

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 30 April 2013

BY: Executive Director (Support Services)

SUBJECT: Customer Feedback

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To give a report on the use of the Council's complaints handling procedure for a six month period: 1 July 2012 to 30 September 2012 (Q2) and 1 October 2012 to 31 December 2012 (Q3).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 1 September 2012, East Lothian Council adopted the model complaints handling procedure for local authorities introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO):

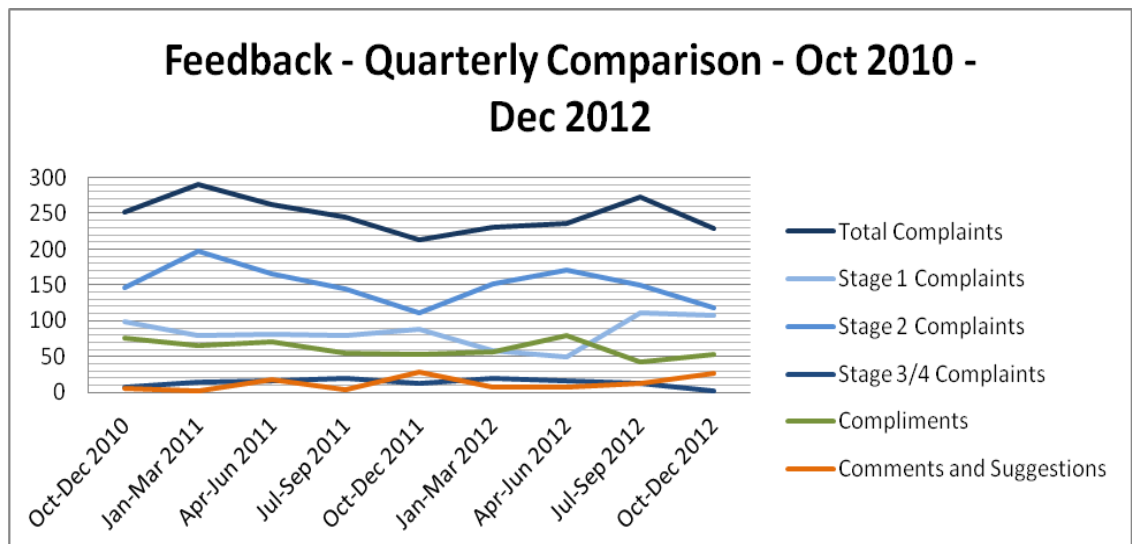
Stage 1 (Frontline Resolution) - Complaint dealt with at point of service within 5 working days

Stage 2 (Investigation) – Investigation of points raised, acknowledged within 3 working days and definitive response provided within 20 working days

If complainants remained dissatisfied after completing this process then they have a legal right of appeal to the SPSO.

- 3.2 Complaints, comments and compliments are recorded on the Council's Customer Relationship Management system (CRM), which provides data on the types of complaints customers make about Council services, as well as complaint handling performance. This system also records comments and compliments from customers.

- 3.3 The Council records and reports on complaints received by the Contact Centre, Customer Feedback Team or Feedback Coordinators appointed for individual service areas. Service areas are encouraged to report complaints they receive through these channels so recording is as accurate as possible.
- 3.4 The total number of complaints received for Q2 (July – Sept '12) was **260**, a 14% increase on the same quarter last year. This was made up of 111 Stage 1 complaints and 149 Stage 2 complaints.
- 3.5 The total number of complaints received for Q3 (Oct – Dec '12) was **226**, a decrease from Q3 but an 11% increase from the number received over the same period last year. This overall figure was made up of 108 Stage 1 complaints and 118 Stage 2 complaints.
- 3.6 The number of Stage 1 complaints increased when compared to the same period in 2011/12, where 80 and 90 Stage 1 complaints were recorded for Q2 and Q3 respectively. This will partly be due to the increased emphasis in the new complaints handling procedure on resolving complaints at the front line, which is considered best practice, and improved recording.
- 3.7 The number of Stage 2 complaints was consistent with the numbers received over the same period in the 2011/12 year, and marked a decrease from Q1 of the 2012/13 year (April – June '12) where 171 complaints were recorded.
- 3.8 A quarterly comparison graph of top line figures shows the following:



- 3.9 Ideally, a higher proportion of complaints should be dealt with at Stage 1, with fewer progressing to Stage 2 and this is an area targeted for continued improvement.
- 3.10 The service areas with the highest number of complaints during these periods were as follows:

Q2 – 1 July to 30 September 2012

Service Area	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Total
Property Maintenance	45	74	119
Community Housing	10	14	24
Landscape & Countryside	9	12	21
Adult Wellbeing	5	15	20
Transportation	8	7	15

Q3 – 1 October to 31 December 2012

Service Area	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Total
Property Maintenance	50	45	95
Transportation	13	6	19
Adult Wellbeing	9	9	18
Waste Services	6	5	11
Community Housing	2	8	10
Landscape & Countryside	6	4	10

3.11 A breakdown of complaints, comments and compliments received per service area and Directorate per quarter is attached at Appendices 1a and 1b.

3.12 The top subject of complaint for each quarter was **outstanding repairs** to council properties.

3.13 Other notable issues complained about included:

- Maintenance of parks / play areas / cemeteries
- Processing of planning applications
- Charge for not arranging access for annual gas safety check
- Housing allocations
- Council Tax administration
- Staff attitude

- Conduct / recommendations of social worker
 - Maintenance of roads / pathways (potholes)
 - Condition of new tenancy
 - Street lighting
 - Neighbour problems (lack of action by ELC)
 - Changes to care package
 - Care charges
 - Class structures / composite classes
- 3.14 The number of complaints recorded about staff attitude increased over this period from 12 in Q2 to 21 in Q3. Reminders have been given about the standards of behaviour expected under East Lothian Council's Customer Care Charter.
- 3.15 Property Maintenance consistently receives the highest number of complaints, which is not surprising considering the nature of the service and the high level of interaction with tenants. It is positive to note that complaint numbers for this service decreased in Q3 and there were more stage 1 complaints than stage 2 complaints this quarter, which is in keeping with the spirit of the new complaints handling procedure in terms of resolving complaints quickly at source.
- 3.16 It is important to learn from individual experiences to improve the services ELC provides. Examples of service improvements made over this 6 month period as a result of complaints being received include:
- Review recording system for road defects to ensure defect entries reflect the correct date of entry on the roads inspection report
 - Replacing broken equipment in Haddington Town Hall
 - Introducing measures to improve communication between different teams within the Property Maintenance service in relation to property repairs
 - Using a complaint as a case study so lessons can be learned in relation to being more proactive in taking ownership of Child Protection referrals involving neighbouring local authorities
 - Updated school guidelines 'Procedures for staff who support children with personal care needs'
- 3.17 Performance against agreed targets for acknowledging and responding to complaints at Stage 2 for these two quarters was as follows:

- Acknowledgement within 3 working days: **94%** (Q2), **97%** (Q3) – Target 95%
- Response within 20 working days (28 days for social work): (Q4) – **81%** (Q2), **76%** (Q3) - Target 85%

3.18 Where it is not possible to send a response within timescale, e.g. due to complexity of investigation, requirement to meet with complainant etc then an update should be provided. This occurred in an additional 9% of cases for Q2 and 3% of cases for Q3.

3.19 It was disappointing to note that performance in relation to response times decreased between Q2 and Q3. Working with service areas to ensure information is provided in good time to enable complaint response timescales to be met is a priority for next quarter.

3.20 A breakdown of performance by service area per quarter in relation to acknowledgement and response times is attached at appendices 2a and 2b.

3.21 It is important to present a balanced view of services and so compliments received about services are also recorded. **42** compliments were recorded during Q2 and **54** during Q3.

3.22 Areas receiving the highest number of compliments included:

- Landscape & Countryside
- Customer Services
- Adult Wellbeing
- Property Maintenance

3.23 The percentage of Stage 2 complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld was as follows:

Q2 (Jul – Sept 12)	Q3 (Oct – Dec 12)
Upheld – 39%	Upheld – 17%
Partially Upheld – 26%	Partially Upheld – 33%
Not Upheld – 35%	Not Upheld – 50%

3.24 It is interesting to note the % of complaints upheld and partially upheld. This demonstrates that customer concerns are being taken seriously and managers are demonstrating a willingness to review their services in an objective way. The number of complaints not upheld (where no evidence of maladministration or service failure was found) increased significantly in Q3.

- 3.25 Acknowledging and taking action to address maladministration and service failure at an early stage prevents complaints from escalating through the process. Only 13 complaints (5%) progressed to Stage 3 (review by Chief Executive) under ELC's old complaints handling procedure, which was still in place for the first 2 months of Q2. No cases progressed to the SPSO or Social Work Complaints Review Committee in either Q2 or Q3.
- 3.26 The graph at Appendix 3 shows the actions taken by service areas to resolve Stage 2 complaints. The most common actions were to provide an appropriate explanation / additional information, provide the requested service or offer an appropriate apology. An apology was always provided wherever failings were identified. Meeting directly with complainants is also being actively encouraged to try and resolve complaints.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.27 A national review of the current statutory social work complaints procedure is currently underway and a short-life working group has been set up by the Scottish Government.
- 3.28 Information on the new complaints handling procedure is available on the ELC website and in council offices. Updated staff guidance is available on ELNET.
- 3.29 Briefings to raise awareness of the new complaints handling procedure and the standards expected in dealing with complaints are being delivered.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Financial - None
- 5.2 Personnel - None
- 5.3 Other - None

6 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix 1a and 1b - breakdown of complaints, comments and compliments received per service area and Directorate
- 7.2 Appendix 2a and 2b - breakdown of performance per service area in relation to acknowledgement and response times
- 7.3 Appendix 3 – Complaint outcomes

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Appendix 1a - Breakdown of complaints, comments and compliments Q2 (1 July to 30 September 2012)

Directorate	Service Area	Comment	Stage 1 Complaint	Compliment	Stage 2 complaint	Stage 3 complaint	Total
Services for Communities	Antisocial Behaviour	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Community Housing	0	10	0	14	4	28
	Facilities Management	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Homelessness	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Housing Strategy	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Landscape and Countryside	6	9	13	12	2	42
	Licensing	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Planning and Building Control	0	1	0	5	1	7
	Property Maintenance	1	45	9	74	2	131
	Property Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Trading Standards	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Transportation	4	8	1	7	0	20
	Waste Services	1	12	2	0	0	15
	Other - Services for Communities	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Directorate Totals	12	89	25	115	9	250
Services for People	Adult Wellbeing	0	5	7	15	0	27
	Children's Wellbeing	0	2	0	5	0	7
	Criminal Justice	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Education and Schools	0	1	0	2	4	7
	Other - Services for People	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Directorate Totals	0	8	7	22	4

Directorate	Service Area	Stage 1 Comment	Stage 1 Complaint	Stage 1 Compliment	Stage 2	Stage 3	Total
Support Services	Community Care Finance	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Council Tax	0	2	0	0	0	2
	Cultural Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Customer Services	0	2	9	4	0	15
	Democratic Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Economic Development	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Finance	0	3	0	6	0	9
	Human Resources	0	0	0	1	0	1
	IT	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Legal Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Libraries	0	5	0	1	0	6
	Print Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Revenues and Benefits	1	1	1	0	0	3
	Other - Support Services	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Directorate Totals	1	14	10	12	0	37

Appendix 1b - Breakdown of complaints, comments and compliments Q3 (1 October to 31 December 2012)

Directorate	Service Area	Comment	Stage 1 Complaint	Compliment	Stage 2 complaint	Stage 3 complaint	Total
Services for Communities	Antisocial Behaviour	0	1	0	2	0	3
	Community Housing	0	2	3	8	0	13
	Facilities Management	1	1	0	0	0	2
	Homelessness	0	1	0	3	0	4
	Housing Strategy	0	2	0	4	0	6
	Landscape and Countryside	4	6	4	4	1	19
	Licensing	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Planning and Building Control	0	1	1	1	1	4
	Property Maintenance	1	50	11	45	1	108
	Property Services	0	0	1	2	0	3
	Trading Standards	0	0	1	1	0	2
	Transportation	8	13	1	6	0	28
	Waste Services	4	6	1	5	0	16
	Other - Services for Communities	0	0	1	2	0	3
		Directorate Totals	18	83	25	83	3
Services for People	Adult Wellbeing	1	9	20	9	0	39
	Children's Wellbeing	0	5	2	4	0	11
	Criminal Justice	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Education and Schools	2	1	1	8	0	12
	Other - Services for People	0	0	1	0	0	1
		Directorate Totals	3	15	24	21	0

Directorate	Service Area	Comment	Stage 1 Complaint	Compliment	Stage 2 complaint	Stage 3 complaint	Total
Support Services	Community Care Finance	0	1	0	3	0	4
	Council Tax	1	2	2	2	0	7
	Cultural Services	1	1	0	1	0	3
	Customer Services	0	1	3	5	0	9
	Democratic Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Economic Development	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Finance	0	0	0	2	0	2
	Human Resources	0	1	0	0	0	1
	IT	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Legal Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Libraries	2	1	0	0	0	3
	Print Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Revenues and Benefits	0	3	0	0	0	3
	Other - Support Services	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Directorate Totals	5	10	5	14	0	34
Feedback Total		26	108	54	118	3	309

Appendix 2a – Stage 2 complaints acknowledgement and response by service area Q2 – Jul- Sept ‘12

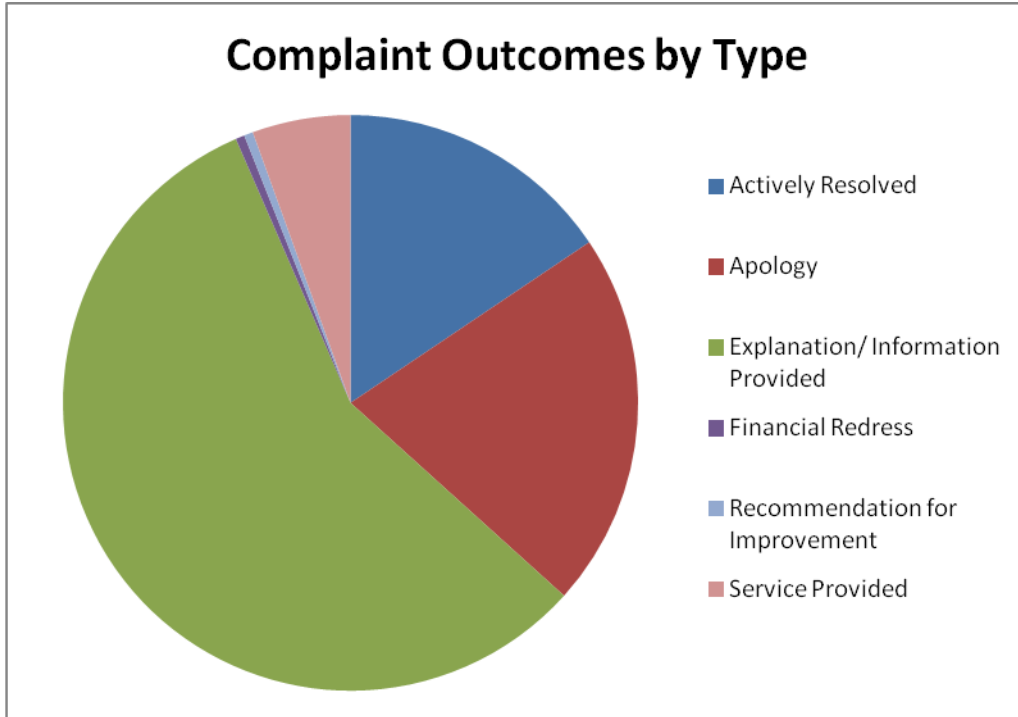
Service Area	Number of Complaints	Number Acknowledged Within 3 Working Days	% Acknowledged Within 3 Working Days	Update Needed and Sent On Time	% Update Sent On Time	Number Responded To Within 20 Working Days	% Responded To Within 20 Working Days
Community Housing	14	14	100.00%	1	7.14%	11	78.57%
Facilities Management	1	1	100.00%	0		1	100.00%
Housing Strategy	1	1	100.00%	0		1	100.00%
Landscape and Countryside	12	12	100.00%	0		12	100.00%
Licensing	1	1	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Planning and Building Control	5	5	100.00%	0	0.00%	4	80.00%
Property Maintenance	74	67	90.54%	6	8.10%	61	82.43%
Transportation	7	7	100.00%	0	0.00%	6	85.71%
Adult Wellbeing	15	15	100.00%	4	26.60%	9	60.00%
Children's Wellbeing	5	5	100.00%	2	40.00%	3	60.00%
Education and Schools	2	2	100.00%	0		2	100.00%
Customer Services	4	4	100.00%	0		4	100.00%
Finance	6	5	83.33%	0		5	83.33%
Human Resources	1	1	100.00%	0		0	0.00%
Libraries	1	0	0.00%	0		1	100.00%
Total	149	140	93.96%	13	8.72%	120	80.54%

Appendix 2b – Stage 2 complaints acknowledgement and response by service area Q3 – Oct - Dec '12

Service Area	Number of Complaints	Number Acknowledged Within 3 Working Days	% Acknowledged Within 3 Working Days	Update Needed and Sent On Time	% Update Sent On Time	Number Responded To Within 20 Working Days	% Responded To Within 20 Working Days
Antisocial Behaviour	2	2	100.00%	0		2	100.00%
Community Housing	8	8	100.00%	1	12.50%	5	62.50%
Homelessness	3	3	100.00%	0		3	100.00%
Housing Strategy	4	4	100.00%	0		3	75.00%
Landscape and Countryside	4	4	100.00%	0		3	75.00%
Planning and Building Control	1	1	100.00%	0		1	100.00%
Property Maintenance	45	42	93.33%	2	4.40%	38	84.44%
Property Services	2	2	100.00%	0		1	50.00%
Trading Standards	1	1	100.00%	0		1	100.00%
Transportation	6	6	100.00%	0		3	50.00%
Waste Services	5	5	100.00%	0		5	100.00%
Other - Services for Communities	2	2	100.00%	0		1	50.00%
Adult Wellbeing	9	8	88.89%	0		7	77.78%
Children's Wellbeing	4	4	100.00%	0		3	75.00%
Education and Schools	8	8	100.00%	0		5	62.50%
Community Care Finance	3	3	100.00%	0		1	33.33%
Council Tax	2	2	100.00%	0		1	50.00%
Cultural Services	1	1	100.00%	0		1	100.00%
Customer Services	5	5	100.00%	0		4	80.00%
Finance	2	2	100.00%	0		1	50.00%
Other - Support Services	1	1	100.00%	0		1	100.00%
Total	118	114	96.61%	3	2.54%	90	76.27%

Appendix 3: Complaint Outcomes

Q2: Jul – Sept '12



Q3: Oct – Dec '12

