



**PART A: MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

**REPORT TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**REPORT OF THE: HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES AND COMMUNITIES  
MARGARET WALLACE**

**TITLE OF REPORT: CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS Q1 2021/22**

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To provide an update on the customer complaints and compliments received in 2021/22 to the end of the quarter 1 reporting period on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

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

2.1 It is recommended to:

- (i) Note and endorse the continued good performance of complaints and compliments received in the first quarter of 2021/22 of the reporting cycle.

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

3.1 To monitor the numbers of complaints and compliments received, the topics of complaints and recommend service improvements in line with data analysis to provide customer excellence.

### **4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS**

4.1 Potential reputational damage from upheld decision notices following investigation by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman into customer complaints.

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

## 5.1 **Our Organisation, an Innovative, Enterprising Council- Accessible to all.**

We will transform our customer services, using new ways of working to improve our responsiveness. We will support those who are digitally excluded or need support to access online services. We will bring partners into Ryedale House and provide options for a “one-stop” Public Services Hub. We will tackle inequality. Delivering better equality across the district is central to everything we do, and we are committed to doing all we can to be a welcoming and inclusive place characterised by diversity. We will improve our engagement with you, asking for your views, and using your feedback

## 6.0 **REPORT DETAILS**

- 6.1 The customer complaints and compliments received form an important part of the feedback process for the Council to learn from any issues raised and improve how we deliver our services, to provide a better standard of service that is more responsive to people’s needs. When analysing the customer complaints and compliments, they should be read in conjunction with each other to gain a full picture of the feedback received.

## **COMPLAINTS**

- 6.2 A complaint is defined within the Council as *“an expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf”*.
- 6.3 The Council operates a 2 stage complaints procedure to respond to the issues raised by complainants. At stage 1 we will acknowledge the submission of the complaint within 1 working day, details of the named officer dealing with the complaint and outlining the timescales for response. At stage 1 it is hoped that we have frontline resolution within ten working days. However, if the issue is complex and we cannot resolve within the 10 working days, we will contact the complainant or their representative to explain the reason for an extension.
- 6.4 If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they receive about their stage 1 complaint, then they can request a stage 2 investigation. We will acknowledge the submission of their stage 2 complaint within one working day. Stage 2 deals with two types of complaints: Those that have not been resolved at stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. Stage 2 complaints will be investigated by a senior manager. After this investigation, the senior manager will provide a full response to the complainant as soon as possible, and within 20 working days.
- 6.5 If the complainant is not satisfied with the stage 2 response, there is the option for the complainant to escalate to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied. The Ombudsman is a free and impartial service but will generally only consider complaints that have been through the internal 2 stage process at the Council first.
- 6.6 In Quarter one the council has handled 14 corporate complaints from 1 April to 30 June 2021. 12 complaints were dealt with under stage 1 of the complaints procedure with 2

complainants remaining dissatisfied at stage 1 and advancing on to stage 2. The majority of the complaints, 12 (86%), did not escalate beyond an initial complaint (stage1) and were answered within the complaint's procedural timescales, showing that responses to corporate complaints have been dealt with effectively and efficiently to address any issues raised.

- 6.7 There was one complaint received in Quarter 1 that required the stage 1 complaint timescales to be extended due to the complexity of the complaint and with agreement from the complainant. There was only 1 complaint that did not meet the timescale set within the stage 1 complaint's procedure and, the complaint was overdue by 1 day. All stage 2 complaints were answered within the procedural timescales. A detailed analysis of the breakdown of complaint topics, timescales and outcomes are attached **(Appendix 1)**
- 6.8 The analysis of the complaints received highlights that the majority of complaints received within quarter 1 were not upheld as council procedures had been followed. However, complaints are an important part of the feedback process for the Council to learn from any issues raised and improve how we deliver our services, to provide a better standard of service that is more responsive to people's needs. As a result of some of the complaints raised services have made additional service improvements for example providing additional information on the RDC website to help assist those with funding applications.
- 6.9 The analysis also highlights some areas where we have failed to provide customer excellence and where this has happened, we have apologised and made service improvements to address the areas of concern. For example, delay in taking enforcement action due to a delay in recruiting an enforcement officer. We have apologised for this delay and taken the action required.
- 6.10 The learning and actions resulting from complaints are an important element of customer feedback reporting and improving services. Understanding the causes of complaints and common themes inform learning and the identification of actions to address the underlying causes of the complaint being made. To ensure we continue to improve our services; customer service complaints officers will continue to work with the service to ensure high quality of response to complaints received. The officers will work with services to ensure timescales for complaints are met. They will also work with service departments to achieve service improvements to mitigate further complaints.

## **COMPLIMENTS**

- 6.11 When analysing the customer complaints, it is important that this is done in conjunction with our compliments received for quarter 1 to provide a full picture of our customer feedback. The number of service compliments recorded in the 2021/22 Quarter 1 period up to 30th June 2021 is 14. The main topics of the compliments received by citizens and local business owners once again relate to appreciation of the council's support during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 6.12 Examples of some of the compliments from April to June 2021 include:

“We are so delighted that RDC can help us – this grant will make such a difference to us in terms of navigating our way through the next few months and, hopefully, surviving. I am incredibly grateful to you for the conversation we had last week”

“The ingenuity and proactiveness of Ryedale District Council saved the day, saved our business and saved our team's jobs last Christmas.”

“Thank you so much, I must say the Ryedale Council have been amazing during the Covid-19 outbreak and have supported us amazingly. “

“I realise how difficult the whole scenario of covid 19 has been, especially for local authorities. I appreciate the speed your department has passed on the Government grants and would like to thank you for the service we have received during these unprecedented times.”

“I confirm receipt of your email and the decision notice. I also wish to thank Ryedale Planning and the case officer for the efficient manner in which this application has been handled within the statutory time period”

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been identified:

- a) Financial  
Costs are contained within the agreed budgets for the service.
- b) Legal  
No complaints required to be escalated to Legal services for advice in quarter 1
- c) Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental and Climate Change, Crime & Disorder)

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**Background Papers:**

None

**Background Papers are available for inspection at:**

None