

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
21 JANUARY 2020**

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

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

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR MARTIN STEARS-HANDSCOMB

PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. SUMMARY

This information note is to provide an update on the first six months performance of 2019/2020 in regards to the Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3Cs) for the Council and the contractors that provide services on the Council's behalf. This briefing note accompanies the 3Cs dashboard at Appendix A, showing key 3Cs data, including that of our contractors and the breakdown of 3Cs 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 (3Cs) Policy. We welcome feedback from our customers about our services so that we can continue to learn about how we can make improvements and what we do well. We know that at times of major service change or disruption complaints can increase significantly and that it can take some time to return to a level that is 'normal' for us as has been the case with the last two major waste service changes.

The 3Cs 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 are able to 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

There are a small number of areas that generally receive the highest amount of feedback and unsurprisingly these are in areas where there is the highest level of contact or interactions such as waste and recycling and the leisure facilities and areas that provide a much valued service such as Careline.

Between 01 April and 31 September 2019 the number of 3Cs received, specifically complaints have decreased in comparison to the same period of 2018 when complaints were at an exceptionally high level following the significant changes to the waste and recycling service. The majority of complaints received (118) relate to the waste service and although the number of complaints has decreased, it is still higher than the two years preceding the service change, showing that it does take some time to return to what is considered a usual level.

The complaints regarding the waste service were mostly to do with repeated missed bin issues which spiked in June (24), July (31) and August (26). Problems with the Urbaser telephone lines also generated a number of customer complaints. Complaints decreased in September with 8 complaints for the month, 4 of which related to the telephone lines.

The service receiving the second highest number of complaints (13) was Revenues, billing and recovery, these complaints were mostly in relation to disputes or issues concerning bills and reminder notices.

Appendix B provides a breakdown of all 3Cs received by service and by type. The Careline service received a high number (27) of compliments about the service provided; these are generally submitted by a client's family following an incident where the Careline staff had provided an emergency response service. The Parks and Open spaces service also received 12 compliments.

There were 12 stage 2 complaints received, 9 of which related to waste complaints, and the rest were 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 three complaints during this period, the table below summarises the LGO decisions on those complaints:

Service (as classified by the LGO)	LGO Decision
Private Sector Housing	Upheld, maladministration and injustice £200 remedy awarded
Planning Control	In progress
Waste and Recycling	In progress

- The complaint regarding private sector housing was in relation to poor living conditions and a delay by the council in responding to the initial complaint which led to an increased risk of harm and distress to the complainant. The LGO recommended a financial remedy of £200.
- The planning control complaint is one that is very complex and relates to a condition on a planning application not being enforced. The LGO has issued a draft decision which we have provided a response to and are awaiting a final decision.
- The waste and recycling is concerning repeated reports of spillages during collections, this is currently being considered and we expect a decision shortly.

Complaints that are escalated to the LGO are often complex and will usually have exhausted our own complaints procedure. We have had a small number of complaints upheld by the LGO over the last year or so and therefore we have arranged for the Assistant Ombudsman to speak at our next Senior Management Group (SMG) meeting in March to continue to raise the awareness of the role of the LGO and the importance of effective complaint handling.

4. NEXT STEPS

3Cs 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.