



ARTICLE NO:

**CORPORATE & ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

**MEMBERS UPDATE 2019/20
Issue: 2**

Article of: Director of Housing and Inclusion Services

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SUBJECT: MONITORING OF FORMAL COMPLAINTS (2018/19)

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

- 1.1 To present data on the number of formal complaints received by the Council from April 2018 to March 2019.
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2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Types, numbers and trends in complaints provide a valuable insight into the quality of services and can make a valuable contribution to improving them. In this respect they should also be considered alongside other information such as performance indicators and securing value for money. The Customer Experience Section is responsible for managing the overall co-ordination of the corporate complaints process.
- 2.2 The Council defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action taken by the Council, or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council, affecting an individual or group of customers. Therefore, the complaints procedure is not simply logging initial service requests e.g. for pest control, missed refuse collections, housing repairs etc. The Council's complaints procedure is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 If a complainant wishes to pursue an issue further after the Council's own internal procedures have been exhausted, this can be raised with either the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman, depending on the nature of the complaint.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Complaints provide valuable customer feedback and the principal purpose of monitoring and responding to complaints is always to improve service delivery. On the very few occasions where the Council acknowledged that the service was not up to the required standard, the focus is on putting the matter right and preventing any re-occurrence. By taking complaints seriously, the Council is ensuring that all genuine grievances are recognised and action taken to address the issue.
- 3.2 This update provides Members with details of the number of formal complaints received during 2018/19. Data on the number of formal complaints received by each Directorate during this period is set out in Appendix 2 to this report. The numbers recorded are all written expressions of dissatisfaction and are not necessarily substantiated.
- 3.3 During 2018/19 the Council received 32 formal complaints, this shows a reduction of 13 from the previous year i.e. from 45 in 2017/18 to 32 in 2018/19. Further details regarding the nature of the specific complaints are provided at Appendix 2.
- 3.4 The details provided at Appendix 2 demonstrate that where there have been genuine complaints/ issues, these have been dealt with accordingly and wherever possible, improvements have been made to prevent re-occurrence.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 4.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this article.

6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This item is for information only and makes no recommendations. It therefore does not require a formal risk assessment and no changes have been made to risk registers as a result of this article.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Article.

Equality Impact Assessment

This article is for information only and does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and/ or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

1. Corporate Complaints Procedure
2. Formal Complaints Received April 2018 to March 2019



West Lancashire Borough Council

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

The Council is always looking to improve services and you can help us do this by contacting the relevant Service Manager with any comments, compliments or complaints.

Comments?

Comments on how services might be improved to better meet the needs of customers are always welcome. If you want to offer any comments on a Council service please contact the relevant Service Manager.

Compliments?

Everyone likes to receive compliments and Council officers are no exception. More importantly, compliments can help us to identify what our customers value and can highlight good practice. If you believe you have received good service from the Council our Service Managers will be pleased to hear from you.

Complaints?

We always try to get things right but there may be occasions when customers have cause for complaint. Such complaints can serve to highlight areas where services could be improved.

The Council defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action taken by the Council, or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council, affecting an individual or group of customers.

The Council has procedures in place to ensure that complaints are thoroughly investigated and, where possible, resolved.

The Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Speak or write to the Service Manager

If you have a complaint you should first speak to or write to the relevant Service Manager and explain your problem so that we can try to put this right for you.

Please note that the following will not usually be treated as complaints:

- Requests for a service e.g. reporting a housing repair
- Requests for information or an explanation of Council policy or practice
- Matters for which there is a right of appeal or a more appropriate or prescribed legal remedy
- Complaints about the conduct of Councillors, which should be reported to the Monitoring Officer – Borough Solicitor
- Complaints about decisions, in respect of licences, permits, approvals, consents, permissions or registrations or any related enforcement actions.

Stage 2 – Submit a formal complaint

If, after speaking or writing to the Service Manager, your complaint remains unresolved, you can either:

- Submit an online complaints form
- Send a letter, email or a downloaded paper complaints form (complaints forms are also available from Customer Services and Service Managers) to the relevant Complaints Co-ordinator setting out your complaint
- Contact Customer Services on 01695 577177 who will complete a complaints form with you over the phone

Your complaint will be investigated by the Head of Service who will aim to respond within 10 working days.

Stage 3 – Ask the Chief Executive for a review

If you believe your complaint remains unresolved, then the final stage of the complaints procedure is a review by the Chief Executive. Please explain fully why you believe your complaint remains unresolved. The Chief Executive will aim to respond within 10 working days.

Following the review by the Chief Executive, if you still believe your complaint remains unresolved, you can refer the matter to the relevant Ombudsman. The Chief Executive will write to you advising how you can do this.

For more information please contact Customer Services via email customer.services@westlancs.gov.uk or by calling 01695 577177

APPENDIX 2

Service	No. of Complaints 2017/18	No. of Complaints 2018/19	Comments
Leisure & Environment Services	1	4	<p>All of the complaints received were relating to Refuse & Recycling and in particular in relation to missed bin collections, non-delivery of a bin, and policy changes for charging for bins.</p> <p>Of the four complaints, three were upheld, apologies were given to the customers and measures put in place to avoid reoccurrence through discussions with the operatives.</p> <p>Following investigation, it was established that the remaining complaint was unfounded, however discussions were held with the customer and as a result a revised process was agreed for their assisted collection.</p>
Housing & Inclusion Property Services Voids & Allocations Tenancy Management Homelessness	26	16 6 1 8 1	<p>The majority of complaints related to Tenancy Management; four were regarding Estate Management issues and four related to Anti-Social Behaviour Issues. Of these eight complaints, only one was upheld which resulted in an apology being given and works completed to improve the situation.</p> <p>Of the six relating to Property Services, two related to compliance and four to response maintenance. Of these complaints, only two were upheld, which resulted in apologies being issued and works completed to resolve.</p> <p>Following investigation it was established that the remaining complaints received were unfounded and the Council was not at fault.</p>
Development & Regeneration Services	9	7	<p>Five complaints related to planning and building control. In these cases it was found that correct procedures were followed and there was no fault of the Council.</p>

			Two letters related to the Investment Centre and in particular to car parking and the air conditioning system. Measures were introduced to address car park concerns and new air conditioning installed. As a result of this feedback, we will be improving our communications with our tenants.
Legal & Democratic Services	0	2	Two complaints were received in relation to Legal & Democratic Services. Both were dealt with by providing explanations to the customers, consisting of guidance, policies and the procedures involved.
Finance & HR Services	4	0	No complaints were received for 2018/19.
Revenues & Benefits	5	3	Out of the three complaints received, the first was resolved by an explanation to the customer regarding existing policies and procedures which had been followed, further guidance and support was also offered to the customer. The remaining two complaints arose due to incorrect information being received by the Council from the customers. In both cases an apology was provided, as well as further advice and assistance given to the customer to rectify.
Total	45	32	