

## **Bolsover District Council**

### **Customer Service & Transformation Scrutiny Committee**

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

#### **Customer Service Standards/ Compliments, Comments and Complaints Report 2019/20**

1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and Annual Summary

#### **Report of the Head of Corporate Governance**

This report is public

#### **Purpose of the Report**

- To provide information on the Council's performance in relation to its customer service standards.
- To provide information on the effective management of complaints and customer requests which is central to excellent customer service and the Council can use to improve its services.
- To provide information on the number of compliments, comments and complaints for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020
- To provide an Annual Summary on the above.

#### **1 Report Details**

The purpose of this report is to make Elected Members aware of performance in relation to its Customer Service Standards and the effective management of complaints.

##### **1.1 Customer Service Standards**

Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of the key customer service standards by quarterly period, together with the target and the cumulative performance for each standard.

##### **Telephones**

##### **Target - 93% to be answered within 20 seconds**

Appendix 2 shows the performance between 1st October 2019 and 31st March 2020 by quarterly period. The report identifies 98% (in both Q3 and Q4) of incoming calls are being answered corporately within 20 seconds cumulatively. Those departments narrowly missing the key customer service standard of 93% for these periods were:

- Housing and Community Safety 92% in Q3
- Planning 92% in Q3.

Cumulatively performance is 98% over 2019/20.

##### **Contact Centres**

##### **Target - 80% of incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds**

Contact Centres achieved 80% and 76% for quarters 3 & 4 respectively (78% cumulatively).

Cumulatively performance is 78% over 2019/20, which falls just short of the target of 80%.

## Revenues & Benefits

### **Target - 60% of incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds**

Revenues & Benefits 'direct dial' achieved 81% and 81% for quarters 3 & 4 respectively (81% cumulatively).

Cumulatively performance is 77% over 2019/20, which exceeds the target of 60%.

## E-mails

### **Target 1 - 100% to be acknowledged within 1 working day**

### **Target 2 - 100% to be replied to within 8 working days**

For this reporting period, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020:

- 6,488 email enquiries (3,388 in Q3 and 3,100 in Q4) from the public were received through [enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk)
- All were acknowledged within one working day
- 99% were replied to in full within 8 working days.

There were more e-mails compared to the same period (4,798) in 2018/19 and this remains a popular method of contact.

## Face to face monitoring

### **Target – 99% not kept waiting longer than 20 minutes at a Contact Centre**

Waiting times were monitored during one week (w/c 15<sup>th</sup> July 2019) in 2019/20 due to the Contact Centre being closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Of the 813 customers who called into the Contact Centres, 812 (99.9%) waited less than 20 minutes to be served. This exceeds the corporate target and demonstrates excellent service.

During the same period, 199 callers were served on Meet & Greet at The Arc in Clowne, bringing the total number of callers served during the monitoring period to **1012**.

## **1.2 Compliments, Comments and Complaints**

### Compliments

Appendix 3 (A) shows the number of written compliments received for the period by department. In total 218 written compliments were received. Compliments were received from customers who appreciated excellent service. These included 44 for Leisure, 35 for Streetscene Services, 35 for Revenues & Benefits and 26 for Housing. As there are some compliments which cross cut departments, the number does not correspond with the total above when viewed in this way.

### Comments

Appendix 3 (B) shows the number of written comments received for the period. 100% (all 39) were acknowledged and passed to the respective department within the target time of 3 working days, for consideration when reviewing their service.

## Complaints

### Frontline resolution (stage one)

Appendix 3 (C) shows the number of Frontline Resolution complaints received by the Contact Centre service and recorded on the Customer Information System (Firmstep) by department. The customer service standard for responding to these complaints is 3 working days.

### Formal Investigation (stage two)

Appendix 3 (D) shows the number of Formal Investigation complaints by department. 110 complaints were received during this period, 92% of which were responded to within our customer service standard of 15 working days. This does not meet the target of 97%, however the contingency plans put in place for dealing with Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the availability of Officers and, consequently, response times.

As some complaints cross cut departments, the number does not correspond with the total above when viewed in this way.

### Internal Review (stage three)

Appendix 3 (E) shows the number of stage three complaints received for the period by department. These are complainants who have already made a stage two complaint and still feel dissatisfied. During this period 13 stage three complaints were received, 77% (10) of which were responded to within the standard of 20 working days. Again, this does not meet the target of 100%, due to the Covid-19 pandemic impact on the availability of Officers and, consequently, response times.

## Ombudsman

Appendix 3 (F) shows the status of Ombudsman complaints for 2019/20 as at the end of March 2020. During this period three cases were received, one decision was 'Not upheld: no maladministration', one was commuted to the Internal Review stage as the complainant had not fully completed the complaints process and the Council is awaiting the decision in respect of the third.

### **1.3 Summary for 2019/20**

The following tables provide a summary of performance for compliments, comments and complaints for 2019/20, with comparative data from previous years.

#### Volume and Performance

<b>Volume by type</b>	<b>2019/20 Total</b>	<b>2018/19 Total</b>	<b>2017/18 Total</b>	<b>2016/17 Total</b>
Compliments	<b>273</b>	258	266	264
Comments	<b>55</b>	69	58	70
Formal Investigation Complaints (S2)	<b>208</b>	193	179	176
Internal Review Complaints (S3)	<b>41</b>	33	46	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>545</b>

Stage 1 Complaints	<b>205</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>% Comments acknowledged within standard (target 3 working days)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>% Stage 2 responded to within standard (target 97%)</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>99%</b>
Average response in days (target 15 working days)	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>% Stage 3 responded to within standard (target 100%)</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Average response in days	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>

When comparing 2019/20 to the previous year of 2018/19, the following is noted:

- There were more written compliments
- We have received fewer comments
- We have received fewer frontline resolution complaints
- Received more formal investigation complaints
- Received more internal review complaints

The above would appear to indicate that the Council has an easy to access complaints system, as recommended by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman.

When looking at Ombudsman complaints decisions for this financial year, it is satisfying to note the Ombudsman has closed 8 of the 17 after making initial enquiries. Five complaints were 'Not upheld: no maladministration' or to 'Close the case' (Housing Ombudsman), 2 were commuted to Internal Review stage as the complainants had not fully completed the complaints process, one was 'Upheld: maladministration and injustice' and we are awaiting a decision in the remaining one.

As reported to Scrutiny on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019, the 'upheld' complaint was a complex one.

### Complaints Feedback

Whilst there were no real trends leading to service improvements during this financial year we have identified some issues around the New Bolsover regeneration project, which is currently the subject of a Scrutiny Review.

## **2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

The report is to keep Elected Members informed of volumes and trends regarding compliments, comments, complaints and to remain compliant with the Customer Service Excellence standard.

## **3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

The report is to keep Elected Members regularly informed of volumes and trends regarding compliments, comments and complaints. No consultation or equality impact assessment is required.

#### 4 **Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

Not applicable as the report is keep Elected Members informed rather than to aid decision making.

#### 5 **Implications**

##### 5.1 **Finance and Risk Implications**

Whilst there are no direct financial implications with regard to the report, the Council is at risk of recommendations or decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman if complaints are not handled well.

In cases of maladministration, financial penalties can be imposed by the Local Government Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman.

In the case of complaints about Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Environmental Information requests, the Information Commissioner's Office can issue decision notices and impose significant fines.

##### 5.2 **Legal Implications including Data Protection**

The Council is at risk of recommendations or decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman and, in the case of complaints about Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Environmental Information requests, the Information Commissioner's Office can issue decision notices and impose significant fines. There are no Data Protection implications.

##### 5.3 **Human Resources Implications**

Not applicable as the report is to keep Elected Members informed.

#### 6 **Recommendations**

6.1 That Scrutiny note the overall performance on Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints.

#### 7 **Decision Information**

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: <i>BDC: Revenue - £75,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £150,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £250,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No

<b>Has the relevant Portfolio Holder been informed</b>	Yes
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	All
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	All

**8 Document Information**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix:	
1	Customer Service Standards monitoring
2	Telephony performance
3	Compliments, Comments and Complaints: A. Compliments by department 1/10/19 – 31/3/20 B. Comments by department 1/10/19 – 31/3/20 C. Frontline resolution complaints by department 1/10/19 – 31/3/20 D. Formal Investigation complaints by department 1/10/19 – 31/3/20 E. Internal Review complaints by department 1/10/19 – 31/3/20 F. Ombudsman complaints summary for 2019/20
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>
Customer Standards and Complaints Officer	Ext: 2353