & Benefits & Council Tax	0		1 - Still within SLA

Ombudsman Complaints – 2/4/13 –30/6/13

Service Area	Total Complaints	Completed or Not?	Upheld or Not? Outcome
Corporate Organisation	1 - Legal	Provisional	Provisional - No action to be taken
Corporate Resources	0		
Housing	3	2 Completed 1 Not Completed	Not being investigated by the Ombudsman No answer yet from Ombudsman
Communities	0		
Environment	1 – Environmental Protection	Completed	Not Considered
Economy	6 – Planning Development	5 Completed 1 Not Completed	3 Not Considered 2 No Fault of Council 1 Provisional No Action
	1 – Planning Enforcement	Not Completed	No answer yet from Ombudsman
SRP	0		

Equality and Diversity Information

As part of our corporate responsibility to ensure that individuals are not being discriminated against, we introduced an Equality and Diversity section into the Compliments, Comments and Complaints process.

Because of the nature of the questions/information we are seeking, we gave individuals who use the hard copy or electronic forms, the option not to answer further questions. For Data Protection and FOI we have stated that this information will only be viewed by officers investigating specific complaints.

This information is stored based upon the complaint reference number, rather than name. Should the need arise, i.e. because a trend of equality issues has been identified, this number can be used to identify specific individuals and their responses to undertake further investigations.

This information is summarised below:

- Of the 78 complaints received to date only a few have completed any equality information.
 - 9 chose "I do not wish to answer at all" further E & D information.
 - 4 gave more detail

David Cleary

3 July 2013