

Report of the Head of Legal Services

Annual Compliments, Complaints, Concerns and Requests for Information 2019/20

Introduction and Summary

The Service has received a similar number of complaints and concerns from the public in comparison to last year, with slightly more complaints/concerns being about Service activities compared to the previous year.

All complaints were investigated but only 13 complaints (32%) were found to involve something having been done incorrectly or where improvements were required. Members can be assured there are no significant levels of recurring themes or trends in the concerns and complaints being reported to give any cause for concern.

The Service continues to receive a pleasing number of compliments from the public with regards to their experience of services provided.

The number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests has increased by 12% and the Subject Access Requests (SARs) has increased from 4 to 15 in the last year. The increase in SARs may potentially be due to an increased awareness of individuals' rights under the GDPR which has almost been in force for two years.

Introduction and Background

1. 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 2019 to 31 March 2020

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

2. The Service received a total of 53 (53) complaints and concerns from the public, with 40 (33) being concerned with Service activities and 13 (20) concerning activities carried out by other organisations or individuals.

3. Only 13 (16) of the complaints about the Service (32%) were upheld as cases where something had gone wrong or we had acted in a way which needed improvement. Remedial action was taken in each of those cases and a summary is set out below.

Summary of complaints upheld

Complaint Category	Number of complaints upheld	Outcome
Misc.	1	Remedial Action and Apology
Driving Standards	4	Staff Reminders and Apology
Staff Behaviour	3	Staff Education Apology Passed to line manager
Poor Response/Service	2	Policy Review Staff Education and Apology
Damage to Property	3	Remedial Action and Apology

4. Two of the complainants appealed to the Deputy 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 types 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 Received 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

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

7. The Service received 100 (102) compliments during this period and it should be noted that the majority came following Service attendance at a fire or flooding incident 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.

Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SAR) Received 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

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

8. The Service received 325 (290) requests for information including 15 (4) subject access requests during this period from individuals about their own personal data held by the Service. Requests received under FOI include information about fires, ICT, HR and fleet information. From 1 April 2020 in addition to these current figures we will also record and report on the number of questions within a single FOI request. Some FOI requests in the last year have had more than 20 questions within them and your officers feel that these figures would also be worth noting.

Conclusion

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.
10. 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.
11. 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.