

**REPORT TO:** Policy and Performance Review Committee

**MEETING DATE:** 29 September 2015

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)

**SUBJECT:** Customer Complaints and Feedback - Q1 2015/2016

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide a brief analysis on the use of the Council's complaints handling procedure for Q1 (1 April to 30 June 2015).

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note the report.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 East Lothian Council complies with the model complaints handling procedure (CHP) 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)** – Complaint investigated; acknowledged within 3 working days and 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. Those complaining about social work issues have the option of asking for their complaint to be referred to a Complaints Review Committee (CRC).

- 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 During this quarter, East Lothian Council received **221** complaints, slightly higher than the same quarter last year (214) and an increase from last quarter (160).
- 3.4 This was made up of:  
 Stage 1: 148 complaints  
 Stage 2: 73 complaints
- 3.5 67% of complaints were closed at Stage 1 and 33% were closed at Stage 2.
- 3.6 On average 54% of complaints were closed at Stage 1 in 2014/15. This quarter showed a marked increase in the proportion of complaints being resolved at the frontline within 5 working days, which is a very positive development.
- 3.7 A breakdown of complaints, comments and compliments by service area is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.8 Stage 1 resolutions included providing an agreed service, providing additional information / explanation, apologising for a service failure, manager / team leader making contact with the customer to try and resolve the issue.
- 3.9 Complaint response times were as follows:  
 Stage 1: **97%** responded to within 5 working days  
 Stage 2: **99%** acknowledged within 3 working days  
**74%** responded to within 20 working days
- 3.10 Performance was comparable with the same quarter last year and an improvement from the previous quarter.
- 3.11 Complaint outcomes for Q1 were as follows:

|                 | Upheld     | Partially Upheld | Not Upheld |
|-----------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| <b>Stage 1</b>  | <b>32%</b> | <b>28%</b>       | <b>40%</b> |
| 2014/15 Average | 25%        | 19%              | 56%        |
| <b>Stage 2</b>  | <b>27%</b> | <b>32%</b>       | <b>41%</b> |
| 2014/15 Average | 30%        | 31%              | 39%        |

- 3.12 Stage 2 outcomes were similar to those recorded last year. In comparison, a higher proportion of Stage 1 complaints were either upheld or partially upheld.

- 3.13 Where it is identified that something has gone wrong and policy / procedures were not properly followed, a complaint will either be upheld or partially upheld, depending on circumstances. An apology will be given for any identified failings and action taken to put the situation right.
- 3.14 If there is no evidence to suggest that policies / procedures have not been properly followed then a complaint will not be upheld. In such cases, a full and clear explanation will be given of the decision taken.
- 3.15 The service areas with the highest number of complaints in Q1 were:
- Housing Maintenance
  - Waste Services
  - Adult Wellbeing
- 3.16 The number of housing maintenance complaints progressing to investigation continues to drop, with a higher proportion being resolved at the frontline within 5 working days. This continues the positive trend shown in the last two quarters of last year.
- 3.17 Some examples of housing maintenance issues complained about were:
- Outstanding day-to-day repairs (various)
  - Quality of repair (i.e. not effective)
  - Recharges
- 3.18 Examples of other subjects of complaint included:
- Bins not uplifted
  - Parking issues
  - Housing allocations policy
  - Child Protection issues
  - Additional Support Needs for Learning
  - Care packages
  - Employee behaviour
  - Planning process
- 3.19 In Q1, 63 compliments and 27 comments were received. Overall, this was a drop compared to the number of compliments received across all quarters last year, which ranged from 71 to 83.
- 3.20 The service areas receiving the highest number of compliments were:
- Housing maintenance

- Adult Wellbeing

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None.

#### **5 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Financial - None.

6.2 Personnel - None.

6.3 Other - None.

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 Appendix 1: Q1 Breakdown of customer feedback by service area

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
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| <b>DATE</b>          | 17 September 2015                                  |

## Appendix 1: Q1 Customer Feedback Breakdown by Service Area

| Directorate                                | Service Area                            | Compliment           | Comment | Stage 1 | Stage 2 |   |
|--|---|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| <b>Health and Social Care Partnership</b>  | Adult Wellbeing                         | 18                   | 1       | 6       | 7       |   |
|  | Criminal Justice                        | 0                    | 0       | 0       | 0       |   |
| <b>Partnerships and Community Services</b> | Building Standards                      | 0                    | 0       | 0       | 0       |   |
|  | Community Housing                       | 1                    | 0       | 4       | 10      |   |
|  | Community Partnerships                  | 5                    | 1       | 1       | 0       |   |
|  | Communications & Customer Relations     | 0                    | 0       | 2       | 0       |   |
|  | Corporate Policy and Improvement        | 3                    | 2       | 0       | 1       |   |
|  | Customer Services                       | 7                    | 1       | 2       | 0       |   |
|  | Engineering Services including Gas Team | 3                    | 0       | 0       | 0       |   |
|  | Environmental Protection                | 4                    | 1       | 1       | 0       |   |
|  | Facilities Management                   | 0                    | 0       | 3       | 1       |   |
|  | Homelessness                            | 0                    | 0       | 2       | 1       |   |
|  | Housing Maintenance                     | 11                   | 1       | 48      | 18      |   |
|  | Libraries                               | 0                    | 0       | 3       | 0       |   |
|  | Planning                                | 0                    | 2       | 2       | 2       |   |
|  | Safer Communities                       | 0                    | 0       | 0       | 2       |   |
|  | Sport Countryside and Leisure           | 5                    | 2       | 6       | 2       |   |
|  | Transportation                          | 1                    | 6       | 7       | 3       |   |
|  | Waste Services                          | 4                    | 8       | 46      | 4       |   |
|  | <b>Resources and People Services</b>    | Children's Wellbeing | 0       | 0       | 1       | 3 |
|  |   | Council Tax          | 0       | 0       | 6       | 2 |
|  |   | Education            | 0       | 0       | 5       | 5 |
| Finance                                    |   | 0                    | 0       | 0       | 1       |   |

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| Directorate           | Service Area                                 | Compliment | Comment   | Stage 1    | Stage 2   |
|-----------------------|--|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|                       | Legal and Procurement                        | 1          | 0         | 1          | 0         |
|                       | Licensing Administration Democratic Services | 0          | 0         | 1          | 1         |
|                       | Revenue and Benefits                         | 0          | 0         | 1          | 0         |
|                       |  |            |           |            |           |
| <b>Other/Unknown</b>  | Other/Unknown                                | 0          | 2         | 0          | 10        |
| <b>Feedback Total</b> |  | <b>63</b>  | <b>27</b> | <b>148</b> | <b>73</b> |