

## **COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Councillor George Clements  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Jane Salt, Head of Customer Services  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Marissa Joyce, Alison Walton Customer Relations Officers

### **Summary and Recommendation:**

During April – June 2009, 25 complaints were investigated through the Councils Comments, compliments and complaints procedure, compared to 23 in the first quarter of 2008/2009.

111 compliments were recorded during this period, 99 of these related to the Beacon.

Recommendations are:

1. Members to note the report
2. Officers to be advised to use the Covalent Complaints module to record all comments, compliments and complaints received by their department.

## **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 was last 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 During the period April to June 2009 there were 25 complaints recorded on Covalent, summary attached.

## **2. ARGUMENT**

- 2.1 Please note these figures do not include complaints about Councillors, complaints about a Policy and initial requests for a service. However they may now include anonymous complaints or comments from which we can learn something even if we can't progress it through our complaints procedure.
- 2.2 Neither do they include complaints dealt with by the department which have not subsequently been recorded on Covalent.

### **3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 From April 2009 Officers were asked to record all comments, compliments and complaints about their service on the Covalent electronic corporate complaints system. This complaints system will support service managers through the process whilst also providing a tool for corporate monitoring and reporting.
- 3.2 Each manager nominated an administrator for their service and both received training on how to use the system to respond to comments, compliments and complaints relating to their department.

### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The system will continue to be updated with enhancements and new releases as they become available.
- 4.2 Reports training to enable Managers and Officers to produce reports from all the modules used in the Covalent system, not just Complaints, is being arranged and will be delivered shortly.
- 4.3 The Customer Relations Officers are monitoring the system on a daily basis, providing on-going training, support and advice to Officers upon request.

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

- 5.1 No additional ongoing financial implications. It has been decided due to the high number of compliments received at the Beacon these would only be recorded in the visitors book and the number reported.

### **6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 Evaluate the selected programmes against our requirements.

### **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 of complaints received April - June 09

**List of Background Documents: None**  
**List of Consultees: Cllr G Clements**

### **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

## Appendix A

### SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED DECEMBER 08 – MARCH 09

Dept	Number of Complaints	Amount of Compensation Awarded £	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Still ongoing	Within timescale	Satisfied
Customer Services	4		4			3	4
Legal	1		1			1	1
Leisure and Environmental Services	15		9		6	9	9
Policy and Performance	-						
Regeneration	3		3			3	3
Anon	2						
<b>Totals</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>

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.

### **Comments and lessons learnt**

#### **Customer Services**

Gentleman rang and wasn't informed when he paid for a bulk collection that it wouldn't be collected that day.  
Lesson learnt – Copeland Direct informed of comment and reminded to give the customer the full information.

#### **Leisure and Environment**

Visitor to the area unhappy about receiving a parking ticket says he won't return to the area and is contacting the press – comment passed to Communications for circulation.

Comment regarding a bench recently removed by contractors but studs remaining in the ground which the lady had tripped over. It appeared that Contractors had removed the seats as part of a regeneration project but left the studs, which our Street Scene team removed immediately they were notified.

Lesson learnt to check works undertaken by a Contractor.

2 x Bins not returned to point of collection

Lesson learnt Janice Carrol issued reminder to all crews reminding them of the policy.

Comments/questions from trade waste customer regarding the reduction in service - Trade Waste Officer worked with the customer to make agreeable alternative arrangements and the customer very happy with the response.

**Compliments – lessons learnt:**

**Customer Services**

Thanks for dealing with change of travel concession quickly and efficiently following a death.

Thanks for assistance in dealing with issues including council tax and benefits arising from a house move.

Thanks to Recovery Officer for advice and assistance given.

**Finance and Business Control**

Thanks for tracing an outstanding invoice and arranging immediate payment.

**Leisure and Environmental Services**

Compliment regarding the organisation and care given to deliver a high quality sports camp.

Letter received by Environmental Health from the Residents of Eskdale re the cancellation of B-Fest.

Compliment for Toni Magean and the Open Spaces team from the Principle Cumbria in Bloom Judge regarding the continuing high standards of management strategies and plant production and maintenance which he says have put West Cumbria on the map.

Thanks for the swift and efficient service in response to 2 separate reports of fly tipping.

Thanks from Parish Council for assistance in regard to Gosforth Playing field

Thanks for prompt response from Enforcement to a report of illegal parking in Whitehaven town centre

Compliment from someone previously classed as a persistent complainer about bulk collection service, reasonable charge and she's please to see we are getting our act together and to keep improving.

Thanks for swift repair of a bin lid, 3 days after he reported it broken.

**NB** – Please remember the Beacon continues to receive numerous compliments but the decision was taken some time ago not to include those to this Committee as they would give an unrealistic view as to the number of complaints the Council receives. This information is available separately from Marissa or Alison upon request.

### **Complaints - lessons learnt**

#### **Customer Services**

Need to review year end procedures regarding benefits to identify changes in circumstances between letters being produced and sent.

#### **Leisure and Environmental Services**

Customer care training and Risk Assessment training required for waste staff following complaints about the refuse collection crews' behaviour which subsequently resulted in investigations under the Councils disciplinary process.