



PART A: MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

REPORT TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 10 FEBRUARY 2022

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

TITLE OF REPORT: CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS Q3 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 3 reporting period on 31st December 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 third 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 2 update in November 2021, the council has responded to a further seven complaints in the period between 1 October and 31 December 2021. The total number of corporate complaints the council has handled so far this reporting year is 25.

During the third quarter, six complaints (86%) were handled under Stage 1 of our complaints procedure with one complainant (14%) remaining dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome and advancing on to stage 2 of the corporate complaints process. The Stage 2 Complaint was still ongoing at the point of the Q3 data being collated.

Please note that this stage 2 complaint is now closed with the complainant receiving a response in January 2022, in advance of its due date in February.

The quarter 3 data continues the trend of a low number of complaints compared to previous years, showing 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 complainants, two complaints received in Quarter 3 required the stage 1 handling timescales to be extended beyond the standard 10 days due to its complexity and need for further information to be received from the person concerned. All of the other complaints were answered within the procedural timescales set out in our Corporate Complaints Procedure.

To summarise, 100% of all complaints reported in Q3 received a response within the agreed 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 3 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, for example we have apologised and made service improvements to address the areas of concern raised. The complaint analysis shows a trend beginning to form in the service area categories when looking at the overall complaints for 2021-22, with further complaints received in quarter 3 relating to car parking and planning issues.
- 6.10 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

- 6.11 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 3 period from 1st October to 31st December 2021 is 28, giving a total of 68 compliments received during the reporting year to date.
- 6.12 Examples of some of the compliments from October to December 2021 include:

Thank you once again for dealing with my complaint and replacing the lights. I truly hope that there will not be any further similar incidents, because for the most part, the crews do a good job. Sincere thanks and appreciation.

I just wanted to send a note of thanks for all your assistance in enabling the above request to be dealt with in such and effective manner.
It was a pleasure to deal with you and your assistance was invaluable.

I was struggling to put my garden waste bin out early yesterday morning because it was so heavy, and I was helped by a member of the refuse collection team. The member of staff could not have been more helpful and courteous.

Following on from my telephone conversation with your department (sorry, I didn't catch your name), I would like to thank you for your patience and kindness.

Thank you so much for the incredibly swift organisation of the exemption. I am so impressed.

Many thanks for your amazingly swift response! Boxes were delivered virtually immediately!
Many thanks to you and to all concerned!

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, 2 or 3.
- 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:

[Q1 committee update – Thursday 30 September 2021](#)

[Q2 committee update – Tuesday 16 November 2021](#)