



PART A: MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

REPORT TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 18 NOVEMBER 2021

**REPORT OF THE: PROGRAMME DIRECTOR PEOPLE AND RESOURCES
MARGARET WALLACE**

TITLE OF REPORT: CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS Q2 2021/22

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

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 2 reporting period on 30th September 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 second 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 Since the Quarter 1 update in September 2021, the council has responded to a further 4 complaints in the period between 1 July 2021 and 30 September 2021. The total number of corporate complaints the council has handled so far this reporting year is 18. During the second quarter, 3 complaints (75%) were handled under Stage 1 of our complaints procedure with 1 complainant (25%) remaining dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome and advancing on to stage 2 of the corporate complaints process. The Stage 2 Complaint is still ongoing and on track for a response within the stage 2 response time frame (20 days) The Quarter 2 figures present a significant decrease in

the number of complaints compared to the previous quarter which shows the benefit of the changes implemented within the Complaints Handling team and the improvement achieved so far in the ongoing review of the administration process.

- 6.7 With the agreement of the complainant, one complaint received in Quarter 2 required the stage 1 handling timescales to be extended beyond the standard 10 days due to its complexity and need to revisit records in relation to the complaint across multiple services. All of the other complaints were answered within the procedural timescales set out in our Corporate Complaints Procedure. 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 2 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.
- 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 and provided staff refresher training. For example, an error with a bill calculation. We have apologised for this error and taken the action required to rectify the mistake and ensure future inaccuracies are avoided.
- 6.10 The complaint analysis shows a trend beginning to form in the complaint categories when looking at the overall complaints for 2021-22, with further complaints received in quarter 2 relating to our Public Toilets and COVID-19 related services (Covid-19 funding/grants)
- 6.11 The learning and actions resulting from complaints are an important element of the customer feedback reporting and improving services. Understanding the causes of the 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 implementing a new service improvement plan from Quarter 3

COMPLIMENTS

- 6.12 When analysing the customer complaints, it is important that this is done in conjunction with our compliments received to provide a full picture of our customer feedback. The number of service compliments recorded in the 2021/22 Quarter 2 period from 1st July to 30th September 2021 is 24, giving a total of 40 compliments received during the reporting year to date.
- 6.13 Examples of some of the compliments from July to September 2021 include:

XXX called an ambulance after receiving a call from XXX. She called back to say how grateful she was that he kept her calm, was so professional, and how quickly he managed to get help

More importantly I would like to thank you for the very professional approach you have taken in the handling of this planning application and the courtesy with which you have dealt with me at all times. I have particularly appreciated the dialogue we have had when you had concerns over aspects of the design allowing sensible reconsideration to be made by me with agreement of the applicant.

Please thank the team who dealt with the mattress that was dumped by the side of the B1248 south of Norton.

My wife & I have just had a little trip in our motorhome to Helmsley where we stayed in the Cleveland Way overflow car park. It is a great little facility & would like to thank whoever it was in Ryedale District Council who promoted the idea. Just to give an insight into what the value of us being there was to the local economy. In total we spent well over £150 & enjoyed our stay. There were 10 vans in total staying overnight & we saw their owners in & around the town throughout the day & evening so suspect they also spent readily. The facility sets Helmsley apart from other towns we have visited so I hope they it feels the benefits especially to small businesses.

I have just received excellent service from Customer Services and the garden waste team who have organised a special collection for my bin following the loss of our payment tag. XXX was polite, efficient, helpful and friendly and his service has reduced my stress levels considerably.

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)
There are no direct equality implication identified, all complaints are handled on a case by case basis taking into account individual's circumstances and details of events whilst liaising with complainants when required to fully understand the matter in depth to ensure the matter is fully addressed and resolved.

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Background Papers:
[Agenda Reports Pack Q1 committee update: Thursday 30th September 2021](#)

Background Papers are available for inspection at:
None