

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 8th October 2013

Learning from Customer Feedback

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the formal feedback received through the Cheshire East Council Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions process.
- 1.2 There is also a summary of cases dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about Cheshire East Council for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee notes this report and makes any further response it considers appropriate.

3.0 Background

In 2012/13 the Council recorded 2,676 instances of customer feedback through the local policy. **Appendix 1** provides an analysis of where the complaints, compliments and suggestions were received by the Council over the past two years.

Just over half (53%) of the total cases related to a complaint. 1,196 complaints were made through the Corporate Complaints process and a further 215 were Social Care Complaints made through their statutory process. The figures show a fall of 197 complaints from the previous year which is a 12% reduction.

The Customer Relations Team have analysed the complaints statistics and have ascertained that the most frequent complaints into the Council were as follows:

Waste	Inconsistent collections Attitude of waste operatives 5 working day re-collection SLE
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Highways	Potholes Lack of contact/action following a report Lack of signage following a diversion
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Council Tax	Phone line opening hours Summons/reminder received Delays in responding to correspondence
Adults	Care planning Care practice (external and Care4ce) Charging
Development	Lack of contact by Case Officer Delays in processing applications Disagreement with decision
Childrens	Care planning Care practice Communication

4.0 Complaints to Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about Cheshire East Council

From 1st April 2012, the LGO changed the way in which they reported complaints and so their Annual Report for 2012 - 2013 was much less comprehensive than previous reports. A total of 68 complaints were considered by the LGO which compares favourably with the 179 handled the previous year.*

**Note: There is a slight discrepancy between the figures quoted in their 2012-2013 report (they state 57 complaints received) and the Council's (68), which is currently being investigated. However, it is likely to be a timing difference (i.e. relating to the decisions made within the year on the complaints received). They now triage complaints before making enquiries with the relevant authority. This was not done in 2011-2012; hence the big drop in numbers.*

The LGO found that, in 87% of the complaints or enquiries submitted, there was no evidence of maladministration or injustice to the complainant.

In 9 cases (13%), Local Settlements were reached. Two of the Local Settlements related to the same Planning issue; they have been highlighted as a cause for concern and were the subject of a Public Report. A review of this is still ongoing within the Planning Service.

(A Local Settlement is when an authority takes or agrees to take action that the Local Government Ombudsman considers to be a satisfactory response. This can be a change in procedures, re-consideration of the original decision, an apology and/or compensation payment).

The table overleaf details the complaints to the LGO for 2012/2013 compared with 2011/2012, per service area:

Total LGO Complaints by Service	Not Investigated 12/13	Investigated 12/13	Not Investigated 11/12	Investigated 11/12
Adult Care Services	4	13 <i>4 Local Settlements</i>	19	14
Housing Benefits & Council Tax	5	2 <i>2 Local Settlements</i>	12	6
Corporate & Other Services	2	0	4	3
Education & Children's Services	5	8 <i>1 Local Settlement</i>	21	13
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	1	0	9	4
Highways & Transport	5	3	7	3
Markets	1	0	0	0
Parking Enforcement	1	0	0	0
Planning	5	13 <i>2 Local Settlements</i>	41	18
Housing	0	0	3	2
Total	29	39	116	63

5.0 Comparison with other Unitary Authorities

Appendix 2 details all complaints against Unitary Authorities investigated by the LGO in 2011 – 2012 (the most recent figures). The highest figure is 130, for Cornwall CC, the lowest is 3, for Rutland, and the average is 39 complaints per authority. In the same period, the LGO investigated 63 complaints against Cheshire East Council.

6.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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