

Annual Customer Feedback (Complaints, Comments and Compliments) Report 2016/17

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents Cabinet with an overview of the formal customer feedback the Council received during 2016/17. Formal customer feedback includes complaints, compliments, comments and other types of enquiry. MP enquiries are monitored and reported separately because they can often duplicate complaints.
- 1.2 2016/17 saw an increase in the amount of feedback from customers to the Council compared to previous years. The largest increase was in compliments which rose by 40% from 462 in 2015/16 to 646 in 2016/17, with smaller increases in the number comments (12%, 40 more) and complaints (5%, 48 more) compared to the previous year. Customer feedback provides the Council with the opportunity to improve services and recognise where customers have had a good experience. The learning and actions that are identified through the complaint investigations are used to improve services provision.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- A. Approve the Annual Customer Feedback Report 2016/17 (Appendix 1) for publication on the council's website.
- B. Agree the recommendations included within the Annual Report (pages 15 and 16), highlighting key issues and areas for improvement.

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 Effective monitoring and follow-up provides the opportunity to manage risks and identify any trends and common issues being raised through customer feedback. Customer feedback reporting is likely to reflect the impact of commissioning decisions made by the Council.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 This report presents information to support decision making and does not itself carry any direct financial implications. Accountable officers and senior managers may use the information to inform actions or interventions for improving service performance and the prioritisation and use of resources.

REPORT

5. Introduction

- 5.1 The Customer Feedback Annual Report for Shropshire Council covers the formal feedback Shropshire Council received during 2016/17 (excluding MP enquiries; these commonly duplicate complaints). The Annual Report covers all service areas and, as a result, the handling of complaints under all three complaints procedures (the statutory and nationally set processes for Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care, and the Council's locally defined Corporate Complaints procedure). Additionally, more detailed reports have been produced for Adult Social Care and Children's Services.
- 5.2 The Annual Report details the performance of Shropshire Council during 2016/17. In addition, quarterly monitoring take place and where necessary issues are addressed within the year.

6. Customer Feedback 2016/17 (focus on complaints)

- 6.1 Shropshire Council received 1,989 cases of formal feedback during 2016/17. There were 922 complaints (46%), 374 comments (19%) and 646 compliments (32%). The number of complaints rose by 48 (5%) compared to 2015/16, but reduced as a proportion of the overall customer feedback received by the Council (51% reducing to 46%).
- 6.2 Of the 922 complaints received, 731 were complaints handled under the Council's corporate complaints procedure and these were also the type of complaints which increased compared to 2015/16. 191 were statutory complaints (with an element of social care so handled under the nationally set Adult or Children's complaints procedures) which maintained a similar number to previous years. Almost all of these were addressed and closed at the first stage of the complaints procedures with only 46 (5%) progressing beyond this stage in 2016/17, which is slightly higher than the 38 in 2016/17.
- 6.3 More than two thirds of the complaints received relate to five main service areas; Adult Social Care and Children's Services, and Highways and Streetscene, Planning, Waste/Recycling and Revenues and Benefits. This is consistent with patterns for previous years and reflects the size of budget and number of staff, the nature of the services provided, and the number of people and/or organisations which come into contact with, or receive, these services. Complaints for most service areas relate to quality of services and failure to deliver a service or take action.

- 6.4 On average it took a little longer to respond to stage 1 complaints during 2016/17 (20.2 days) compared to 2015/16 (17.4 days) and 2014/15 (13.4 days), but remains well within the LGO timescales of 60 days for Stage 1 and Stage 2 investigations to be completed. (The Council work to 30 days for each stage). Complex and long running cases can impact on this, and it is recognised that reduced officer capacity may also have an impact on the ability to respond to all comments and contacts in a timely manner. This is equally likely to be true for the time taken to respond to Freedom of Information and Data Protection requests.
- 6.5 The learning and actions resulting from complaints are an important element of customer feedback reporting and improving services. Understanding the causes of complaints and common themes informs learning and the identification of actions to address the underlying causes of the complaint being made.
- 6.6 Learning from complaints during 2016/17 covered a range of issues. Communication and information provision were the most common theme and ranged from responding to correspondence and comments in a timely manner and keeping people up to date, through to clear communication about the level and reach of services that were provided. Service quality provided another key area of learning and included issues such as access to services, the quality of work done, and the attitude and behaviour of those providing services.
- 6.7 Appendix 1 of the Annual Report includes Shropshire Council's annual report from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The LGO publish data on the investigations that they have carried out, including whether they upheld the complaints they looked into. During 2016/17 the LGO carried out 23 investigations into complaints about Shropshire Council of which 11 (48%) were upheld, compared to 50% in 2015/16 and the 2016/17 national average of 54%.
- 6.8 Appendix 2 of the Annual Report highlights recommendations made by the LGO within 2015/16. All recommendations are monitored and actioned by the Shropshire Council service area responsible for the complaint.

7. Customer Feedback Development

- 7.1 The recommendations included within the Annual Report highlight areas of development designed to improve customer feedback handling. Key areas of focus for 2016/17 include:
- A focus on effective recording of all types of customer feedback.
 - Maintaining robust complaints handling (including ensuring that complaints are managed within timescales and that stage 1 responses are robust).
 - Making the best use of learning from customer feedback to inform service improvement.
 - Supporting staff and third party service providers through improved information and guidance.
 - Delivering accessible training on the Council's Learning Management System.
 - Implementing the new Complaints system as part of the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) through the Digital Transformation Programme.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr Steve Charmley - Portfolio Holder for Corporate Support
Local Member All
Appendices Appendix 1 – Customer Feedback Annual Report 2016/17