

Report to Finance & Performance Working Group

17th February 2016

By David Plank Customer Services Manager

INFORMATION REPORT



Horsham
District
Council

Not exempt

Complaints & Compliments Monitoring Report for Horsham District Council 1st October to 31st December 2015

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform the Finance & Performance Working Group of the details of the complaints and compliments notified to the Council's Complaints and Feedback Officer for the period 1st October to 31st December 2015. The intention is to learn from the feedback that the Council receives to prevent reoccurrence of complaints, improve Council services and promote areas of good practice.

For the period 1st October to 31st December 2015 the Complaints and Feedback Officer was notified of 57 complaints and the number of complaints received at the Council's leisure centres for the period was 102. In previous reports we have stated the number of telephone complaints received by Census Revenues & Benefits. With the introduction of a new telephone system, the department wanted to record the number of complaints made about it to monitor introductory issues. As these complaints have now dwindled to near non-existence, the department has now decided to record any complaints about telephones directly onto Covalent. Therefore, the number of complaints for the quarter does now include any of these received.

Over the course of quarter two and three, we have seen an improvement to each department's management of the complaints. We are seeing good progress in response times as staff receive triggers as the due date for a response approaches. Whilst staff have 20 working days to respond in full to a complaint, we do endeavour to reply well before this date as this is a key driver of customer satisfaction.

There has been a significant reduction in complaints received in Quarter three, with a decrease from 102 complaints in Quarter two. Whilst there is still progress to be made, the use of root cause analysis and the Covalent software to rigorously monitor complaints, in terms of their content and how they are addressed, has made a promising start and yielded positive results. Quarter three has in fact recorded more compliments than it did complaints.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

- i) To Note the contents of this report and comment as appropriate.

Reasons for Recommendations

- i) To increase awareness of the Council's corporate complaints procedure and improve our learning and understanding from the complaints received.

Background Papers: Local Government Ombudsman's (LGOs) Guidance on Running a Complaints System, LGO Guidance on Good Administrative Practice, LGO Guidance on Remedies

Consultation: Director of Community Services & Monitoring Officer

Wards affected: All

Contact: David Plank, Customer Services Manager ext 5371

Background Information

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to show the number and type of complaints and compliments received by Council department to identify trends and help monitor the situation. This excludes any representations, appeals or disagreements with Council policy – these are not classed as complaints under the Council’s current definition of a complaint.

This report is intended for managers, staff and Councillors to help everyone at the Council learn and act upon customer feedback.

2 Statutory and Policy Background

2.1 Local Government Act 2000

Relevant Government policy

- 2.2 Current LGO Guidance recommends that information gathered from front line staff about complaints, questions and comments be collated and reviewed on a regular basis as it can be a valuable source of information about how users view service provision. This provides a mechanism for identifying emerging issues that might be addressed before they escalate into complaints.

Relevant Council Policy

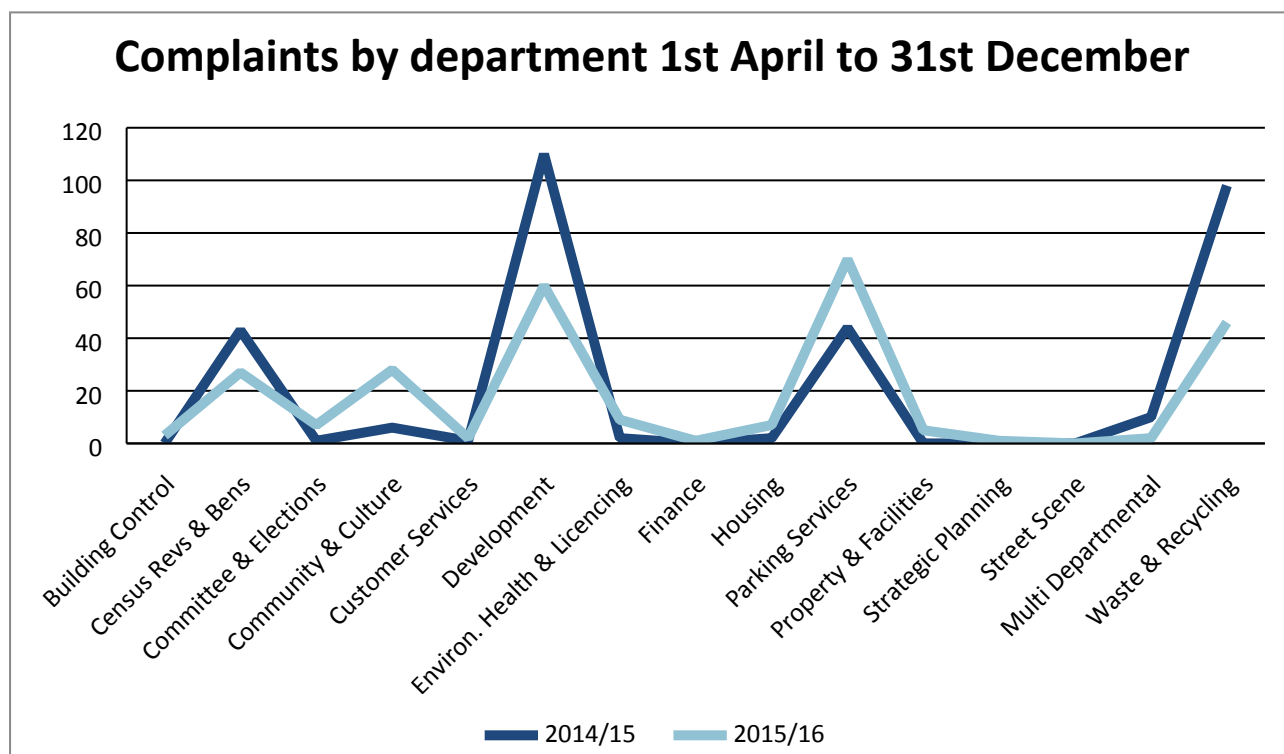
- 2.3 The Council’s procedure for dealing with Comments, Representations, Criticism of Policy and Complaints was approved by Council February 2015.

3 Details

Complaints notified to the Complaints and Feedback Officer 1st October to 31st December 2015

- 3.1 The number of complaints notified to the Complaints and Feedback Officer for the period 1st October to 31st December 2015 is 57 complaints. A further 102 were received by the Leisure centres. In previous reports we have stated the number of telephone complaints received by Census Revenues & Benefits. With the introduction of a new telephone system, the department wanted to record the number of complaints made about it to monitor introductory issues. As these complaints have now dwindled to near non-existence, the department has now decided to record any complaints about telephones directly onto Covalent. Therefore, the number of complaints for the quarter does now include any of these received.

3.2 We did anticipate that there may have been spikes in numbers with the introduction of Covalent, as this is the first time that complaints have been accurately recorded all in one place. However, at this point in the year, we have received a total of 268 complaints for 1st April 2015 to 31st December 2015. We received 317 complaints in the same period for the previous year. This is a reduction in complaints of 18% in this year.

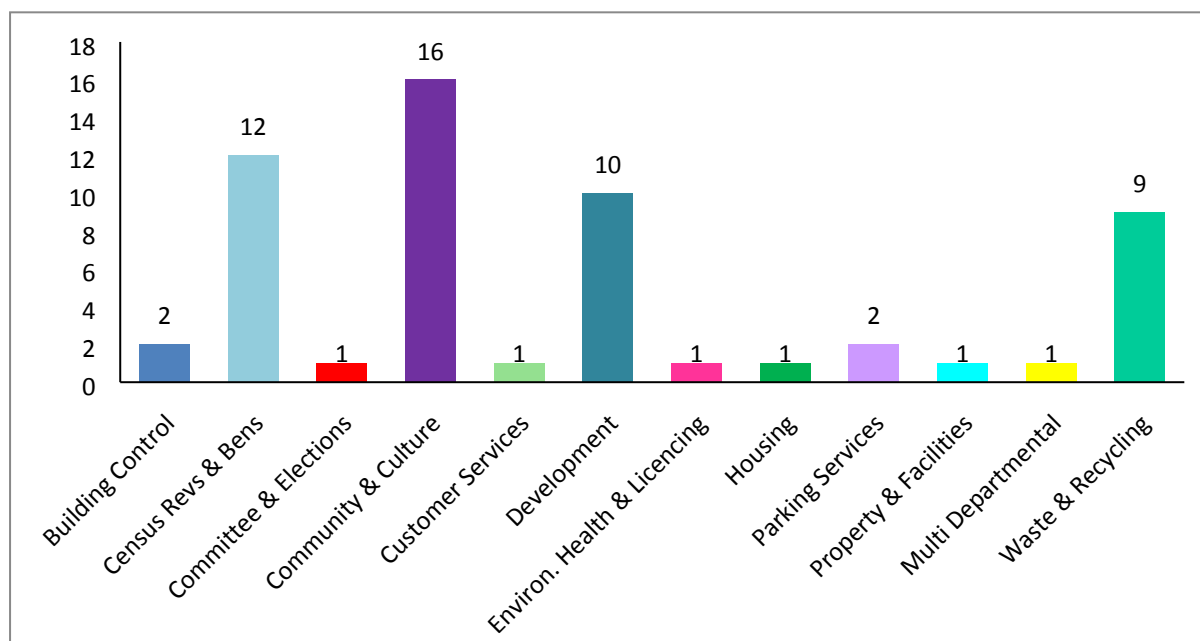


Note The spike in complaints in parking services for the 2015/16 year has predominately been caused by the introduction of the Smart Parking system. It was expected that the number of complaints for this would reduce over time and this has been the case.

3.3 It should be noted that front line Council services such as parking, refuse collections, planning services and leisure facilities will, by their nature attract more complaints than the services which provide 'in house' functions. Horsham District Council's current definition of a complaint is:-

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response, about the standards of service, action or lack of action by the Council, its staff or a contractor working on the Council's behalf affecting an individual customer or resident or group of customers'

3.4 Complaints received by department 1st October to 31st December 2015.



There has been a significant decrease in complaints to Parking Services. This is a result of identifying the root causes of their previous complaints and actively working to address customers' concerns before they become formal complaints.

Similarly, a significant decrease in the number of complaints regarding the Development Department (down from 24) and the Waste & Recycling Department (down from 26) is a result of root cause analysis and change in approach to complaints.

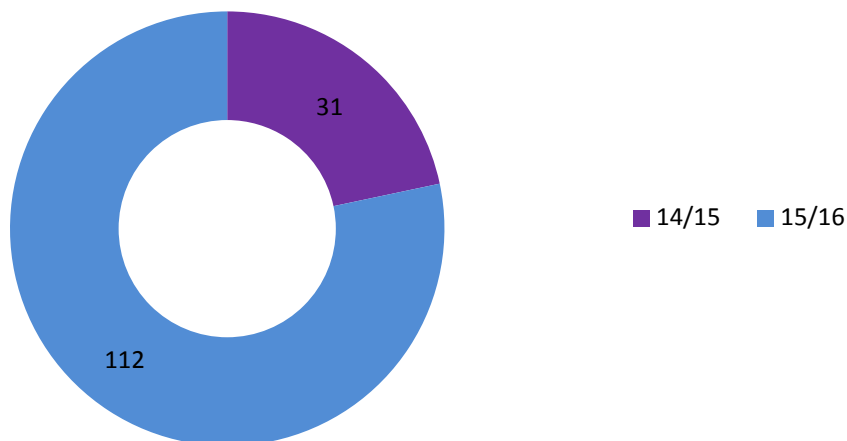
The increase in complaints for Community and Culture is predominantly due to increased complaints about The Capitol. The December period traditionally sees a higher footfall at the theatre because of the pantomime. Also the release of the James Bond and Star Wars films saw increased visitor numbers. It does follow that increased patronage will see higher numbers of correspondence about the theatre and we have seen both increased complaints *and* compliments. We therefore, expect a decrease in complaints moving forward into quarter four.

3.5 Compliments received for the period 1st October to 31st December 2015.

Department	Compliments Received 1 July 2015 to 30 September 2015
Community & Culture	19
The Capitol	15
Economic Development	2
Environmental Health & Licencing	4
Development	5
Spatial Planning	1
Waste & Recycling	7
Street Scene	8
Multi Departmental	1
Leisure Centres	84
TOTAL	146

Note The total number of compliments *excluding* leisure centres has again increased this quarter from last. We have received a total of 62 compliments excluding leisure centres on quarter three, giving a total number of compliments to date of 112 for the 2015/16 year.

Compliments received 1st April- 31st December



We understand that these numbers of compliments have always been received by the various departments, but they have not been accurately recorded until now. The Complaints and Feedback officer has encouraged staff to inform their managers of compliments they receive and as such we now have a much more accurate reflection of the positive experiences that our customers have.

4 Outcome of Consultations

4.1 Not applicable

5 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

5.1 Not applicable

6 Staffing Consequences

6.1 There are no staffing consequences as a result of this report.

7 Financial Consequences

7.1 Whilst each complaint does have its own costs, there are no financial consequences as a result of this report.

