

## **Report of the Head of Legal Services**

### **Annual Compliments, Complaints, Concerns and Requests for Information 2017/18**

#### **Purpose of report**

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 2017 to 31 March 2018:***

- i) a total of 284 requests for information about the Service were received,***
- ii) a total of 75 compliments and donations were received from the public,***
- iii) 34 complaints about Service activities were made; and***
- iv) 31 complaints or concerns were received about activities carried out by other organisations or individuals.***
- v) Two of the complainants appealed the response provided and of those one complaint was sent to the Local Government Ombudsman for investigation.***

#### **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 2017 to 31 March 2018**

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

2. The Service received a total of 65 (37) complaints and concerns from the public, with 34 (15) being concerned with Service activities and 31 (22) concerning activities carried out by other organisations or individuals. Concerns relating to

business fire safety are passed to Community Risk for immediate action. Following investigation by officers, 15 (15) of the complaints about the Service were upheld, a summary is set out overleaf.

### Summary of complaints upheld

Issue	Number of complaints upheld	Outcome
Driving Standards	3	Reminders to staff of values and responsibilities.
Damage to property	2	Remedial Work
Staff behaviour	10	Reminders to staff about expected levels and standards of behaviour.  Internal investigations.

3. Two of the complainants appealed to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer regarding dissatisfaction with the response provided by the Service, neither were upheld. One of the complaints was subsequently passed to the Local Government Ombudsman who responded to confirm that they would not be conducting a further investigation following the review of evidence.
4. 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.

All complaints and concerns were acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and all received a response within 10 working days. Due to extended investigations, five complainants received a holding letter within 10 days and a full response was issued within 28 days.

### Compliments and Donations Received 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

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

5. The Service received 75 (89) compliments and donations during this period and it should be noted that the majority, 37, came following Service attendance at a fire or conducting a Safe and Well check. There were 10 following Service attendance at an event with the remainder noting miscellaneous compliments from animal and water rescues to help with ring removal. It should also be noted that any donations received are passed on to the Fire Fighters Charity who actively support fire fighters in need and exist to support the everyday heroes of the UK fire community.

## **Freedom of Information and Data Protection Requests Received 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018**

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

6. The Service received 284 (300) requests for information during this period. It should be noted that there was a national spike in FOIA requests following the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy with HWFRS receiving 16 requests specifically concerning high rise buildings. 100% of all requests received were responded to within the statutory timeframe. Themes included requests for information on fires, RTC's, fleet information, I.T, and HR.

### **Conclusion/Summary**

7. 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 on 16 April 2014 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. FOIA processes are continually monitored for improvement opportunities; however, currently no areas have been identified for development.
8. 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

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The complaints, concerns and compliments process uses existing resources.  The FOIA and DPA process uses existing resources.
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (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 in with the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance.  The FOIA and DPA process links to statutory and legislative frameworks.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (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. Committee and Members' Services Officers monitor for any emerging trends in reported concerns and complaints on a monthly basis.
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	N/A – no policy change is recommended
<b>Equalities</b> (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: Committee and Members' Services Officer  
Tel: 01905 368241, email: [airish@hwfire.org.uk](mailto:airish@hwfire.org.uk)