

Report of the Head of Legal Services

Annual Compliments, Complaints, Concerns and Requests for Information 2018/19

Purpose of report

1. To update the Committee with details of compliments, complaints, concerns and requests for information made by the public to the Service over the past 12 months.
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Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee notes that during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019:

- i) a total of 290 requests for information about the Service were received;***
- ii) a total of 102 compliments and donations were received from the public;***
- iii) 33 complaints about Service activities were made; and***
- iv) 20 complaints or concerns were received about activities carried out by other organisations or individuals.***
- v) None of the complainants appealed the response provided and no complaints were passed to the Local Government Ombudsman for investigation.***

Introduction and Background

2. It is important that the Authority has good corporate governance arrangements to ensure services are run in an open and accountable manner. The role of the Committee includes the monitoring and review of the Authority's corporate governance arrangements, which includes responsibility to consider the process and review of compliments, complaints and concerns made by the public about the Service.

Complaints and Concerns Received 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

(Last year's figures are shown in brackets for comparison)

3. The Service received a total of 53 (65) complaints and concerns from the public, with 33 (34) being concerned with Service activities and 20 (31) concerning activities carried out by other organisations or individuals. 16 (15) of the complaints about the Service were upheld, a summary is set out below.

Summary of complaints upheld

Complaint Catagory	Number of complaints upheld	Outcome
Misc.	3	Remedial Action and Apology
Driving Standards	3	Staff Reminders and Apology
Staff Behaviour	4	Staff Education Apology Passed to line manager
Strategic / legal / financial / FRA decision	2	Remedial Action
Poor Response/Service	2	Policy Review Staff Education. Apology
Damage to Property	2	Remedial Action and Apology

4. None of the complainants appealed to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer regarding dissatisfaction with the response provided by the Service and no complaints were subsequently passed to the Local Government Ombudsman.
5. It should be noted that the complaints and concerns received regarding the responsibilities of other organisations or individuals included concerns over poor fire safety at business and residential premises and the potential lack of access to properties in an emergency. Where possible these type of concerns are directed straight to Community Risk.
6. All complaints and concerns were acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and all received a response within 10 working days.

Compliments and Donations Received 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

(Last year's figures are shown in brackets for comparison)

7. The Service received 102 (75) compliments and donations during this period and it should be noted that the majority came following Service attendance at a fire or conducting a Safe and Well Check. There were a number of compliments following Service attendance at an event or making a visit with the remainder noting miscellaneous compliments from animal rescues to children being rescued from locked cars. It should also be noted that any donations received are passed on to the Fire Fighters Charity who actively support firefighters in need and exist to support the everyday heroes of the UK fire community.

Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SAR) Received 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

(Last year's figures are shown in brackets for comparison)

8. The Service received 290 (284) requests for information including subject access requests during this period. Themes included requests for information on fires, ICT, HR and fleet information.

Conclusion/Summary

9. The role of the Audit and Standards Committee includes the monitoring and review of the Authority's corporate governance arrangements. This includes responsibility for considering the process with regards to compliments, complaints and concerns made by the public. This process was last reviewed in December 2018 and was considered to be robust and fit for purpose. There have been no significant issues that have arisen since this date and it has not been necessary to make any changes in Service delivery. The FOI and SAR processes are continually monitored for improvement opportunities; new categorisation systems have been introduced to better support data tracking and monitoring trends and improved methods to collate data for publishing have been developed and are now live.
10. Your officers are satisfied that there are no significant levels of recurring themes or trends in the concerns and complaints being reported to give any cause for concern.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The complaints, concerns and compliments process uses existing resources. The FOI and SAR process uses existing resources.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The complaints, concerns and compliments process links to the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance. The FOIA and SAR process links to statutory and legislative frameworks. (GDPR and DPA 2018)
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	The Audit & Standards Committee receive an annual report to provide assurance to Members that the processes are effective. Legal Services Officers monitor for any emerging trends in reported concerns and complaints on a monthly basis.

Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	N/A – no policy change is recommended
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A – no policy change is recommended

Supporting Information

Background papers:
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority Annual Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance

Contact Officer

Avril Irish, Information Governance Officer
(01905 368241)
Email: airish@hwfire.org.uk