

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Norman Williams
LEAD OFFICER: Jane Salt, Head of Customer Services
REPORT AUTHOR: Marissa Joyce, Customer Relations Officer

Summary and Recommendation:

In the second half of 2007/2008, 43 complaints were investigated through the Councils Comments, compliments and complaints procedure.

The total number of complaints investigated for the whole of 2007/08 was 121, an increase to the 106 recorded in 2006/07.

Recommendations are:

1. Members to note the report and
2. Managers to be encouraged/reminded to record and feedback details of complaints and compliments received to the Customer Relations Officer for monitoring and reporting purposes.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has had a written procedure for the resolution of customers' formal complaints since 1992 and has been revised several times since then. The procedure has very recently been revised to reflect the new arrangements for dealing with allegations of misconduct by Councillors, which took effect on 8 May 2008. The procedure is based on the Local Government Ombudsman's published recommendations for best practice on Local Authority complaints procedures.
- 1.2 In the second half of 2007/08 the Customer Relations Officers recorded 43 complaints, summary attached.
- 1.3 The previous report to this Committee in March 2008 mentioned several ongoing Planning complaints. In one case the Ombudsman subsequently found no case to answer and the others are still undergoing investigation. The Ombudsman requested and has been provided with the relevant documents and details in order to make an informed decision. The outcomes of these investigations will be reported to the department and this Committee in due course.

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 Please note these figures do not include anonymous complaints, complaints about Councillors, complaints about a Policy and initial requests for a service.

- 2.2 Neither do they include complaints dealt with by the department which have not subsequently been reported to the Customer Relations Officer for monitoring and recording purposes.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 To refine the process to ensure that all complaints are logged by the relevant department to enable thorough monitoring and accurate reporting.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 In order to achieve 3. we will be investigating the functionality within the new Customer Relations Management system to ensure that we can automatically record and monitor all comments, compliments and complaints received via e-mail and letter. The intention is that each department will then be able to record incoming correspondence and the system will automatically confirm receipt of e-mails and issue reminders when responses are due. The Customer Relations Officers will have access to this information for monitoring and recording purposes.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 No payments were made in compensation for distress and/or inconvenience.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 None

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 The lessons learnt from comments, compliments and complaints should help CBC deliver the 2.5 objective in the Corporate Plan.

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Summary Report of Oct 07 – March 08 Complaints Register

List of Background Documents: None

List of Consultees: Cllr N Williams

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Ensure complaints are properly dealt with
Impact on Sustainability	Ensure complaints are properly dealt with
Impact on Rural Proofing	Ensure that the whole borough is dealt with equally
Health and Safety Implications	Ensure complaints are properly dealt with
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Ensure complaints are dealt with equally and sensitively
Children and Young Persons Implications	Ensure complaints are properly dealt with
Human Rights Act Implications	Ensure complaints are properly dealt with

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision NO

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED OCTOBER 2007- MARCH 2008

Dept	Number of Complaints	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Still ongoing	Within timescale/	Satisfied
Leisure and Env Services	18		17		1	14	9
Regeneration	14		3		11	3	3
Customer Services	10		9	1		9	8
Legal Services	1		1			1	0
Totals	43		30	1	12	27	20

Details of individual complaints are available upon request from Marissa Joyce or Alison Walton, Customer Relations Officers, The Copeland Centre, Catherine St, Whitehaven. tel 598525.

Compliments received: Beacon/TIC - services are excellent and numerous compliments about the Beacon redevelopment.

Customer Services - thanks to the Customer Services Officers for going the extra mile to help/advise .

Open Spaces - several letters of thanks to the Agricultural team for excellent standard of work carried out in areas in the Borough.

Open Spaces - how well Trinity gardens & St Nicholas Gardens are maintained

Customer Relations - thanks for the prompt and efficient service

Dept	Complaint	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Lessons learnt	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3	Within timescale	Satisfied
Waste	Non Collection of Brown bin for 6 weeks Complaint re staff not dealing with telephone requests		Apology given and discussed with staff	√			√	Yes
Waste	Didn't empty her black bin but emptied others		Explanation given bin was open	√			√	Yes
Waste/Enforcement	Alleging we are ignoring constant street littering by neighbour		Meeting arranged with CBC & CCC re joint response	√			√	Ongoing neighbour dispute
Waste	Repeated non collection		Explained due to access difficulties which are being addressed	√			√	Yes
Waste	Non delivery of bins to new build, asked 5 times		Admin error apology given and bins delivered	√			√	Yes

Waste	Changed to receiving only 1 not 2 black bin bags about 6 months ago		Explained due to new crew adhering to the 1 bag policy	√			√	Yes
Dept	Complaint	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Lessons learnt	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3	Within timescale	Satisfied
Waste	Refuse Collection arrangements & attitude of staff in the Waste Dept		Stage 2 Inv Officer found no case to answer		√			Probably not
Waste	Refuse not collected when rest of street was		Rang and explained on lock outs as not out by 7.30am.	√			√	Yes
Waste	Repeatedly left messages for someone in waste to ring her back to explain 1 bag policy.		Designated Officer on leave, apology given	√			√	No writing to C.E. - says its not a good service
Waste	Non collection of removal of furniture		Apology given for the delay removed that day.	√			√	No, not happy they had to call back.
Waste	General issues re waste collection		Policies and procedures explained.	√			√	Yes

Waste	Non collection 8+ calls re non collection of garden waste Arranged own collection then we turned up		Apology given should have told him it wasn't collected because it wasn't bagged.	√			No	No
Dept	Complaint	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Lessons learnt	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3	Within timescale	Satisfied
Waste	Complaining can't cope with 2 weekly collection		Offered to visit and advise how to recycle etc	√			√	Probably not didn't accept offer of help.
Open Spaces	Tourist complaining about inadequate toilet facilities		Apology given and explained being reviewed	√			√	No
Open Spaces	Disgusted at the lack of upkeep to the Cycle way.		Site visit with Complainant and Toni Magean.	√			√	Yes and Sustrans gained a volunteer warden.
Enforcement	Town centre resident complaining about parking in and around New Doctors Surgery and Whitehaven News Office and the lack of enforcement in town centre		Explained facts and figures prove areas are regularly patrolled, no case to answer	√			√	No then withdrew his complaint.

Enforcement	Officer attitude when Enforcement notice served on business premises		Enf Officers disputed her allegations, found no case to answer	√				No
Dept	Complaint	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Lessons learnt	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3	Within timescale	Satisfied
Enforcement	Alleging we didn't carry out correct procedures when issuing Enforcement notice		Notice withdrawn due to admin error.	√				Yes
Planning	Didn't consult about neighbours extension		Explained Officer discretion whether or not to consult.	√			√	No
Planning	Officers not responding to complaints about the adoption of roads and pavements in the locality of Oak Crescent		Current application Tony Pomfret agreed to oversee				Ongoing	
Planning	Re a development near his home allegedly causing flooding		Site visit attended by CBC. Complainant, drainage expert and				Ongoing, Ombudsman omb involved	

			Ombudsman.					
Planning	Non response to letter re No Planning Permission for a sign on Ind Est at Seascale		Apology given and thanked for notifying us				Ongoing owner told to seek retrospective permission.	Yes
Dept	Complaint	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Lessons learnt	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3	Within timescale	Satisfied
Planning	Grievance against Officer. Feels he is being unfairly treated re Planning Application		Found no case to answer.	√			√	Yes
Planning 6 complaints re same issue.	Passing of plans for the development and Cross house and the planning meeting of 5 March		Found no case to answer procedures followed.				Ongoing case referred back to Omb for advice/ determination	No
Planning/ Councillor	No consultation re O2 Antenna & Councillor saying there were no objections without consulting residents	Application has been refused	Initial telephone conversation requested a complaint form but Application refused happy to withdraw.	√			√	Yes

Regeneration Grants	Claiming Maladministration re Application for Disables Facilities Grant		Investigation ongoing.				ongoing	
Housing	Complaining about damp in house black mould on walls.	Several Insurance claims previously paid out.	CBC and C Homes jointly investigating.				ongoing	
Dept	Complaint	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Lessons learnt	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3	Within timescale	Satisfied
Customer Services	Re Officer attitude when she asked for an explanation of business rates. Officer using jargon.		Apology given, accounts explained clearly.	√			√	Yes
Customer Services	Re being asked to pay back 25% discount, for alleged Councils error		Explanation given why she isn't eligible for the discount	√			No	No
Customer Services	Requested HB be paid to him several times but we continue to pay it to the landlord		Explained legislation, its because he is more than 8 weeks behind with his rent	√			√	Yes, informed he can use the Appeals process

Customer Services	Re Data Protection received someone else's info with hers		Apology given, staff spoken to.	√			√	Yes
Customer Services	Rude attitude of Officer & enquiry not dealt with appropriately		Apology, letter sent fully responding to the enquiry.	√			√	Yes
Dept	Complaint	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Lessons learnt	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3	Within timescale	Satisfied
Customer Services	Bailiff sent without prior notification from us.		No case to answer, copy letters sent	√			√	No
Customer Services	Council tax bills mix up re Mothers death disputing amount owed		Accounts reviewed and amended to reflect further info.	√			√	Yes
Customer Services	Have rang 3 times & 1 visit to request a Payment Card		Doesn't need a card Welfare Officer to contact them with assistance	√			√	Yes
Customer Services	Complaining breaking Data P with Civica report detailing payment refused as "card not authorised"		No case to answer, written explanation sent by		√		√	Yes

			Monitoring Officer					
Customer Services	Payment card issued in wrong name twice.		Data incorrect, amended and apology given.	√			√	Yes
Dept	Complaint	Amount of Compensation Awarded	Lessons learnt	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3	Within timescale	Satisfied
Legal/Env	Claiming compensation re delays in test results Re Estuary Close	.	Martin Jepson determined no liability.	√			√	No As no compen received for costs