



**COMPLAINTS
MONITORING REPORT TO
CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER
SCRUTINY PANEL
September 2005- March 2006**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report details those complaints referred to the Chief Executive during the six-month period of September 2005 to March 2006. These complaints are investigated, on behalf of the Chief Executive, by Corporate and Policy Services.

Complaints, Comments and Compliments are important to the authority, as the information that they provide can serve as a useful feedback on our services and how they impact on the community we serve. By using this information we can improve our services and become more responsive to customers needs and concerns. By handling complaints in line with best practice we can demonstrate our commitment to customer care, and to continuous improvement.

As a Council we utilise the following definition of a complaint:

‘An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council’s action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council’.

Generally, and for the purposes of this report, a complaint is distinguished from a request for service such as pest control or reporting a defect such as faulty street lighting.

2. NOTES OF CLARIFICATION

In those instances where a complainant has referred to the activity of more than one Unit or Service area in their complaint, each separate aspect of the complaint against separate units or service areas will be recorded as a complaint, for monitoring purposes. The purpose of this is to ensure that the information provided about each distinct service area by complainants can be used to inform service improvements.

The response date recorded for the purpose of this report is the date on which a full response was sent. Reference is not made to any contact informing the complainant of progress made in the investigation of their complaint, or of requests for additional information, which can, on occasions, delay responses. When such delays occur we endeavour to keep complainants updated regarding progress made.

Those units against which no complaints have been referred to the Chief Executive, are not included in this report.

Corporate Complaints

The Chief Executive deals with three types of complaints:

Stage 1: Complaints formally registered for the first time:

This type of complaint should be referred to the Service Unit concerned; however, on occasion these are referred directly to the Chief Executive.

If a complaint is referred to the Chief Executive at this stage, it may be passed directly to the Unit concerned to respond, or the Chief Executive may respond in liaison with the Unit.

Those Stage 1 complaints recorded below are just the ones received and investigated by the Chief Executive, not those referred directly to units.

Stage 2: If the customer is not satisfied with the response received from the Unit concerned, they are offered the opportunity to complain to the Chief Executive.

Stage 3: Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman. Those complainants, who remain dissatisfied with the response received from the Chief Executive, may refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman for investigation. Complaints of this nature are handled by Corporate and Policy Services on behalf of the Chief Executive.

Structure

As the report relates to those complaints received during the period Sept 2005 to March 2006, before the implementation of the recent restructure the old

Council Unit Structure has been retained for reporting purposes, in future complaints will be reported inline with the new structure of the authority.

Timescales:

The investigating officer should ensure that all complaints are acknowledged in writing within five working days of the complaint being made. The complaint should be investigated and a response should be sent within ten working days of receipt. Where it is clear that investigation of a complaint will take longer than ten working days a letter of explanation should be sent, within ten days, and the complainant should be kept informed of progress at regular stages whilst the investigation is ongoing.

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response received from the Chief Executive they will be informed that the Council's complaints procedure has been exhausted. The complainant will be informed of their right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. Those complaints referred to and investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman will form part of a separate report.

When dealing with those complaints directed to the Chief Executive by the Local Government Ombudsman, responses are scheduled according to the timescales set out by the Local Government Ombudsman, in some instances these may differ from those set out in the Council's complaints policy.

3. TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED APRIL TO SEPTEMBER BROKEN DOWN BY SERVICE AREA

| UNIT | TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS | AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME (WORKING DAYS) |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| CUSTOMER, DEMOCRATIC AND OFFICE SUPPORT SERVICES | 1 | 2 Days |
| DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION | 1 | 2 Days |
| ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES | 5 | 9 Days |
| FINANCE | 3 | 10 Days |
| PROPERTY SERVICES | 1 | 2 Days |
| PUBLIC SPACE SERVICES | 1 | 5 Days |

Note: The length of time taken to send a full response to a complaint can vary according to the nature of the complaint. Those complaints that are complex in nature tend to involve ongoing contact with the complainant and various bodies and may elicit a longer period of time before a final response can be sent, this, along with the relatively small number of complaints relating to particular units may account for some of the variations in average response times between different units.

As those complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman are not detailed in this report the total number of complaints recorded above does not account for all of those complaints that pass stage two of the Council's complaints procedure. For details of those complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman please see the Ombudsman's report issued at year end under a separate cover.

Average Response Time for all Service Areas:

| |
|---------------|
| 7 Days |
|---------------|

4. DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services

| DATE RECEIVED | DATE OF RESPONSE | DESCRIPTION | OUTCOME/ACTION TAKEN |
|-----------------|------------------|---|--|
| 27 January 2006 | 2 February 2006 | Alleged racist treatment in One Stop Shop. Complainant alleged that Customer services were slow to respond and that this was the result of implicit racism. | Full investigation launched (including use of CCTV footage from One Stop Shop and interviews with staff). Allegation of Racism not upheld, issues regarding level of Customer Service offered fed back to staff. Support offered to complainant through Racial Equality Council. |
| TOTAL: 1 | | | |

Development and Regeneration

| DATE RECEIVED | DATE OF RESPONSE | DESCRIPTION | OUTCOME/ ACTION TAKEN |
|---------------|------------------|--|--|
| 15 March 2006 | 17 March 2006 | Complaint regarding debris left close to the Lake at Astley park following activity to drain the lake. | Complaint fully investigated. Apology issued, clarification of instructions issued to contractors regarding disposal of debris from the lake during any future drainage activity |
| TOTAL: 1 | | | |

Environmental Services

| DATE RECEIVED | DATE OF RESPONSE | DESCRIPTION | OUTCOME/ ACTION TAKEN |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| 28 September 2005 | 6 October 2005 | Complaint regarding refuse collection service, asserts that receptacles providing for recycling are inappropriate for purpose and are prone to loss on windy days. | Full explanation of rationale behind choice of receptacles provided to complainant. Offer of alternative receptacles made. |
| 23 January 2006 | 23 January 2006 | Complainant asserted that a vehicle had been damaged by refuse collection crews during the course of a collection. Requested compensation | Details forwarded to Cleanaway, the contractors charged with having caused damage for investigation and instigation of proceedings to pay compensation if appropriate. |
| 9 September 2005 | 30 September 2005 | Complaint regarding failure to accurately reflect charges relating to pest controls service in Council's website | Detailed investigation, apology issued and full explanation offered to complainant. Website amended. |
| 22 February 2006 | 23 March 2006 | Complaint regarding maintenance and policing of Public Space in Clayton Green and allocation of Council Tax | Complaint fully investigated. Full explanation of Council and Parish Council funding issued. Area allocated high priority status with Neighbourhood Warden's team. Details of local Police and communities Together Team provided to complainant. |
| 2 March 2006 | 6 March 2006 | Complaint regarding missed refuse collections | Complaint investigated, Customer informed of process for notifying the authority of missed collections. |
| TOTAL: 5 | | | |

Finance

| DATE RECEIVED | DATE OF RESPONSE | DESCRIPTION | OUTCOME/ACTION TAKEN |
|-------------------|------------------|--|---|
| 20 September 2005 | 3 October 2005 | Complaint regarding issuing of a Court summons for none payment by the revenues and benefits service whilst an appeal was ongoing causing unnecessary distress | Apology issued to complainant, procedures out in place to ensure that all recovery action is halted automatically whilst an appeal is underway. |
| 23 February 2006 | 2 March 2006 | Allegation of racism in administration of Housing Benefit | Complaint fully investigated, allegation not upheld, advice offered to complainant |
| 16 January 2006 | 6 February 2006 | Complaint regarding administration of single occupancy Council Tax reduction. | Complaint fully investigated and not upheld. Complainant provided with details of appeals service. |
| TOTAL: 3 | | | |

Property Services

| DATE RECEIVED | DATE OF RESPONSE | DESCRIPTION | OUTCOME/ACTION TAKEN |
|---------------|------------------|---|--|
| 15 March 2006 | 17 March 2006 | Complaint regarding administration of Right of Way access to property | Complaint investigated not upheld. Information provided to complainant to clarify position |
| TOTAL: 1 | | | |

Public Space Services

| DATE RECEIVED | DATE OF RESPONSE | DESCRIPTION | OUTCOME/ACTION TAKEN |
|------------------|------------------|---|--|
| 28 February 2006 | 7 March 2006 | Complaint regarding lack of enforcement action with regards to fly tipping at Drakes Hollow Estate. | Signage to be erected at the site. Arrangements made for a contractor to visit the site and undertake clearance work. Further investigation of how education and enforcement can be used in the longer term to address the problems outlined undertaken. |
| TOTAL: 1 | | | |

5. Potential Issues for further Overview and Scrutiny consideration

It may be worth noting that in this period two letters of thanks were received, one relating to the service offered by Housing Maintenance, the second letter thanked Council Housing Tenancy Services. Both letters have been passed to the Council's Communications Manager.