

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
8 DECEMBER 2020**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: HALF YEAR UPDATE ON COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS (3CS)

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. SUMMARY

This information note is to provide an update on the first six months performance of 2020/2021 regarding the Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3C's) for the Council and the contractors that provide services on the Council's behalf. This briefing note accompanies the 3C's dashboard at Appendix A, showing key 3C's data, including that of our contractors and the breakdown of 3C's by service and type at Appendix B.

2. STEPS TO DATE

The Council has a well embedded policy and procedure for handling customer feedback called the Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3C's) Policy. We welcome feedback from our customers about our services so we can continue to learn about how we can make improvements and what we do well.

The 3C's policy sets out clearly the definition of a comment, compliment and complaint as well as how to escalate a complaint either to stage 2 of the process or the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Customers can give feedback in a number of ways and can do this directly to the Council or to the contractors who provide key services on our behalf. The policy was reviewed and updated in 2019.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

Between 1st April and 30th September 2020, the combined total of comments, compliments and complaints all decreased in comparison to the same period in 2019. Whilst total 3C's engagements are down year-on-year since 2018, it is worth highlighting specifically the combined number of complaints decreased almost by half (48%).

The Waste Management team took the highest number of complaints (41), with 32 of these taken in quarter two (July (9), August (9) & September (14)). Most of these complaints were in relation to on-going missed bin issues. The second highest number of complaints were logged for Planning (20) which were mostly regarding planning application decisions.

The garden waste sign-up period falls within this reporting period each year. Since 2018, Urbaser have seen a steady decline of complaints logged within this period; with 103 logged this year between April and September compared to 124 in 2019 and 748 in 2018.

Appendix B provides a breakdown of all 3C's received by service and by type. There were 111 compliments received between April and September for various service areas. Careline received 48 compliments and most often these are from family members calling to say thank you for the care provided to a relative. Waste Management received the second highest with 16 and a number of these were residents saying thank you to the crews and the street cleaning teams for their continued service throughout the pandemic.

The number of comments received by Contractors remains steady (259), with 208 of those logged to Urbaser. In July, Urbaser received 69 comments; 51 of those were from new customers not being able to sign up to the garden waste subscription immediately and having to wait until October for collections.

There were 13 Stage 2 complaints, 7 of which were logged for Planning Control and the rest for various service areas. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with our complaints outcome after completing our process, they may escalate their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The LGO received five complaints during this period; the table below summarises the LGO decisions on those complaints:

Service (as classified by the LGO)	LGO Decision
Planning and Development	Upheld – maladministration and injustice – No further action
Corporate and Other Services	Closed after initial enquiries – out of jurisdiction
Planning and Development	Closed after initial enquiries – out of jurisdiction
Planning and Development	Closed after initial enquiries – No further action
Planning Enforcement	Not investigated – recommended to put through as Stage 2 complaint

- The upheld complaint regarding Planning and Development was in relation to the Council failing to properly determine an application for prior approval of a change of use of buildings next to the resident's home. The Council accepted fault and apologised which was deemed as a sufficient and proportionate remedy.
- The Corporate complaint was one previously handled by the Council's Monitoring Officer, which meant the role of the LGO was limited in Councillor against Councillor complaints and therefore not investigated.
- The second Planning and Development complaint was regarding how the Council dealt with a planning application. The LGO concluded that as the resident received the permission he sought; an investigation would not achieve a further outcome.
- The third Planning and Development complaint was in relation to the way the Council considered and decided a planning application to develop a neighbouring property. There was not enough evidence of fault by the Council in how it made its decision to justify an LGO investigation.
- The Planning Enforcement complaint was regarding a neighbours proposed plans for an outbuilding that was not on the plans uploaded to the Planning Portal. This complaint had only gone through Stage 1 of the 3C's procedure and was therefore recommended to be put through as an official Stage 2 complaint.

4. NEXT STEPS

3C's performance will continue to be monitored and reported to SMT quarterly and Overview and Scrutiny six monthly.

The Customer Service Manager will continue to keep up to date with guidance and case studies from the LGO, sharing any key learning.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Dashboard

Appendix B - Breakdown by Service Area

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.