

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL**

<b>From: Head of Corporate Resources</b>	<b>Report Number: JSC/13/14</b>
<b>To: Joint Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting: 23 July 2014</b>

**CORPORATE COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To brief Members on the compliments, comments and complaints received in the 2013/14 financial year.
- 1.2 To put this into context against the customer interaction during the same period.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Members note the activity since the new system was introduced on 2 April 2013.

**3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no specific financial implications identified from this report. Any implications are picked up as part of service 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 introduction of the new corporate compliments, comments and complaints process has enabled the provision of consistent information across the organisation by service area for the past year.

8.2 **Compliments** - as services now have a central repository for compliments being received and the figures can now be reported with more confidence. The figures for 2013/14 are shown below:

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Total</b>
Corporate Organisation	5
Corporate Resources	22
Housing	14
Communities	8
Environment	27
Economy	26
SRP	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>

8.3 **Complaints** - across both Councils the total for the year was 307. This figure includes Stage 1, Stage 2 and Ombudsman's complaints. We do not have a comparable figure from previous years for both Councils, but the numbers are in line with expectations after the new system was launched. The break down by service area is shown below:

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	<b>Total Ombudsman Complaints</b>
Corporate Organisation	4	1	1
Corporate Resources	16	4	2
Housing	66	7	7
Communities	2	0	0
Environment	38	1	3
Economy	54	17	17
SRP	64	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>

8.4 These numbers need to be put into context, based upon customer contact in relation to the 3 areas who have received the largest number of complaints; Housing; Economy and the Shared Revenues Partnership (SRP):

8.4.1 Housing - received 68,654 calls/visitors in 2013/14, therefore complaints equate to 0.12% of the total contacts with the Councils in this service.

8.4.2 Economy - received 27,828 calls/visitors/applications. The majority of the complaints relate to Development Management and therefore equate to 0.31% of the total contacts with the Councils in this service.

8.4.3 SRP – in relation to Revenues & Benefits 117,955 calls/visitors were received in 2013/14, therefore complaints equate to 0.06% of the total contacts with the Councils in this service.

- 8.5 Members asked Heads of Service / Corporate Managers to identify the gravity of complaints, in order to establish whether there were more significant issues behind them. To date the complaints received have been on operational issues, we have not identified any significant trends within these.
- 8.6 Members asked officers whether there were individuals who complained more than once. Within the last year there has only been one person in this category who is currently being considered for Unreasonable or Persistent.
- 8.7 **Unreasonable or Persistent Complainants** - There are 4 people designated in this category, 1 couple and 2 individuals. These are reviewed on a quarterly basis to ascertain whether they should still be listed. To date none have been removed.
- 8.8 Of the Stage 1 complaints received, 79% were responded to within the 10 working days as per the service level agreement (SLA). At Stage 2, the SLA is 20 Working Days and the figure achieved was 93.75%.
- 8.9 Of the Stage 1 complaints received, the numbers that were upheld, not upheld or partially upheld only began to be recorded in quarter 2, so there is no correlation between these figures and the overall number of complaints. This information was available from July 2013 onwards and is shown in the table below:

Service Area	Upheld	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld
Corporate Organisation	0	0	1
Corporate Resources	2	3	3
Housing	5	13	6
Communities	0	0	0
Environment	10	6	3
Economy	5	10	5
SRP	10	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>20</b>

- 8.10 All Stage 2 complainants are advised of their rights to complain to the Ombudsman and how they can do so. Of the 31 referred to the Ombudsman, the results were:

Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	Not investigated	No Answer yet
1 (but no further action)	1	16	10	3

- 8.11 The split of complaints between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, at Stage 1 is now recorded and shown in the table below. This information is not recorded at Stage 2 or Ombudsman as that would be repeating the information. There is a difference between those identified as BDC / MSDC complainants and the total figure, due to the number that are emailed, and do not specifically relate to a location/Council. There are no specific issues that can be identified to explain the larger number of complaints in Housing and SRP.

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Babergh</b>	<b>Mid Suffolk</b>	<b>Not Identified</b>
Corporate Organisation	1	3	2
Corporate Resources	7	7	6
Housing	27	37	4
Communities	2	2	0
Environment	12	16	11
Economy	15	13	13
SRP	21	40	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>41</b>

8.12 **Equality & Diversity** – In the last year only 14 people have given us full information and 14 have consciously chosen not to answer the question at all. The remaining complainants have left all the information blank.

8.13 The statistics and information is shared and reviewed by Heads of Service and Corporate Managers on a quarterly basis. Any specific areas for concern/areas of risk are identified and acted upon. Any high risk items would be added to the Risk Register. No complaints have raised issues that have had to be added to the Risk Register during 2013/14.

8.14 **Lessons Learnt** – This information is recorded and shared with relevant teams / individuals by the Corporate Manager dealing with the complaint. The information recorded could lead to a change in the operational systems of the service. To date there have been very few areas that have identified any required operational changes.

## **9. Development**

9.1 The first year of the new service and system will provide us with comparative information for the future.

9.2 Areas of development/change have been identified, as an organisation we are still treating complaints as issues rather than opportunities to develop the service. In order to develop / change this culture we will be:

- Developing training for staff on Complaint handling
- Ensuring staff take ownership of complaints
- Encouraging staff to contact the complainant immediately and speak to them rather than relying on a formal mailed response
- Changing the culture of the organisation to reflect the fact that we see complaints as positive learning experiences
- Ensure that where there are learning points from complaints these are identified and implemented.

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