

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Corporate Complaints update</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Audit Committee on 10 February 2016
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Graham Ebers, Director of Finance and Resources

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

We proactively engage with our residents and customers, if they express dissatisfaction about a service we deliver. This helps us to understand issues from their perspective, learn and continuously improve how we do things to serve our community.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee is requested to provide comments which might further improve this area of work.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

In September 2014 the Complaints team moved into Information Services, located within the Customer Service team.

This was a new team, and after the move the key objective was to look at how complaints were dealt with, identify where immediate improvements could be made to resident and customer experiences, plus promote early resolution.

There has been an increased focus on working in partnership with colleagues to achieve these objectives and change mind-sets around the way we deal with complaints; whilst recognising the difference between a complaint and a service request. To date, this has been successful.

### **Corporate complaints** (Appendix 1, slide 6)

From April to December 2013 we received a total of 145 complaints at stage 1. In the same period 2014 we received 161 stage 1's, and in the same period 2015 we received 75 - a reduction of 46.5% year on year.

For 2013 and 2014, approximately 22% of stage 1 corporate complaints escalated to stage 2. For 2015, only 12% of complaints escalated to stage 2, a total of 9.

The most common reasons for corporate complaints are inadequate service delivered and delays in delivery.

As at 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the complaints received via the LGO and HO have reduced by 55.5% since 2014. 5 of the 6 corporate complaints received from the LGO relate to school transport appeals, which do not go through the Council's internal complaints process. The remaining complaint was received via the HO regarding housing maintenance issues.

### **Children's Social Care complaints** (Appendix 1, slide 7)

From April to December 2013 we received a total of 9 complaints at stage 1. In the same period 2014 we received 11 stage 1's, and in the same period 2015 we received 5.

For 2013 and 2014, 4 of the 20 stage 1 complaints were escalated to stage 2. For 2015, no complaints were escalated to stage 2.

The most common reasons for Children's complaints are inadequate or non-delivery of services.

There has been no contact from the LGO in respect of social care complaints received in Q3; although, as they will investigate complaints within 12 months of them being reported, we may yet see some escalate to the LGO.

### **Adult Social Care complaints** (Appendix 1, slide 8)

From April to December 2013 we received a total of 14 complaints at stage 1. In the same period 2014 we received 15 stage 1's, and in the same period 2015 we received 16.

For 2013 and 2014 only 4 stage 1 complaints were escalated to stage 2. For 2015, no complaints were escalated to stage 2.

The most common reasons for corporate complaints are inadequate or non-delivery of services.

There has been no contact from the LGO in respect of social care complaints received in Q3; although, as they will investigate complaints within 12 months of them being reported, we may yet see some escalate to the LGO.

## **Background**

The complaints team deal with both corporate (including Housing) and social care complaints, and there are formal processes published for all.

Customers can refer to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) or Housing Ombudsman (HO) should they remain dissatisfied after completing the process.

<http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/contact-us/how-to-complain/>

In September 2014 the Complaints team moved into Information Services, located within the Customer Service team.

After the move the key objective was to look at how complaints were dealt with, identify where immediate improvements could be made to resident and customer experiences, plus promote early resolution.

By focusing more on resolving complaints at an early stage, means that:

- Our residents and customers receive a satisfactory response as quickly as possible
- It negates the need to escalate to further stages, therefore reducing cost and resource to deal
- It demonstrates our commitment to listen, achieve a positive resolution quickly and act on any learning as a result

There has been an increased focus on working in partnership with colleagues to achieve these objectives and, as part of the Customer Programme, a change of mind-sets around the way complaints are dealt with; whilst recognising the difference between a complaint and a service request. (Appendix 1, slide 13)

### **Analysis of Issues**

Good progress has been made during 2015 with the focus on early resolution. A Lean review has commenced around how corporate complaints are dealt with. Lean is an examination and improvement of business processes designed to reduce errors, reduce effort and improve speed. The aim is to improve customer experiences by standardising the processes and sharing good practice. The full output of this Lean review is due at the end of February 2016.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

#### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

N/A

#### **Cross-Council Implications**

Complaints cut across all Council services.

#### **Reasons for considering the report in Part 2**

N/A

#### **List of Background Papers**

Complaints report April – December 2015, as at 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

<b>Contact</b> Jacqueline Whitney	<b>Service</b> Customer Services
<b>Telephone No</b> 0782 440 9291	<b>Email</b> Jackie.Whitney@wokingham.gov.uk
<b>Date</b> 28.01.16	<b>Version No.</b> 1