



Report Reference Number: A/22/7

To: Audit and Governance Committee
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Status: Non-Executive Decision
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Title: Corporate Complaints & Compliments Annual Report, April 2021 – March 2022 and Local Authority Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2022

Summary:

Selby District Council is committed to customer service. We believe that the needs of our customers are our top priority, and we are committed to putting our customers first by improving the quality of our services and our customers' experience of them. We are keen to understand where services can improve as changes are made to a deliver a greater digital service.

The Council adopted a Complaints Policy in 2017, which was amended in 2020 in respect of dealing with vexatious customers. In this policy we have made a commitment to publish our performance on dealing with complaints every quarter as part of the Corporate Performance Report and to publish an annual complaints report.

The annual report is an opportunity to inform on service area improvement, this report covers April 2021 – March 2022

As previously advised, this report also includes information and a link to the Ombudsman Annual Report to provide a comprehensive picture of complaints handling at this Council.

Recommendations:

That the Audit and Governance Committee note and provide comments on the Corporate Complaints Annual Report and the Ombudsman Annual Report.

Reasons for recommendation

In our Complaints Policy we have made a commitment to publish an annual complaints report. This report includes how we have performed in responding to complaints and how we have used complaints to inform service improvement. Including Ombudsman information within the same report provides Members with a full picture of complaints handling and its effect on continually improving standards at Selby District Council.

1.0 Introduction and background -

- 1.1 Complaints arrive into the Council in varying ways; telephone, email, and letter. The central point for receipt, recording and administration is Customer Services, who triage to assess the type of complaint received. The assessment is to establish if the complaint is a service area complaint, which can be initially dealt with by the Customer Service team, or if there is a requirement for the Customer Service team to log as a corporate complaint and trigger the designated timelines.
- 1.2 Compliments are usually received direct from a service area, a line manager or a colleague plus via the web, where a customer can log their feedback. The Customer Service team log details of the named member of staff or team and the service area, with brief details of the customer's comments.
- 1.3 Customer Services monitor complaints for responses to Stage 1, Stage 2 and Ombudsman complaints and they issue reminders to colleagues for completion dates.

During the last financial year, 27 complaints have been dealt with as a service area complaint, providing a timely response and minimising the risk of escalation to a corporate complaint.

- 1.4 Information is gathered monthly and quarterly for Stage 1, Stage 2, and Ombudsman complaints, including details of the numbers received and if they have been responded to in the required timeframe. This information is then recorded in KPI reports and published on the web.

2.0 Complaints Performance Report:

Stage 1 Corporate Complaint's

- 2.1 The tables below illustrate a comparison of Stage 1 complaints for the last two financial years, and the data that forms part of the current KPI and the yearly return of the council's performance: -

2020-2021: -

Service Area	Total	On time	Late	Not Justified	Partially Justified	Justified	No data provided
Operational	26	23	3	11	5	1	9
Planning	18	15	3	1	2	0	15
Legal	1	1	0	1	0	0	0

Democratic	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Licensing	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Contracts	4	4	0	2	2	0	0
Business Dev	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comm. & Partnership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	52	46	6	15	9	1	27

2021-2022: -

Service Area	Total	On time	Late	Not Justified	Partially Justified	Justified	No data provided
Prop and Commercial	16	15	1	4	10	2	0
Planning	20	11	9	6	3	7	4
Legal	0						
Democratic	0						
Licensing							
Contracts	4	4		2	2		
Business Dev	1	1			1		
Housing	7	4	3	4			3
Environmental Health	3	3		3			
Benefits and Taxation	2	2		2			
Total	53	40	13	21	16	9	7

2.2 These figures illustrate Stage 1 complaints have remained at a similar figure. Late responses have increased, however information regarding complaint justification has increased. Complaints where no data outcome has been received from service areas represents 13% of all complaints received, compared to 25% from the previous year.

Stage 2 Corporate Complaints

2.3 The tables below illustrate a comparison of Stage 2 complaints for the last two financial years, and the data that forms part of the current KPI and the yearly return of the council's performance: -

2020-2021: -

Service Area	Total	On time	Late	Not Justified	Partially Justified	Justified	No data provided
Operational	9	5	4	2	0	0	7
Planning	13	9	4	1	0	0	12
Legal	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Contracts	2	2	0	0	1	0	1
Business Dev	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comm. & Partnership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	25	16	9	3	1	0	21

2021-2022: -

Service Area	Total	On time	Late	Not Justified	Partially Justified	Justified	No data provided
Housing	5	5		4			1
Planning	12	7	5	5	1	1	5
Benefits and Taxation	1	1		1			
Contracts	1	1		1			
Property and Commercial	3	2	1	3			
Total	22	16	6	14	1	1	6

2.4 These figures illustrate Stage 2 complaints have decreased slightly, late responses have also decreased slightly, information regarding complaint justification has increased, providing more data on the complaint outcome.

LGA Ombudsman Complaints

2.5 The figures below illustrate an increase in complaints escalated to the LGA Ombudsman. However, the majority when assessed by the LGO were not investigated. The LGO reported a nil return for complaints upheld for SDC for the last financial year.

2020-2021: -

Received	Investigated	Not investigated	Complaint upheld	Complaint not upheld
7	3	4	0	3

2021-2022: -

Received	Investigated	Not investigated	Complaint upheld	Complaint not upheld
12	2	10	0	2

2.6 The Ombudsman Service published the Annual Statistics on its website for 21/22 at [Selby District Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) None of the complaints made against SDC were upheld during this period.

Compliments

2.7 The figures below show an overall decrease in the number of compliments received and the service areas concerned.

2020-2021: -

Received	Contact Centre	Assets	Lifeline	Housing	CT& Bens	Contracts	Planning
134	67	26	3	8	2	27	1

2021-2022: -

Received	Contact Centre	Assets	Lifeline & DFG	Data & Systems	Housing	EH	CT& Bens	Contracts	SDC & CX
80	25	20	3	3	7	3	3	12	4

Other Complaints

2.7 Separate from the complaint's procedure, MP enquires continue to come direct to Customer Services, who facilitate a response in a timely manner. In the last financial year 47 MP enquiries have been received and referred for response.

This enables the designated officer to have an overview of varying complaints received which assists with appropriate escalation of complaints and decreases duplication of complaints across MP enquiries, corporate complaints, and service area complaints.

3.0 Legal Implications

3.1 Clear and lawful policies and procedures in place to consider complaints and learn from them reduces the risk of legal challenges and increases the efficiency of Council administration. Oversight by Members is important in terms of transparency and openness.

Financial Implications

- 3.2 With stronger complaint administration and key data on lessons learnt, this may assist with claims against the Council for compensation for delays with complaint handling.

4. Conclusion

Complaint administration has returned to Customer Services. A designated officer within the team has been assigned to this duty. The Officer collates information on complaints for the yearly return.

The administration of Corporate complaints, Ombudsman correspondence and MP enquiries is managed in Customer Services to provide a more holistic approach with the intention of minimising confusion for customers and colleagues.

Corporate complaints are a tool to provide vital feedback for the Council to improve our performance. The return by Departments of Stage 1 & Stage 2 monitoring sheets to Complaints Administration has provided information advising on the outcome of the complaint.

During this report period, Leadership support and Customer services have provided strong administrative support, assisting with responses at service level, to avoid matters escalating to corporate complaints.

Corporate complaints remain at a similar figure over the last two financial years, with more information received from colleagues in regard to the complaint outcome of not justified, justified and partially justified.

As we move to North Yorkshire Council, the joint corporate policy is intended to continue to strengthen the council's relationship with our customer base and evidence the value we place on complaints received.

It can be inferred from the Ombudsman Annual Review Report [selby district council.pdf \(lgo.org.uk\)](#) that Selby District Council's improvements to complaints handling procedures continue to impact on outcomes of Ombudsman Complaints, resulting in improved reputation and increased efficiency of process.

Members are asked to note the information in this report.

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