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<b>PART A:</b>	<b>MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS</b>
<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>1 OCTOBER 2020</b>
<b>REPORT OF THE:</b>	<b>HEAD OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE SIMON COPLEY</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>CORPORATE COMPLAINTS 2019/20</b>
<b>WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To review the handling of customer complaints to identify areas for improvement and recognise areas of organisational learning that have taken place over the past year as a result of the complaints received.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Note the year-end position of the corporate complaints received in 2019/20
- (ii) Note the lessons learned from the complaints received in 2019/20
- (iii) Note the ongoing complaints procedure review and the new procedure to be brought to the November meeting

### **3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 To give members the opportunity to consider the complaints process so that improvements required in service delivery are continually reviewed.

### **4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS**

4.1 Failure to handle complaints in an effective and timely manner can result in investigation and action from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to rectify injustices.

### **5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION**

5.1 None

## REPORT

### 6.0 REPORT DETAILS

- 6.1 The review of complaints received offers an opportunity to listen and change what we do as a council to provide a better standard of service in the future that is more responsive to people's needs.
- 6.2 The complaints process at the council is a two stage process. When a complaint is received, it is logged at stage 1 and dealt with locally, within the service being complained about. We aim to resolve the majority of complaints at stage 1 of the process. However, if the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request to move to stage 2 of the process for a more formal investigation by the relevant Director or Head of Department for the service area concerned. Following the response to the stage 2 complaint, the complainant has the option to refer their case to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for an independent, impartial investigation.
- 6.3 In numbers, from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, the council received 60 complaints through the corporate system. Of these, 44 (73.33%) of the complaints were resolved at stage 1, with 16 (26.66%) exercising the right to move to stage 2 of the complaints process. This compares to 60 complaints received in 2018/19, with 49 (82%) resolved at stage 1 and 11 (18%) moving on to stage 2 of the complaints process. The most customer complaints received in 2019/20 was in Planning and Regulatory Services (18), followed by Streetscene (17) and Revenues and Benefits (8). This compares to Streetscene (27), Planning and Regulatory Services (6) and Revenues and Benefits (5) in 2018/19.
- 6.4 In terms of response times, the expectation detailed in the Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure is for complaints of a simple nature requiring remedial action to be responded to either immediately or within 5 working days. If this is not possible, then a full and final response will be sent within 15 working days. The corporate performance target is to respond to complaints received within 5 working days, however this target has proved difficult to achieve, with the average time to respond to stage 1 complaints as 8.70 days and 23.56 days at stage 2.

#### Stage 1 complaints Department Breakdown

Department	Complaints received	Resolved at Stage 1	Stage 1 Resolution Rate	Average days to complete Stage 1 complaints
Community Team	5	5	100%	5.40
Corporate Services	0	0	N/A	N/A
Customer Services	1	1	100%	2.00
Democratic Services	0	0	N/A	N/A
Economic Development	0	0	N/A	N/A
Environmental Health	2	1	50%	10.50
Facilities	0	0	N/A	N/A

Housing	6	3	50%	10.00
Human Resources	0	0	N/A	N/A
ICT	0	0	N/A	N/A
Legal Services	3	2	67%	4.33
Planning and Regulatory Services	18	12	67%	15.56
Revenues and Benefits	8	7	88%	5.63
Ryecare	0	0	N/A	N/A
Streetscene	17	13	76%	4.35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>73.33%</b>	<b>8.70 days</b>

### Stage 2 complaints Department Breakdown

Department	Total Complaints received	Complaints escalated to Stage 2	Average days to complete Stage 2 complaints
Community Team	5	0	N/A
Corporate Services	0	0	N/A
Customer Services	1	0	N/A
Democratic Services	0	0	N/A
Economic Development	0	0	N/A
Environmental Health	2	1	65.00
Facilities	0	0	N/A
Housing	6	3	23.33
Human Resources	0	0	N/A
ICT	0	0	N/A
Legal Services	3	1	4.00
Planning and Regulatory Services	18	6	27.17
Revenues and Benefits	8	1	43.00
Ryecare	0	0	N/A
Streetscene	17	4	8.00
	<b>60</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23.56 days</b>

6.5 Looking at the response times for stage 1 complaints, the only service area where complaints were not dealt with in an average response time of 15 working days is Planning and Regulatory Services. For stage 2 complaints, complaints in Environmental Health, Housing, Planning and Regulatory Services and Revenues & Benefits were not responded to within an average of 15 working days. The above target response times for stage 2 complaints reflects the more detailed nature of the investigations required at stage 2 to attempt to bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion and avoid any further escalation of the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. Discussions have taken place for the areas identified to put in place

service improvement plans to reduce complaint handling times, along with producing monthly reports to each service area to identify areas of concern quickly and take prompt action to rectify delays identified in responding to complaints.

- 6.6 Discussions with services have highlighted training requirements and capacity levels as barriers to meeting target response times. As a result of the complaints analysis work undertaken, a review to look at the corporate complaints process as a whole has been started to develop an improvement action plan. This review will involve a full refresh of the written corporate complaints procedure, which will be brought to the committee at the November 2020 meeting. Also to be considered as part of the review is to clearly define what a complaint is within the council, to provide clarity on how the two stage process works and setting expectations for those complaining and staff responding. In order to address this, we will set up refresher training for staff to reinforce the guidance around keeping customers informed at all stages of dealing with complaints, and the revised timescales as part of a new procedure and set up.
- 6.7 The lessons learned from complaints received can vary depending on the service concerned and the situation under investigation. For example, practical actions such as being more proactive and providing more information at the initial first point of contact with a customer can help them to better understand a situation. Also making adjustments to policies and procedures can help to provide a more streamlined customer journey and avoid hold ups and delays in resolving concerns. Examples of the lessons learned as a result of the complaints received and the ongoing learning process is attached at Appendix 2.
- 6.8 The Corporate Governance team have now taken responsibility for the monitoring of complaints handling, to strengthen support for services on handling more complex complaints and ensure deadlines for responses are met. They will work alongside the Customer Services team to ensure regular reflection of lessons learned through the new monthly reports and developing a learning culture to complaints within the organisation.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The following implications have been identified:
- a) Financial  
None
  - b) Legal  
None
  - c) Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental and Climate Change, Crime & Disorder)  
None

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