



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
POLICY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor D Berry (Convener)
Councillor J Caldwell
Councillor J Gillies
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor P MacKenzie
Councillor J Williamson

Council Officials Present:

Mr A McCrorie, Executive Director (Support Services)
Ms M Patterson, Executive Director (Services for Communities)
Dr R Jennings, Head of Housing and Environment
Mr A Strickland, Policy Officer
Mr P Iannetta, Property Maintenance Service Manager
Mr S Gibb, Contact Service Manager
Ms S Bogunovic, Customer Feedback Manager
Mr J Finn, Service Manager, Financial Support

Clerk:

Mrs F Stewart

Apologies:

None

1. ELECTION OF A DEPUTE CONVENER

The Convener announced that he had invited all Members to indicate if they would wish to be considered for the position of Depute Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee (PPRC). Nominations were considered.

Decision

The Committee agreed to elect Councillor Peter MacKenzie as Depute Convener of the PPRC.

2. EAST LOTHIAN ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Convener advised Members that this report, which had gone to the meeting of Full Council on 28 August 2012, was available to view on the Council's website.

3. CONTACT CENTRE PERFORMANCE – 1.10.11 – 30.6.12

The Executive Director of Support Services had submitted a report requested by the Committee on two matters. The first was '*Why has the Contact Centre call handling performance reduced during the Quarter 1 April 2012 – 30 June 2012?*' and the second was '*What has been the effect of handling Social Work calls on the performance of the Contact Centre?*' A breakdown of calls to the Contact Centre for this period and for the same period in 2010 and 2011 was attached to the report as Appendix 1.

Paul lanetta, Property Maintenance Service Manager, summarised the report. He advised that the Contact Centre comprised of 4 separate teams; the Contact Team, the Community Access Team, the Community Response Team and the Systems and Development Team. He outlined the responsibilities of each team and advised that each one had a dedicated staffing establishment to it. He also updated Members on the staffing compliment for each team and advised that the Council was currently recruiting to 3 new posts created to answer Council Tax calls from January 2013. He added that, over the past 2 years, the total calls coming in to the Contact team for the first quarter of the year had increased by 9.31% and the number of answered calls had increased by 5%. The largest number of calls to the Contact Centre for any service was property maintenance and those were generally related to Council house repairs. Figures showed that the demand on property maintenance calls had increased in the past 2 years by over 24% and a graph showing the percentage of day to day repairs completed within the target time was tabled for Members. Mr lanetta pointed out that the Contact Centre was not staffed to support the increasing number of property maintenance calls and it was this service which had had a detrimental effect on the call handling performance of the Contact Centre. To improve the Contact Centre's performance, he proposed to put in place a number of external frameworks to manage periods of higher pressure. He was happy to respond to questions from Members, but advised that, as he had only been in post for 4 months, it might be necessary to report back with further information on certain matters.

Councillor Caldwell sought details on mobile working and enquired if there was an update on the appointments system for repairs. Mr lanetta replied that joiners and working trades worked reactively whenever possible and that the system had worked well. In respect of appointments, Mr lanetta advised that a new system was being trialled and it was expected that this would lead to repairs being carried out more quickly. Web based repairs were also being considered. This would enable tenants

to log their request for a repair and check the progress of the repair online. Mr lanetta also outlined response methods and target times in response to a question from Councillor McAllister.

Stuart Gibb, Contact Centre Manager, outlined for Councillor Goodfellow how calls for repairs were actioned and Mr lanetta confirmed that tenants were advised whether their appointment was scheduled for morning or afternoon. The Council Officers also advised the procedures for contacting tenants to cancel an appointment in the event of an emergency taking priority over scheduled repairs. Mr Gibb added that the present call management system was being replaced and outlined the benefits of the new system.

Councillor Caldwell enquired if calls could be rerouted back to the Contact Centre if unanswered by Council Officers, to ensure customer satisfaction. Mr McCrorie, Executive Director (Support Services), advised that there was policy in place governing this matter but he would progress any concerns.

Councillor Berry stated that he would be interested to hear from tenants on their experience of the repairs procedures and hoped that feedback would be received from Tenants Panels. He also stated that flexible staffing in the contact centre would be key to the success of the operation and was advised by Mr Gibb that, under the new system, all staff would be able to answer each call. Five Specialist lines would, however, still be available.

Alex McCrorie was confident that the performance of the Contact Centre in relation to property maintenance calls would improve. Performance for the last Quarter had been affected by the severe weather conditions in June resulting in an exceptionally high level of calls.

Finally, Mr Gibb reported that the introduction of Social Work calls to the Contact Centre had been very successful and feedback from Social Work colleagues indicated that they were very satisfied with the service they received.

Councillor McLennan welcomed the report and commended Mr Gibb and his staff on what had been achieved.

The Convener, Councillor Berry, described the discussion as very useful and suggested that a follow up report could be brought to a future meeting of the PPRC. He believed that it was important to know how well the Council was serving its customers and what the experience of the customer was.

Decision

The Committee:

- i. noted the situation with regard to the call handling performance of the Contact Centre
- ii. noted the handling of Social Work calls on the performance of the Contact Centre.

4. SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

The Executive Director (Support Services) had submitted a report on the use of the Council's Social Work Complaints and Feedback Policy for the year 2011/12.

Appendices 1-3 of the report provided a complaints breakdown for each of the 3 services; Adult Wellbeing, Children's Wellbeing and Criminal Justice.

Sarah Bogunovic, Customer Feedback Manager, presented the report. She advised that the number of Stage 1 complaints, which were dealt with directly at the point of service, had decreased and gave a breakdown by service of Stage 2 complaints which required investigation and a formal response. She added that the Social Work Service had also received 62 compliments in 2011-12.

Ms Bogunovic detailed performance figures relating to acknowledgement and response times to complaints and explained the complexities which can impact on the process. However, she advised that the figures demonstrated that client concerns were taken seriously and managers had demonstrated a willingness to co-operate and review their services where appropriate. Clients had also appreciated when the Council endeavoured to rectify matters. Finally, she advised that the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) had received 4 complaints about East Lothian Council's Social Work Services and none had proceeded to full investigation.

Councillor Caldwell enquired if there was any evidence to suggest that complaints upheld were recurring after investigation and Ms Bogunovic replied that each complaint tended to be a particular set of circumstances. However, any trends would be addressed with the service area.

Councillor McLennan welcomed the report and suggested it could be useful to see figures for a few years previous to the current year to provide context for the performance figures. He also stated that, as a scrutiny panel, it would be remiss of the Committee not to acknowledge the good work done by the Social Work staff.

The Convener suggested that figures for similar benchmarking authorities could be helpful. He also enquired what the Council's procedure was for sharing good practice with colleagues in the service and was advised by the Executive Director (Services for Communities) that the recording of positive feedback had improved and contributed to the How Good Is Our Council (HGIOC), the Council's Annual Performance report.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

5. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

The Executive Director (Support Services) had submitted a report on the use of the Council's Feedback Procedure for the period 1 January 2012 to 31 March 2012 (Q4), a yearly summary for the year 2011-12, and Q1 of the 2012-13 year (1 April 2012 to 30 June 2012). A Complaints Overview for Quarters 4 and 1 and a Complaints Breakdown by Service were appended to the report.

The Customer Feedback Manager, Sarah Bogunovic, summarised the report. She reported the number of complaints for each Quarter and gave a breakdown of complaints by service area. She advised that there were fewer Stage 1 complaints and an increase in Stage 2 complaints in both Quarters and the focus in future would be on resolving more complaints at Stage 1. The highest number of complaints received during these periods had been in relation to Property Maintenance, however, customer satisfaction surveys generally indicated high levels of satisfaction with the service. Adverse weather conditions during the reporting period had also impacted on the level of complaints in a number of service areas. Timescales for

acknowledging and responding to complaints had either exceeded or come close to targets. Ms Bogunovic was pleased to report that there had been a significant decrease in the number of complaints about staff attitude and this was expected to continue as a result of customer services training.

Councillor McLennan welcomed the report, stating that targeting resources and staff training would be key to reducing complaints.

Councillor McAllister noted the relatively small number of Education complaints and Ms Bogunovic explained that many of those complaints were handled differently and at school level. The Convener requested further information on the separate recording figures for Education when they were available.

The Convener also stated that it was important to distinguish policy matters and operational matters in relation to complaints and pointed out that an increase in complaints in certain cases could indicate that the Council was being more pro-active in the public complaints procedure.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

6. REVIEW OF ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Executive Director (Support Services) had submitted a report to provide the Committee with an opportunity to review and determine its Annual Work Programme.

The Convener stated that follow up reports on two of the matters discussed at today's meeting could be scheduled for future PPRC meetings; April 2013 for Property Repairs and a date to be confirmed for Customer Services. A report on the Community Wardens was now scheduled for the November 2012 meeting.

Members would consider the SPIs and KPIs prior to the next PPRC meeting and an agenda setting meeting would take place on Monday 22 October at 10 am.

The Convener also suggested that Members might find it useful to hold a future PPRC meeting at Penston House, where they could have the opportunity to meet and talk to staff there.

Decision

The Committee noted the Annual Work Programme and requested that a report on Property Repairs in April 2013 and a report on Customer Service at a future date to be agreed were included in the Work Programme.

Signed

Councillor David Berry
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee