



REPORT TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

DATE: 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE: PROGRAMME DIRECTOR PEOPLE AND RESOURCES
MARGARET WALLACE

TITLE OF REPORT: CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS Q1 2022/23

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on the Customer Complaints and Compliments received in 2022/23 to the end of the Quarter 1 reporting period ending on 30 June 2022.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 It is recommended to:

- (i) Note and endorse the performance of complaints and compliments received in Quarter 1 of 2022/23 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.

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, 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 This report provides an overview of the corporate complaints and compliments received in Quarter 1 from 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022. In Quarter 1 the council has received and responded to 19 complaints. This is an increase of 8 complaints from the last Quarter 4 2021/2022 report.
- 6.7 In Quarter 1, 14 out of the 19 complaints received were dealt with under the stage 1 procedure which equates to 74% of all Quarter 1 complaints. 5 complainants remained dissatisfied with the stage 1 response and progressed to the stage 2 complaint procedure.

- 6.8 In Quarter 1, there were four stage 1 complaints that required an extension to the standard 10 days timescale. This was as a result of the complexity of the complaints and in all cases the complainant was accepting of the extended response times. However, one of the complaints required further investigation to produce the response and exceeded the agreed timescale by one day. In total 84% of Stage 1 complaints met their agreed timescale.
- 6.9 In total five Stage 2 complaints were submitted in Quarter 1, four were handled within the agreed timescales and one is still ongoing. One of the Stage 2 complaints has been escalated to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). A detailed analysis of the breakdown of complaint topics, timescales and outcomes can be found in Appendix 1.
- 6.10 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. The service areas where complaints have been received in Quarter 1 will review their procedures and produce remedies from the highlights in the analysis to prevent the issue reoccurring and stop further complaints.
- 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 and Insight Officers will continue to work with services to ensure a high-quality response is made to all complaints received. The officers will continue to work with services to ensure timescales for complaints are met.
- 6.12 Training from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) has been arranged in Quarter 2 for all service complaint responders to receive best practice guidance and training from the Ombudsman. A Staff Complaints Handbook is being created by the Customer Service Complaints and Insight Officers following this training, to ensure clear instructions and guidance is available when answering complaints. This will improve the quality of the responses to complainants.
- 6.13 It is important to note that all complaints that are received by the LGSCO from Ryedale residents are reported yearly. The report received for the reporting period April 2021-March 2022 shows that no detailed investigations were undertaken in this reporting year.

COMPLIMENTS

- 6.14 When analysing the customer complaints, it is important that this is done in conjunction with the compliments received to provide a full picture of customer's feedback. The number of service compliments recorded in Quarter 1 from 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022, was 20. Of the compliments received 6 were for the Customer Services Team, including one for joint working with the Streetscene Team and 5 for the Economic Development Team. A detailed analysis of the breakdown of compliments and be found in Appendix 1.

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 implications 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:

<https://democracy.ryedale.gov.uk/documents/s63165/Customer%20Complaints%20and%20Compliments%20Q4%202021-22%20-%20Draft%20OS%20report.pdf>