



Committee and Date

Cabinet

30th November 2016

2015/16 Council Customer Feedback report - Complaints, Compliments and Comments

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents Cabinet with an overview of the formal customer feedback the Council received during 2015/16. 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 Although the Council is continuing to make tough decisions about services as a result of reducing funding from the Government and needing to meet increasing demand for support for vulnerable people, the number of complaints that the Council received during 2015/16 has remained stable, being broadly the same as the number received in 2014/15. The learning and actions that are identified through the complaint investigations are used to improve how services are provided and the experience of people who use them.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- A. Approve the Annual Customer Feedback Report 2015/16 (Appendix 1) for publication on the council's website.
- B. Agree the recommendations included within the report (Appendix 1, pages 13 and 14), 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 2015/16 (excluding MP enquiries; these commonly duplicate complaints). The 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 Customer Feedback Annual Report details the performance of Shropshire Council during 2015/16. In addition, quarterly reports monitor performance, and where necessary address issues within the year.

6. Customer Feedback 2015/16 (focus on complaints)

- 6.1 Shropshire Council received 1,719 cases of formal feedback during 2015/16. There were 874 complaints (51%), 334 comments (19%) and 462 compliments (27%). The number of complaints received is broadly in line with the number received in 2014/15 (857).
- 6.2 Of the 874 complaints received, 679 were complaints handled under the Council's corporate complaints procedure, and 195 were statutory complaints (with an element of social care so handled under the nationally set Adult or Children's complaints procedures). Almost all of these were addressed and closed at the first stage of the complaints procedures with only 31 progressing beyond this stage in 2015/16, which was slightly lower than the 35 in 2014/15.
- 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 and Waste/Recycling. 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. The exception to this is Planning, where complaints commonly relate to a failure to respond to letters or emails rather than the nature of the service provided.
- 6.4 On average it took a little longer to respond to complaints during 2015/16 (17.4 days) compared to 2014/15 (13.4 days), but remains well within the LGO timescales for handling complaints of 60 days. 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, and 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 2015/16 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 on progress, issues or concerns they have raised, through to clear communication about the level and reach of services that were provided, and access to information through self-serve or information being sent out by the Council. 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 report (see page 15) 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 2015/16 the LGO carried out 30 investigations into complaints about Shropshire Council of which 15 were upheld. This is in line with the average proportion of complaints that the LGO upheld nationally in 2015/16 (50%), and lower than the proportions upheld for Shropshire in 2014/15 and 2013/14.

7. Customer Feedback Development

- 7.1 The recommendations included within the report (pages 13 and 14) 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.
 - Developing an understanding of customer feedback themes within service areas.
 - 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.
- 7.2 The recommendations in need of the most significant development work include:
- Improving the IT systems to enable greater efficiencies and effectiveness in the way the council records, handles and reports customer feedback.
 - Implementing best practice in the handling and recording of third party provider complaints following recent LGO communications concerning their expectations of local authorities.

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 Michael Wood - Portfolio Holder for Corporate Support

Local Member/s

All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Customer Feedback Annual Report 2015/16