

Bolsover District Council

Executive

26th June 2017

Customer Service Standards and Compliments,
Comments and Complaints Report 2016/17 –
1st October 2016 to 31st March 2017 and Annual Summary

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- To provide information on the Council's performance in relation to its customer service standards.
- To provide information on the effective management of complaints and customer requests which is central to excellent customer service and the Council can use to improve its services.
- To provide information on the number of compliments, comments and complaints for the period 1st October 2016 to 31st March 2017
- To provide an Annual Summary on the above.

1 Report Details

The purpose of this report is to make Elected Members aware of performance in relation to its Customer Service Standards across the organisation and provides supporting evidence for Customer Service Excellence. Elected Members will note that Customer Service Excellence is compliance checked annually to ensure that the organisation still meets the standard.

Customer Service Standards

Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of the key customer service standards by quarterly period, together with the target and the cumulative performance for each standard.

Telephones

Target - 93% to be answered within 20 seconds (5 rings)

Appendix 2 shows the corporate performance between 1st October 2016 to 31st March 2017, by quarterly period. The report identifies 92% (94% achieved for Q3 and 91% for Q4) of incoming calls are being answered corporately within 20 seconds cumulatively. Those departments not achieving the key customer service standard of 93% for these periods were:

Quarter 1

- Customer Service (& Improvement) 80%
- Planning 89%

- Revenues & Benefits 89%
- Property & Estates 91%

Quarter 2

- Leisure 83%
- Planning 85%
- Customer Service (& Improvement) 87%
- Revenues & Benefits 90%
- Property & Estates 91%
- Streetscene Services 91%
- Legal and Governance (excluding Elections) 92%

Cumulatively, corporate performance over the year is 93%, which meets the target.

Contact Centres

Target - 80% of incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds

Contact Centres achieved 84% and 81% for quarters 3 & 4 respectively.

Cumulatively, this brings Contact Centre performance over the year to 80%, which meets the target. This is a significant improvement in the performance over the year (56% in 2015-16).

Revenues & Benefits

Target - 60% of incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds

Revenues & Benefits 'direct dial' achieved 80% for both quarters 3 & 4.

Cumulatively, Revenues & Benefits 'direct dial' performance over the year is 77%, which exceeds their target and is an improvement on last year (74% in 2015-16).

E-mails

Target 1 - 100% to be acknowledged within 1 working day

Target 2 - 100% to be replied to within 8 working days

For this reporting period, 1st October 2016 to 31st March 2017:

- 5,445 email enquiries (2,551 in Q3 and 2,894 in Q4) from the public were received through enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk
- All were acknowledged within one working day
- 97% were replied to in full within 8 working days

A significant increase in this form of communication during the last year has impacted on Contact Centre's ability to meet this target. This electronic form of communication is still an increasingly popular method of contact with the Council, with an annual total of 11,043 e-mail communications (8,869 in 2015-16, representing a 25% increase).

Cumulatively, performance over the year is 98%.

Face to face monitoring

Target – 99% not kept waiting longer than 20 minutes at a Contact Centre

Waiting times were monitored during the period of monitoring week commencing 25th July 2016. During the week 1,334 customers called into the Contact Centres 99.6% of which waited less than 20 minutes to be served. 99% or 1,320 waited less than 15 minutes to be served. This exceeds the target and demonstrates that we provide our customers with excellent service.

Compliments, Comments and Complaints

Compliments

Appendix 3 (A) shows the number of written compliments received for the period by department. In total 126 written compliments were received. A good cross section of compliments was received from customers appreciating excellent service, including 48 for the Leisure Department, 22 for Streetscene Services and 21 for the Housing Department. As there are some compliments which cross cut departments, the total does not correspond with the total above when viewed in this way.

Comments

Appendix 3 (B) shows the number of written comments received for the period. All 34 were acknowledged and passed to the respective department within the target time of 3 working days, for consideration when reviewing their service. Seventeen (17) comments were suggestions for the newly opened Go!Active Leisure Centre and their ideas, e.g. new/ different classes, were considered.

Complaints

Frontline resolution (stage one)

Appendix 3 (C) shows the number of Frontline Resolution complaints received by the Contact Centre service and recorded on the Customer Information System (Firmstep) by department. The customer service standard for responding to these complaints is 3 working days.

Formal Investigation (stage two)

Appendix 3 (D) shows the number of Formal Investigation complaints by department. 110 complaints were received during this period, all of which were responded to within our customer service standard of 15 working days.

There was a spike in Leisure complaints following the opening of the Go!Active Leisure Centre. However, these were mainly snagging issues and have since been resolved.

As some complaints cross cut departments, the total does not correspond with the total above when viewed in this way.

Internal Review (stage three)

Appendix 3 (E) shows the number of stage three complaints received for the period by date order. These are complainants who have already made a stage two complaint and still feel dissatisfied. During this period 20 stage three complaints were received, all of which were responded to within the standard of 20 working days.

Ombudsman

Appendix 3 (F) shows the status of Ombudsman complaints for 2016/17 as at 26th May 2017. During this period, the Ombudsman (Local Government) made two decisions, both of 'Maladministration and injustice'; however in one the LGO closed the case as the Council had identified the issue and rectified it

- The Council offered an ex gratia payment of £161.10 to a landlord, this amount being the value of a second payment made to the tenant for the period 14th December 2015 to 28th December 2015. **LGO findings** The Council has accepted that from 15 December 2015 it should not have ignored the agent's statement that no rent had been paid. The Council agrees that it should have suspended payment at that point. The LGO considers that this is the point at which the Council was at fault. The Council had already offered £161 in respect of the payment it issued after 15 December. The LGO considers that this is an appropriate remedy which puts the complainant back in the position he would have been in if it had not been for the Council's fault. The LGO does not consider the Council should take any further action. For those reasons the LGO considers the Council is at fault but it has offered an appropriate remedy for the faults it identified. The LGO completed the investigation and closed the complaint.
- The Council failed to respond to emails from the complainant which resulted in it issuing a summons for non payment of council tax. The Council also failed to tell the complainant about the right of appeal against its decision to not give a single person's discount. **LGO findings** The LGO considers the summons was issued as a direct result of the Council's failure to respond to the emails the complainant sent in April 2016. The Council accepts that the complainant had been living in the house since 28 March 2016. It has told the complainant that it will not grant a single person's discount for the period 24 August 2015 to 30 November 2015 without proof that he was living in the house during that time. The complainant can appeal to the Valuation Tribunal if he disagrees with the Council's decision that he is not entitled to a single person's discount. The Council should have told the complainant about his right of appeal. It did not do so; this was fault.

Performance

Cumulatively, 99% of Formal Investigation complaints were responded to within 15 working days to date for the financial year 2016/17. It is pleasing to report that this exceeds the target of 95%.

Summary for 2016/17

The following tables provide a summary of performance for compliments, comments and complaints for 2016/17.

Volume and Performance

Volume by type	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17 Total	2015/16 Total	2014/15 Total
Compliments	77	61	44	82	264	324	167
Comments	7	29	8	26	70	50	48
Formal Investigation	32	34	29	81	176	127	121

Complaints (S2)							
Internal Review Complaints (S3)	4	11	9	11	35	39	20
Total	120	135	90	200	545	540	356
Stage 1 Complaints	69	84	29	42	224	273	310
% Comments acknowledged within standard (target 3 working days)	100%						
% Stage 2 responded to within standard (target 95%)	100%	100%	97%	99%	99%	99%	96%
Average response in days (target 15 working days)	10	10	11	8	10	10	12
% Stage 3 responded to within standard (target 100%)	100%						
Average response in days	13	13	15	17	14	14	16

When comparing 2016/17 to the previous year of 2014/15, the following is noted:

- There were fewer written compliments
- We have received more comments
- We have received slightly fewer frontline resolution complaints
- Received more formal investigation complaints
- Received slightly fewer internal review complaints

The above would appear to indicate that the Council has an easy to access complaints system, as recommended by the Local Government Ombudsman.

Complaints Feedback

There was a spike in Leisure complaints in quarter 4, however the snagging issues with regard to the newly built leisure centre have now been resolved. Additionally, the Housing Department have improved their procedure in relation to complaints about contractors working on behalf of the Council.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

The report is to keep Elected Members informed of volumes and trends regarding customer service standards and compliments, comments, complaints and to remain compliant with the Customer Service Excellence standard.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

The report is to keep Elected Members regularly informed of volumes and trends regarding customer service standards and compliments, comments and complaints. No consultation or equality impact assessment is required.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

Not applicable as the report is keep Elected Members informed rather than to aid decision making.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

Whilst there are no direct financial implications with regard to the report, the Council is at risk of recommendations or decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman if complaints are not handled well.

In cases of maladministration, financial penalties can be imposed by the Local Government Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman.

In the case of complaints about Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Environmental Information requests, the Information Commissioner's Office can issue decision notices and impose significant fines.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

The Council is at risk of recommendations or decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman and, in the case of complaints about Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Environmental Information requests, the Information Commissioner's Office can issue decision notices and impose significant fines. There are no Data Protection implications.

5.3 Human Resources Implications

Not applicable as the report is to keep Elected Members informed.

6 Recommendations

That Executive notes the overall performance on customer service standards and compliments/comments and complaints.

7 Decision Information

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p><i>BDC:</i> <i>Revenue</i> - <i>£75,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p> <i>Capital</i> - <i>£150,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>NEDDC:</i> <i>Revenue</i> - <i>£100,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p> <i>Capital</i> - <i>£250,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
District Wards Affected	All wards
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	Providing Our Customers with Excellent Service – retain Customer Service Excellence accreditation year on year Transforming Our Organisation – good governance.

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Customer Service Standards performance by quarterly period 2016/17
Appendix 2	Telephony performance by quarterly period 1/10/16 – 31/3/17
Appendix 3:	Compliments, Comments and Complaints information
A:	Compliments by department 1/10/16 – 31/3/17
B:	Comments by department 1/10/16 – 31/3/17
C:	Frontline resolution complaints by department 1/10/16 – 31/3/17
D:	Formal Investigation complaints by department 1/10/16 – 31/3/17
E:	Internal Review complaints by department 1/10/16 – 31/3/17
F:	Ombudsman complaints summary for 2016/17
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	
Contact Number	
Customer Standards and Complaints Officer	Ext: 2353

