



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

Audit and Risk Committee

November 2016

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS (NON STATUTORY)

Report of the Director of Finance

- **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to update the Audit and Risk Committee on progress since the BSC Service Manager presented findings on the corporate non statutory complaints process in November 2015 and to report Quarter 2 2016/17 non statutory complaints figures.

- **Summary – Progress Update**

- Policy and Procedure

A new complaints procedure has been piloted which streamlines the process of handling corporate complaints from whatever source they derive and to take a much more flexible approach when handling a complaint dependent upon the nature and complexity.

It will be at a 'triage' stage that will determine the route of the complaint and who will need to be involved. This also simplifies the process and independent investigation will take place to determine whether a complaint is justified or otherwise. This also removes the need for a stage 2 complaint which previously existed.

This commenced from the new Organisational structure being implemented and the new CRM being in place from April 2016.

Evaluation of this pilot has now taken place with our citizens who have made a complaint using this process, officers and customer services.

The findings are detailed on appendix 1.

- Technology, Recording and Management Information

A new system has been procured and been in operation since April 2016, which incorporates Corporate Complaints and a portal in use by Customer services to process our citizens transactions. This is part of the Customer Services transformation project led by Sarah Moore. The new system incorporates the functionality required to streamline and record corporate

complaints. 'Self' is a system for those citizens who are able to self-serve to transact business with the council on line, this was soft launched on 4 October 2016. It is anticipated that once this has been fully evaluated that councillors, MP and Mayoral enquiries, will use a similar process. Members will be consulted whilst devising the system.

- Structures/Roles & Responsibilities- Corporate Complaints

A centralised corporate complaints function has now been in place since November 2015 with Complaints Officers who will manage a complaints case load and ensure that service improvements are identified, reported and followed through with Divisions.

The evaluation of this service is also attached in **appendix 1**.

Report on Key Quarterly Information Q2 2016/17

- Complaints - Quarter 2 the total number of complaints received was 507, compared to 699 in the Q2 2015/16. However, of these complaints received 114 were 'triaged' out (22%) of the complaints process, as another process was applicable. This meant that a total of 393 were investigated and responded to within the quarter.
- Justified Complaints - in 2015/16 Q2 21% of all complaints received were categorised as justified. The reporting of justification last year was determined by the service. This year the complaints team are independently assessing whether the complaint was justified. The numbers of justified complaints might therefore be expected to increase.
- In addition a new category of partially justified has been introduced. Complaints are rarely about 1 isolated issue and so we have introduced a partially justified category, where some elements of the complaint can be considered justified, where others were not.
- In Q2 26% of complaints investigated were wholly justified, 26% were partially justified.
- Complaints Categories – Headline categories are as follows, and now include an additional category of 'appointment issues', as this was found to be an element in many complaints when analysing previous data.
 - Appointment Issues
 - Policy Procedure & Legislation
 - Premises
 - Quality of Service
 - Speed of Service
 - Staff Attitude & Behaviour

Previous recording only captured one category for complaint. We now categorise each complaint over all applicable areas relating to the complaint, therefore raw numbers on categorisation will exceed total

number of complaints received. However, categorising them in this way gives us better analysis.

In addition each of these categories is now broken down further. These again are based on key themes emerging from analysis of 2015/16 complaints. The full detail is on the attached summary sheet (**appendix 2**). This also captures whether these complaints were justified (including part justified within the figure)

The most significant area of categorisation remains the quality of service. 46% of complaints contained an element of poor quality of service.

Top 15 service areas for complaints					
	July	August	September	Q	%
<i>Housing repairs</i>	30	31	26	87	22%
<i>Housing other</i>	23	15	17	55	14%
<i>Revenues and benefits</i>	18	19	14	51	13%
<i>Council tax</i>	9	14	18	41	10%
<i>Housing options</i>	13	5	9	27	7%
<i>Customer services</i>	9	6	4	19	5%
<i>Parks and green spaces</i>	5	10	3	18	5%
<i>Streetscene enforcement</i>	3	7	5	15	4%
<i>Licencing and pollution control</i>	3	10	2	15	4%
<i>Planning management</i>	7	4	0	11	3%
<i>Waste management</i>	3	2	3	8	2%
<i>Sports and leisure centres</i>	2	4	1	7	2%
<i>Arts and museums</i>	3	0	2	5	1%
<i>Open Uncategorised</i>	0	1	4	5	1%
<i>Right to buy</i>	0	3	0	3	1%
<i>The Top three areas account for 49% of complaints received and is in line with previous data</i>					

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report – Kamal Adatia, City Barrister & Head of Standards, ext. 37 1401.

Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications arising directly from this report – Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081.

Report Author/Officer to contact:

Caroline Deane, BSC Service Manager
Date 27 October 2016

APPENDIX 1

EVALUATION OF PILOT ONE STAGE PROCEDURE AND CENTRALISED COMPLAINTS FUNCTION FOR CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

Methodology

In order to evaluate the new procedure we decided on key areas of performance that we needed to analyse. Some of these were based on the weaknesses of the old procedure, and others were general qualities that all service based processes should aim to provide.

These were:

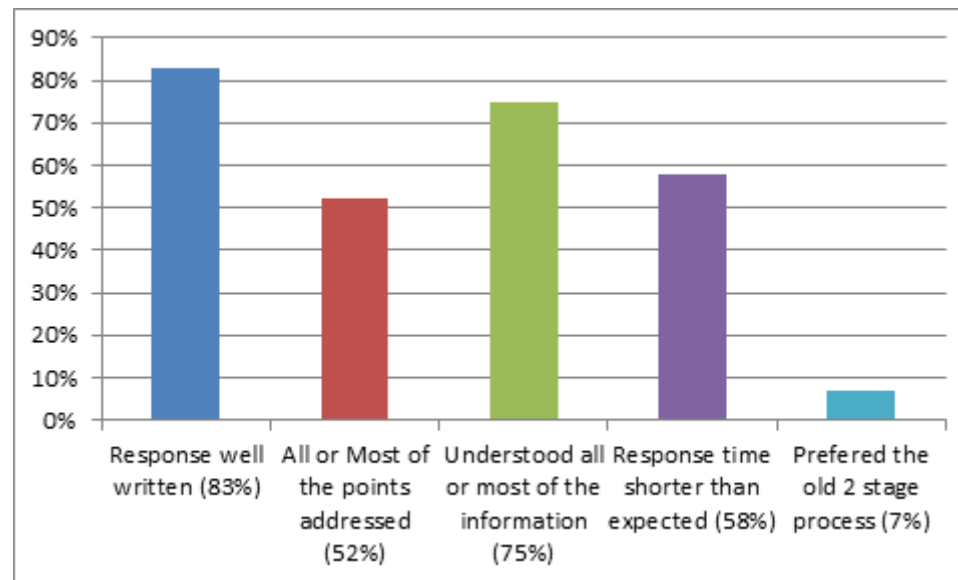
1. The complaints team should deal with fewer service requests than in the old process. The service requests are better dealt with by the specialised team for that request and it takes up time of the complaints team unnecessarily.
2. Vexatious customers should be contained more effectively than in the old process. The customers shouldn't be able to engage many areas of the council repeatedly with the same request as they used to, this encourages them to keep trying and uses up valuable officer time.
3. Ensure the categorisation regarding the 'Justification' of the complaint is accurate. This is a classification to show whether the council had received the complaint due to a genuine mistake or failing on our part. The fear was that since service areas would decide this in the old process, there was a conflict of interest with admitting fault.
4. Responses should be a consistent high quality, where high quality is defined by:
 - a. They should be well written
 - b. Complaints responses should accurately address the issues raised
 - c. The information should be given clearly
5. Timescales should be both reasonable and met. The timescale we give the customers for us to get our final response to them needs to be met as promised, but also needs to be a reasonable timescale as per the customer's expectations.
6. Reduced cost of or increased efficiency in providing the service. This is an ongoing aim of every service in the council. Based on the findings about the objectives above, we would hope to see either a reduction in costs or a maintained cost if the level of service has improved. We would need to consider both operational and efficiency costs.

To analyse our performance on these areas we used Survey Monkey for external customers who had complained using this process, and another set of surveys for internal officers who deal with the complaints process. We will also use statistics surrounding these KPI's where possible to empirically show the differences.

Key findings of the citizen survey (citizens who had made a complaint)

This was sent to citizens who had used an email address and used the new complaints process. The response rate was 11%. Citizens responded as follows:

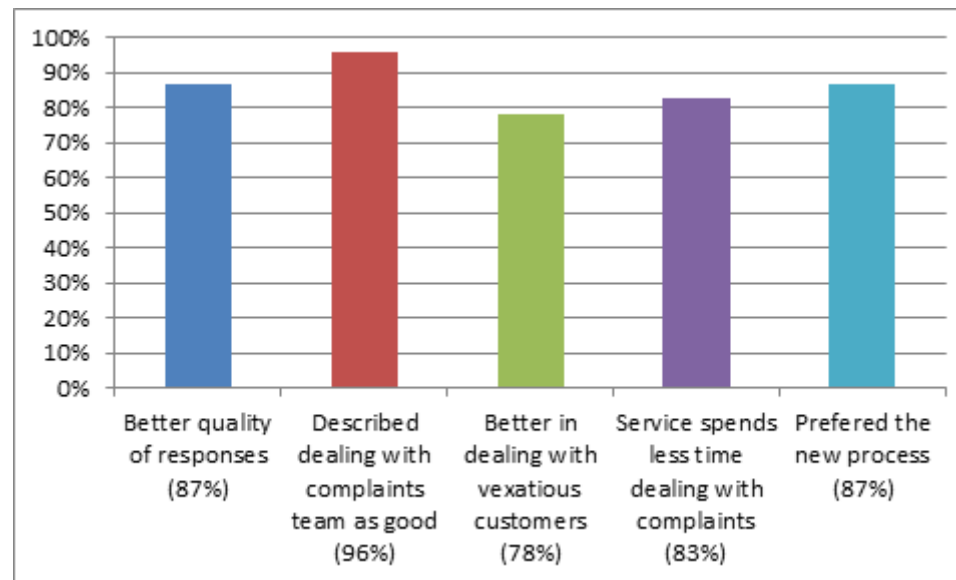
- 83% stated that the response received was well written.
- 52% stated that all or most of the points that they had raised in the complaint had been addressed, on further examination of this, comparing the complaint response to the issues recorded, 94% of the responses addressed all the points recorded by customer services regarding the complaint.
- 75% stated that they understood all or most of the information contained in the response to them
- 58% reported that the response time was either shorter or as they had expected. Of the 42% who thought it was longer than expected, none of the response times were over 10 days which was the previous blanket response time.
- Only 7% stated that they preferred the old 2 stage process.



Key findings of the Services, Managers and Heads of Service

This was sent to managers who previously undertook stage 2 investigations and also responded to complaints. There was a 58% response rate.

- 87% thought that the response that was sent out by the complaints team was of a better quality than previously sent out by services
- 96% of managers reported that their experience of dealing with the corporate complaints team was good
- 78% reported that the process for dealing with vexatious customers was better than previously, please note that 14% reported that they had not used the new process, so could not comment, and 8% felt that it was time consuming giving evidence to the complaints team to back up the vexatious process
- 83% reported that they spent less time in the new process dealing with complaints
- 87% reported that they preferred the new process



In conclusion the new pilot process of one stage, and being investigated and responded to by a specific team has had no adverse affects to our citizens and we will be recommending that this be formally adopted.