

**QUARTERLY COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS AND ANNUAL  
CONTACT CENTRE REPORT**

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

**Summary and Recommendation:**

During December 2008 and March 2009, 19 complaints were investigated through the Councils Comments, compliments and complaints procedure, taking the total number received in the financial year 2008/2009 to 93. This is a significant decrease to the 121 complaints recorded in 2007/08.

The contact centre has now been using the new system since 01 April 2008 and this report informs members of the annual performance.

Recommendations are:

1. Members to note the content of 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 December 2008 to March 2009 the Customer Relations Officers recorded 19 complaints, summary attached.
- 1.3 From April this year, Officers will record all comments, compliments and complaints on the recently purchased Covalent electronic corporate comments , compliments and complaints system, referred to in previous reports to this committee.
- 1.4 On April 1<sup>st</sup> last year, due to soaring costs and poor performance the Council implemented a new telephony and customer relationship management system.

- 1.5 The performance of the service immediately improved and this report advises members of the first annual performance figures.

## **2. ARGUMENT**

- 2.1 Please note the attached complaints summary attached does not include anonymous complaints, complaints about Councillors, complaints about a Policy and initial requests for a service.
- 2.2 Neither does it include complaints dealt with by the department which have not subsequently been reported to the Customer Relations Officer for monitoring and recording purposes.

## **3. CONTACT CENTRE PERFORMANCE**

- 3.1 The average number of calls answered for 08/09 is 94% compared with 81% in 07/08.
- 3.2 The average length of time to deal with a call is 2½ minutes compared with 3½ previously.
- 3.3 The average speed to answer a call is 29 seconds. The previous reporting system did not provide this information so it cannot be compared, although from memory during 07/08 we did use to receive between 3-5 comments per week about the length of time it was taking to get through to Copeland Direct. We have not had any complaints about this during the last 12 months.

## **4. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The Covalent comments, compliments and complaints system will support service managers through the process whilst also providing a tool for corporate monitoring and reporting.
- 4.2 Each manager has nominated an administrator for their service and this person has received training on how to use the system to respond to comments, compliments and complaints relating to their department. Further training will be given by the Customer Relations Officer upon request.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The Covalent comments compliments and complaints system will not only allow regular reporting to OSC it can also report on complaints by type, by area, by postcode etc
- 5.2 One of the Council's 6 priorities is to give good customer service and the implementation of this system will contribute to this priority by delivering:
  1. A corporate view of all complaints is available
    - a. Every department will store complaints on the same system

- b. Complaints will be recorded centrally from when they are first reported (unlike now where CROs may not be aware until the manager's monthly return).
- 2. Improved services offered to customers through better use of this 'free' feedback from customers by:
  - a. Having information available and in a format to identify and recommend where changes should be made to services
  - b. Having improved reporting and analysis tools (currently carried out manually)
- 3. Improved complaints service
  - a. The system will support managers through the complaints process e.g. sending emails to remind them when deadlines are approaching
  - b. The Council will have a complete picture of all complaints and how they are being processed
- 5.3 As the new Contact Centre system is more simple to use this has enabled us to answer the calls more quickly and for us to deal with the enquiry in a shorter period.

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

- 6.1 Approximate minimum costing for the Covalent comments compliments and complaints system is £4375.00, which includes 1<sup>st</sup> year support charge. The funding for this will be found from the T-enabling budget.
- 6.2 The annual costs for the existing contact centre system are less than the previous system and therefore has provided some budget savings. There are some enhancements required and these have been budgeted for as part of the T-enabling programme.

## **7. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The risks are all included in the T-enabling project.

## **8. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN**

- 8.1 The lessons learnt from comments, compliments and complaints should help CBC deliver the 2.5 objective in the Corporate Plan.
- 8.2 The improved service delivery should help CBC deliver the 2.5 objective in the Corporate Plan.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix A: Summary of complaints received December 08 – March 09

**List of Background Documents: None**

**List of Consultees: Cllr N William**

## **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            | Improved customer service |
| Impact on Sustainability                | Improved customer service |
| Impact on Rural Proofing                | Improved customer service |
| Health and Safety Implications          | Improved customer service |
| Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues | Improved customer service |
| Children and Young Persons Implications | Improved customer service |
| Human Rights Act Implications           | Improved customer service |

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<br>£ | Resolved at Stage 1 | Resolved at Stage 2 | Still ongoing | Within timescale | Satisfied |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------|
| Customer Services                  | 8                    | 1 x £250.00                         | 5                   | 1                   | 2             | 6                | 4         |
| Leisure and Environmental Services | 7                    |                                     | 5                   | 1                   | 1             | 5                | 4         |
| Policy and Performance             | 1                    |                                     | 1                   |                     |               | 1                | 0         |
| Regeneration                       | 3                    |                                     | 1                   |                     | 2             | 1                | 1         |
| <b>Totals</b>                      | <b>19</b>            | <b>£250.00</b>                      | <b>12</b>           | <b>2</b>            | <b>5</b>      | <b>13</b>        | <b>9</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.

**Compliments received: December**

None

**Compliments received: January**

**Open Spaces** Thanks for re-siting a bin at Holmrook within a week of the request.

**Compliments received: February**

**Customer Services.** Thanks for the helpful and professional manner in which the Benefits Officer dealt with a claim

**Open Spaces** Thanks for putting a litter bin on the play area at Pica.

**Compliments received: March**

**Customer Services** Comment that CSO was “very pleasant on the phone”

**Open Spaces** Thanks to the crew who cleaned the verges around Beckermat, “a very thorough job well done”

**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.

| Dept                           | Complaint  | Amount of Compensation Awarded | Lessons learnt   | Resolved at Stage 1 | Resolved at Stage 2 | Within timescale | Satisfied |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------|
| <b>Customer Services</b>       |  |                                |  |                     |                     |                  |           |
| Revs & Bens (Complaint ref 75) | Delay in processing benefit – due to her not supplying the requested information. Stage 2 found fault on both sides.                                     |                                | Review of benefit letters and when its appropriate for CSO to refer the case to benefits officer |                     | √                   | Yes              | Yes       |
| Revs & Bens (ref 77)           | Bailiffs' actions and attitude, request to take case back to CBC – We spoke to the Bailiff and found no case to answer so refused to take the case back. |                                |  | √                   |                     | Yes              | No        |
| Revs & Bens (ref 80)           | Received a reminder letter when he had already paid – apology given found a problem with the posting interface.  |                                |  | √                   |                     | Yes              | Yes       |

|                                    |  |                                       |                       |  |  |                         |                  |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|-------------------------|------------------|
| Revs & Bens<br>(ref 82)            | Received a reminder letter when he had already paid – payment posted the day reminder letters sent out.                                      |                                       |                       | √  |  | Yes                     | Yes              |
| <b>Dept</b>                        | <b>Complaint</b>   | <b>Amount of Compensation Awarded</b> | <b>Lessons learnt</b> | <b>Resolved at Stage 1</b>                               | <b>Resolved at Stage 2</b>                               | <b>Within timescale</b> | <b>Satisfied</b> |
| <b>Customer Services cont'd...</b> |  |                                       |                       |  |  |                         |                  |
| Revs & Bens<br>(ref 85)            | Alleging a breach of Data Protection – found no case to answer   |                                       |                       | √  |  | Yes                     | No               |
| Revs & Bens<br>(ref 86)            | Cancelled benefit and didn't notify the claimant or her landlord.  | £250.00 paid to landlord              |                       | √  |  | Yes                     | Yes              |
| Revs & Bens<br>(ref90)             | DD not changed when benefit awarded – explained it was too late to change it and the payment has been credited to previous years Ctax debts. |                                       |                       | √<br>Ongoing investigation awaiting complainant response |  |                         |                  |
| Revs & Bens<br>(ref91)             | Alleging Court mis-informed re Ctax recovery – found no case to answer   |                                       |                       |  | √<br>Ongoing investigation awaiting complainant response |                         |                  |



|                                  |  |                                       |   |                            |                            |                         |                                   |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Policy and Performance</b>    |  |                                       |   |                            |                            |                         |                                   |
| I.T.<br>(ref 88)                 | Poorly designed website, particularly relating to online payments.   |                                       | Comments passed and page revised                                      | √                          |                            | Yes                     | No                                |
| <b>Dept</b>                      | <b>Complaint</b>   | <b>Amount of Compensation Awarded</b> | <b>Lessons learnt</b>   | <b>Resolved at Stage 1</b> | <b>Resolved at Stage 2</b> | <b>Within timescale</b> | <b>Satisfied</b>                  |
| <b>Leisure &amp; Environment</b> |  |                                       |   |                            |                            |                         |                                   |
| Enforcement<br>(ref 76)          | Attitude of Enforcement Officer, inconsistently of giving tickets  |                                       | Enf Officers to complete work logs and training to ensure consistency |                            | √                          | Yes                     | Yes                               |
| Enforcement<br>(ref 78)          | Attitude of Parking Warden – found no case to answer   |                                       |   | √                          |                            | Yes                     | Yes                               |
| Enforcement<br>(ref 79)          | Attitude of Parking Warden – found no case to answer   |                                       |   | √                          |                            | Yes                     | No                                |
| Env Health<br>(ref 83)           | Alleging over zealous in actions taken relating to noise complaint and breach of confidentiality – found no case to answer |                                       |   | √                          |                            | No                      | Original investigation still live |

|   |   |                                       |  |  |                            |                         |                  |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Waste Management (ref 87)               | Attitude of Officers when complaining about refuse collection - apology given   |                                       |  | √  |                            | Yes                     | Yes              |
| <b>Dept</b>                             | <b>Complaint</b>  | <b>Amount of Compensation Awarded</b> | <b>Lessons learnt</b>                        | <b>Resolved at Stage 1</b>                               | <b>Resolved at Stage 2</b> | <b>Within timescale</b> | <b>Satisfied</b> |
| <b><i>Leisure and Env Cont'd...</i></b> |   |                                       |  |  |                            |                         |                  |
| Waste Management (ref 89)               | Delay in responding to Env complaints re fly tipping, road cleansing throughout the Borough – apology and explanations given. |                                       |  | √  |                            | Yes                     | Yes              |
| Open Spaces (ref 92)                    | Re Officer attitude – found no case to answer   |                                       |  | √<br>Ongoing investigation awaiting complainant response |                            |                         |                  |
| <b><i>Regeneration</i></b>              |   |                                       |  |  |                            |                         |                  |
| Regen and Planning (ref 81)             | Issues re Millom Palladium and Equestrian Centre – regular complainant  |                                       |  | Ongoing investigation                                    |                            |                         |                  |
| Planning (ref 84)                       | Re Drainage works carried out at Mirehouse football club – found no case to answer  |                                       | To keep accurate records of site meeting and | √  |                            | Yes                     | Yes              |

|                          |                     |  |                            |                          |  |  |  |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|--|--|--|
|                          |                     |  | telephone<br>conversations |                          |  |  |  |
| Homelessness<br>(ref 93) | Re Officer attitude |  |                            | Ongoing<br>investigation |  |  |  |