

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

Audit Committee – 16th September 2014

Customer Feedback Performance 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014

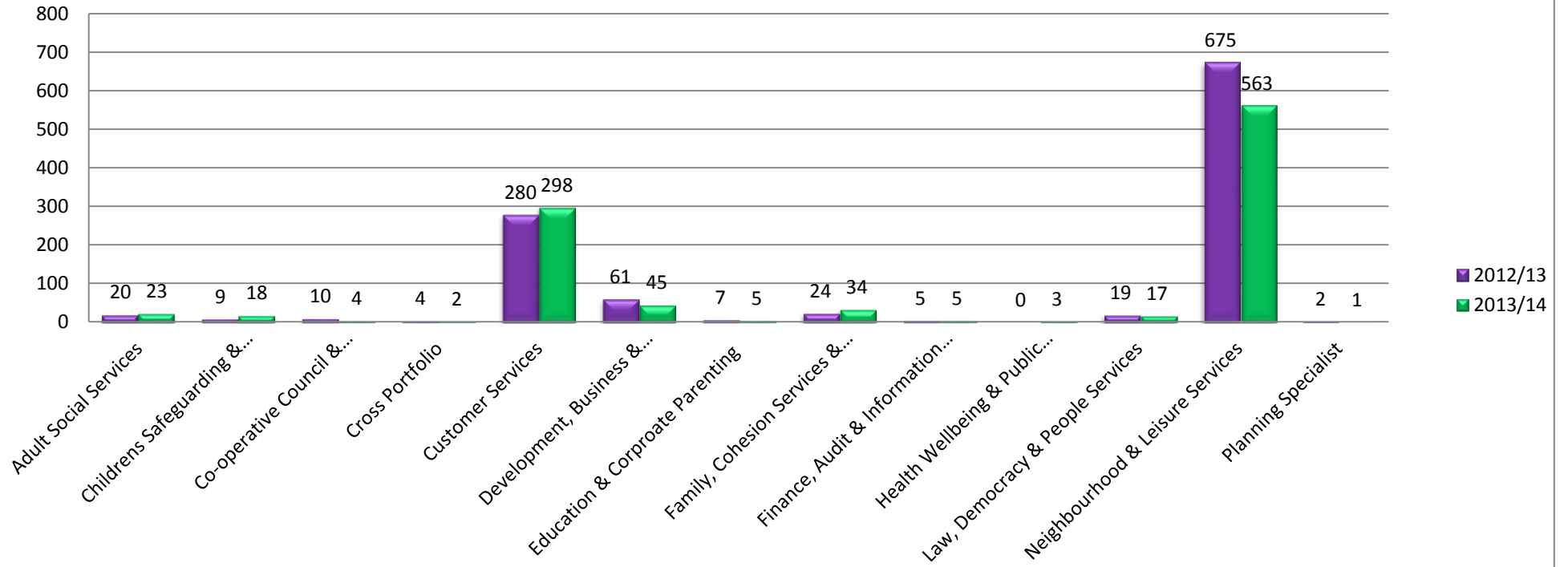
REPORT OF: Angie Astley, Assistant Director – Customer Services

Please note figures in brackets below relate to the corresponding period last year

1. Summary for the Period 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014

- 1.1 Detailed below are the main areas of customer compliments and complaints for this period. It should be acknowledged that there are relatively small numbers of complaints registered when compared to the number of services provided by the Council on a daily basis and against a backdrop of having delivered £53m in savings over the last 5 years. Given these circumstances, it is really pleasing to note that the number of complaints received in 2013/14 has reduced by 9%, with fewer complaints having elements fully or partly upheld, and that compliments received have increased by 17% for the same period. Complaints continue to be viewed as a good form of customer feedback and the Council already has a culture of embracing and learning from complaints over a number of years and this will continue in order to help continually improve service delivery.
- 1.2 For this period we received **592** (506) compliments an increase of 17% from this time last year, which is excellent news. The majority of the compliments were addressed to our front line services, particularly those in Neighbourhood and Leisure Services 211, Customer Services 115 and Adult Social Services 81.
- 1.3 We have received **1018** (1116) corporate complaints, a decrease of 9% over the same period last year. There has been a significant reduction in the numbers of complaints partly or fully upheld, to 54% compared to 66% for the same period last year. In part, this will be as a result of reminding managers to correctly determine whether a complaint is upheld or not.
- 1.4 It is also pleasing to note that 87% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 15 working days against a target of 83%.
- 1.5 The service area titles throughout this report have been updated following the structure changes introduced from 2nd January 2014

Comparison of corporate complaints received



2. Stage 2 – Independent Investigations of Corporate Complaints

Of the 1018 customer complaints received, only 40 requests were made for an independent ‘Stage 2’ investigation. Please find breakdown below.

| Service | Number of requests received | Outcome of request/ investigation |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Adult Social Services | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigated - partly upheld |
| Children’s Safeguarding & Specialist Services | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 investigated – 2 upheld, 1 partly upheld |
| Customer Services | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 investigated – partly upheld 2 requests refused (nothing further to add to Stage 1 response) |
| Development, Business & Employment | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 investigated (6 not upheld, 5 partly upheld) 2 requests refused (nothing further to add to Stage 1 response) A further response at Stage 1 sent for 1 request as some issues from original complaint weren’t addressed in the Stage 1 response. Awaiting customer to provide further evidence for 1 request |
| Family, Cohesion & Commissioning | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 investigated (1 not upheld, 2 partly upheld) |
| Neighbourhood & Leisure Services | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 investigated (1 upheld, 4 partly upheld, 5 not upheld) 2 withdrawn 2 request refused (nothing further to add to Stage 1 response) 1 resolved prior to escalation. |

3. Adult & Children's Statutory Complaints

For this period we received **120** (105) statutory complaints made up of:

- **51** (45) Adult Statutory
- **69** (60) Child Statutory

Both areas have seen an increase from the previous year.

53% (54%) of Adult statutory complaints had elements upheld, a slight decrease compared to last year and **27%** (31%) were responded to within the timescale. The average overall time taken to respond to a complaint was **42** days.

45% (55%) of Children's statutory complaints had elements upheld, a decrease compared to last year. **27%** (22%) were responded to within 10 working days, **50%** (25%) were responded to within 20 working days. The average time taken overall to respond was **17** days.

6 (3) Children's Statutory Stage 2 requests were received during this period. 1 was resolved through a mediation meeting, 2 were upheld, 1 was partly upheld and 2 were not upheld.

4. Freedom Of Information & Data Protection

Whilst Data Protection requests have remained static, there has been a 25% increase in Freedom Of Information requests.

- **1076** (862) Freedom of Information (FOI) requests with **95%** (90%) responded to within 20 working days
- **65** (65) Data Protection (DP) requests with **95%** (82%) responded to within 40 days

5. MP Enquiries

The customer services strategy, which will shortly be presented to Cabinet, contains an amendment to response timescales for MP Enquiries moving from 10 days to 15 days to bring this response time in line with those for customer complaints. This recommended

change reflects the reduction in resources and therefore our ability to respond within 10 days particularly in high volume areas such as Neighbourhood & Leisure Services. Therefore for this reporting period performance against both 10 and 15 days has been reported.

For this reporting period we have received a total of **200** (146) MP enquiries;

- ✚ David Wright, MP has submitted 152 enquiries and Mark Pritchard, MP has submitted 35. There were 13 enquiries submitted by other MP's.
- ✚ Of the 200 enquiries due a response at 31st March 2014, we have responded to 67% (57%) within the target of 10 working days or 82% within 15 days.
- ✚ David Wright MP - We have responded to 65% within 10 days & 79% within 15 days
- ✚ Mark Pritchard MP - We responded to 71% within 10 days and 91% within 15 days
- ✚ Neighbourhood & Leisure Services have received the highest number of MP enquiries 37% = 73.

The table in Appendix C shows the distribution of enquiries across the Service Area's and the levels of performance.

6. Member & Parish Council Enquiries

For this period we received:-

- ✚ **1037** (974) Member enquiries, with 98% (95%) responded to in target*
- ✚ **752** (1538) Parish enquiries, with 98% (92%) responded to in target*

* This includes enquiries and requests for service that have been received and had an initial response within 10 days. However, as a significant number of these relate to highways maintenance and improvements, not all of the work will have been completed within 10 days.

7. Ombudsman Enquiries

7.1 The Local Government Ombudsman received a total of 27 (24) enquiries relating to Telford & Wrekin Council. Please find breakdown below.

| Service | Number of enquires received | Number formally investigated by the LGO | Outcome of LGO enquiry/ investigation |
|---|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Adult Social Services | 8 | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still under investigation (1) • Could not reach a conclusion (1) • Not investigating (3) • Premature complaint (3) |
| Children's Safeguarding & Specialist Services | 1 | 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premature complaint (1) |
| Customer Services | 1 | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still under investigation (1) |
| Development, Business & Employment | 6 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still under investigation (3) • Not investigating (3) |
| Family, Cohesion & Commissioning | 3 | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still under investigation (1) • Premature complaint (2) |
| Law, Democracy & People Services | 3 | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injustice remedied during enquiry (1) • Awaiting final decision (1) • Premature complaint (1) |
| Neighbourhood & Leisure Services | 5 | 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside jurisdiction (2) • Not investigating (2) • Premature complaint (1) |

- The premature complaints were referred back to the Council's complaints procedure.
- A time and trouble payment of £750 was paid for the complaint where the LGO found injustice.
- There were no findings of maladministration served on the authority in this period.

- 7.2 To ensure that we take every opportunity to identify issues within our processes, we have now introduced a review of all Stage 2 complaint investigations, where the LGO identifies issues that weren't addressed in the Stage 2 investigation. In addition, all cases where the LGO finds fault with the Council will be presented to the Senior Management Team by the relevant Assistant Director, to ensure that lessons are shared across the Council.
- 7.3 Following criticism of the LGO service in a national report we have noticed a change in the approach to investigations and an increase in monetary recompense for time and trouble payments where fault has been found. In addition to being more thorough in their investigations they also appear to be more robust in respect to the follow up of actions required by the Council included in their final decision.

8. Summary & Impact Assessment

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| COMMUNITY IMPACT | Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)? | |
| | Yes | The information within this report impacts on all of the Council's Priorities. |
| | Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people? | |
| | No | The Corporate and Statutory feedback procedure is open to all our customers. Appropriate support is available to meet the diverse needs of our customers to enable them to make representation to the council. |
| TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE | Not applicable | |
| FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT | No | The costs associated with administering the complaints process is in the form of officer time. This is met from within existing budgets across the Council |
| LEGAL ISSUES | No | There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, however compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 , the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Statutory complaints procedure are legal requirements |
| OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES | Yes | The council's robust feedback mechanisms support the council to maintain its reputation by being responsive to our customers concerns and implementing service improvements as appropriate. |
| IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS | No | |

9. DETAILED INFORMATION

- 9.1 **Refuse & Kerbside** received **283** (262) complaints from approximately 70,000 properties which equates to over 3.6m collections. Of the 283 complaints, 65% had elements upheld. The upheld elements were mainly about missed pull outs and collections, bins/boxes not being returned and receptacles being taken or not delivered and items being spilt, along with a small number of inappropriate behaviour concerns by the contractors. It should be noted although we are reporting an increase in complaints compared to the same period last year, a review of internal processes, including what is classified as a complaint, has led to a significant reduction in the number of complaints recorded against this service in the last quarter of this period. The review related to missed refuse collections and it is now only recorded as a formal complaint where a missed collection isn't subsequently collected on time or there is a repeat occurrence of the event. This approach was agreed with the Assistant Directors for Neighbourhood & Leisure Services and Customer Services in October 2013. If this rationale had been applied throughout this year it would have resulted in an overall decrease in complaints recorded. This has been implemented without a reduction in the contract management data required to fully manage the waste contract.
- 9.2 **Council Tax & Benefits Service** received **195** (166) complaints from approximately 70,000 properties from whom we collect council tax and 21,100 benefit claimants. 46% of complaints had elements upheld. The upheld elements were mainly due to Benefit and Council Tax processing errors and delays. There has been a significant increase in workload due to the Governments welfare benefit reforms which commenced in April 2013 and this has also resulted in a major increase in the amount of correspondence that has been received across this particular service area. However, since the first quarter of this reporting period the number of upheld complaints has continued to decrease.. The Revenues and Benefits service analyse all complaints and any errors are put through the services quality monitoring process. Where necessary procedures are introduced or improved to reduce further errors or complaints. The majority of complaints relate to the recovery of council tax, which by its very nature will attract a larger volume of complaints.
- 9.3 **Traffic Management** received **51** (51) complaints, 45% of which had elements upheld. The upheld elements included traffic calming and road safety issues, obstructive parking and concerns around signage. Even though local authorities are facing reduced budgets and staffing levels there is still a high expectation from the public that we have the ability to respond positively to all requests for traffic calming and general road safety issues, i.e. to introduce measures to slow vehicles, provide pedestrian crossings etc. In many cases the issues are one of perception; we would always act promptly if there was a serious road safety problem.
- 9.4 **Leisure Centres** received **49** (102) complaints out of 1.2m visitors each year. Of the 49 complaints, 14 were fully upheld and a further 25 were partly upheld. Telford Ice Rink received 21 of the complaints and 76% of these were fully or partly upheld, these related to

the level of service and facilities available. It must be noted that the number of complaints for all the Leisure Centres has dropped significantly by over 50% compared to the 102 received in 2012/13 which is an excellent reflection on the service.

- 9.5 **Customer Contact Centre** received **47** (43) complaints, from approximately 279,000 customer contacts, during this period. Of these 70% had elements upheld which related to a range of issues. The majority of these related to the length of time taken for a call to be answered during peak periods when the welfare reforms went live earlier during the year and a smaller number relating to services not being provided as agreed. The latter two issues are always addressed with the individual officer concerned to minimise the likelihood of a similar incident occurring in the future.
- 9.6 **Highways Planned Maintenance** received **26** (6) complaints, 23% of which had elements upheld. The upheld elements related to the recent road works in the Telford area, including those that coincided with the road works the Highways Agency were carrying out on the M54.

Report prepared by Sarah-Jane Ballantyne, Customer Quality Team, 01952 382507

Top 10 Customer Complaints Investigated at Stage 1

| Service | No. Of Complaints Received | Numbers with elements fully/partly upheld | % fully/partly upheld |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Refuse & Kerbside | 283 | 183 | 65% |
| Council Tax & Benefits | 195 | 90 | 46% |
| Traffic Management | 51 | 23 | 45% |
| Leisure Centres | 49 | 39 | 79% |
| Customer Contact Centre | 47 | 33 | 70% |
| Highways Planned Maintenance | 26 | 6 | 23% |
| CRC's | 20 | 9 | 45% |
| Planning (Decision Making) | 18 | 4 | 22% |
| Housing Options | 16 | 3 | 19% |
| Trees & Woodlands | 15 | 7 | 47% |

Complaints Response Performance for Each Service Area

Corporate Stage 1 Complaints

| Service | % responded to within deadline | No Responded to In 15 days | No Responded To After 15 days | Total Complaints | % Upheld/ Partly Upheld |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Adult Social Services | 57% | 13 | 10 | 23 | 57% |
| Children's Safeguarding & Specialist Services | 39% | 7 | 11 | 18 | 61% |
| Co-operative Council & Commercial Delivery unit | 100% | 4 | 0 | 4 | 75% |
| Cross Portfolio | 100% | 2 | 0 | 2 | 100% |
| Customer Services | 95% | 282 | 16 | 298 | 54% |
| Development Business & Employment | 73% | 33 | 12 | 45 | 40% |
| Education & Corporate Parenting | 100% | 5 | 0 | 5 | 40% |
| Family , Cohesion Services & Commissioning | 91% | 31 | 3 | 34 | 47% |
| Finance, Audit & Information Governance | 80% | 4 | 1 | 5 | 60% |
| Health Wellbeing and Public Protection | 67% | 2 | 1 | 3 | 100% |
| Law, Democracy & People Services | 53% | 9 | 8 | 17 | 29% |
| Neighbourhood & Leisure Services | 87% | 489 | 74 | 563 | 56% |
| Planning Specialist | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| Overall Total | 87% | 881 | 136 | 1018 | 54% |

MP Enquiries

Appendix C

| Service | Number Received due for Response | | | | Number Responded to in 10 Days | | | | % Responded to in 10 Days | | | | % Responded to in 15 Days [#] |
|---|----------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|--|
| | Mark P | David W | Other MP | Total | Mark P | David W | Other MP | Total | Mark P | David W | Other MP | Total | Total |
| Adult Social Services | 4 | 10 | 0 | 14 | 4 | 5 | - | 9 | 100 | 50 | - | 64% | 79% |
| Children's Safeguarding & Specialist Services | 0 | 9 | 3 | 12 | - | 2 | 1 | 3 | - | 22 | 33 | 25% | 42% |
| Co-operative Council & Commercial Delivery Unit | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | - | 2 | - | 2 | - | 100 | - | 100% | 100% |
| Cross Portfolio | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | - | 2 | 100 | 50 | - | 67% | 67% |
| Customer Services | 4 | 31 | 1 | 36 | 3 | 29 | 1 | 33 | 75 | 94 | 100 | 92% | 97% |
| Development Business & Employment | 4 | 17 | 0 | 21 | 3 | 12 | - | 15 | 75 | 71 | - | 71% | 81% |
| Education & Corporate Parenting | 1 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 4 | - | 5 | 100 | 80 | - | 83% | 83% |
| Family, Cohesion Services & Commissioning | 4 | 14 | 4 | 22 | 2 | 12 | 3 | 17 | 50 | 86 | 75 | 77% | 90% |
| Finance, Audit & Information Governance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Health, Wellbeing & Public Protection | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 100 | 100% | 100% |
| Law, Democracy & People Services | 1 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 63% | 75% |
| Neighbourhood & Leisure Services | 16 | 54 | 3 | 73 | 10 | 27 | 3 | 40 | 63 | 50 | 100 | 55% | 78% |
| Planning Specialist | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | - | 1 | - | 1 | 0 | 50 | - | 50% | 100% |
| Overall Total | 35 | 152 | 13 | 200 | 25 | 98 | 10 | 133 | 71 | 65 | 77 | 67% | 82% |

A target of 15 days will be adopted subject to Cabinet approval, and this represents performance against a 15 day target.