

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

30 NOVEMBER 2011

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Report prepared by Ellie Kershaw

1. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS JULY-SEPTEMBER 2011

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the Council's performance in dealing with complaints during July-September 2011 and to note the areas identified for improvement.

1.2 Recommendation of the Chief Executive

1.2.1 That the committee notes the performance in relation to complaints and agrees action as appropriate.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 In order to ensure that complaints are being dealt with effectively and within corporate timescales it is important that a monitoring mechanism is in place.

1.3.2 Details of the complaints received broken down by service area, category and performance can be found at Appendix A.

1.3.3 During the period July-September 2011 there was a total of 112 complaints closed of which 108 (96%) were responded to in time. This is an improvement from 87% (84 from 97) in the previous quarter.

1.3.4 Of the complaints responded to outside of the target time one related to Council Tax, one to Housing, one to Complaints and one to Community Development. It should be noted that there has been a considerable improvement in the Housing department's performance. This is due to one officer having been nominated to deal with all complaints.

1.3.5 The services with the highest number of complaints were;

- Waste collection- 25

- Development control-23
- Pollution (including litter enforcement)-17

- 1.3.6 Although there were five parking services complaints relating to staff, the Parking Services manager is satisfied that these are unrelated and do not highlight any training issues. These related to the contracted civil enforcement staff and not Council staff.
- 1.3.7 The Waste and Recycling Manager has said that the level of complaints was slightly higher this quarter as a result of issues experienced with the supply of garden waste sacks. These issues have now been resolved and new procedures are in place to prevent the same problems reoccurring. There have also been complaints regarding missed collections not being rectified, however following investigation most of these non-collections were due to valid reasons including contamination, use of the old plastic garden sacks, the bin being broken and blocked access. Effort is being made to ensure residents are aware of the reason that their collection could not be made and therefore avoid it being escalated to an official complaint.
- 1.3.8 22 Stage 2 complaints were processed in this quarter of which 19 (86%) were answered in time. Nine of the stage 2 complaints related to development control and four to planning enforcement. These were mainly from people who were unhappy with planning decisions and did not relate to anything that the Council had done incorrectly. A number of other services had one stage 2 complaint.
- 1.3.9 79 complaints surveys were sent out of which 30 (38%) have been returned. There were no specific comments that could be actioned. Whilst no one service had enough surveys returned to draw any conclusion it is encouraging that 12 of the 30 were satisfied or very satisfied with the way their complaint had been handled. A further two were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- 1.3.10 Of the 16 dissatisfied and very dissatisfied people, nine stated that their complaint had not been understood correctly. The Policy and Performance Manager has reviewed these complaints and is satisfied that whilst the customers may have been unhappy with the resolution to their complaint, that all issues were addressed in the replies.
- 1.3.11 There were some complaints where the issue has been closed by telephone but no notes provided to indicate the outcome. It is important that officers make notes in case of the complainant returning in the future. CMT recommended that this message go into the next core brief.
- 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The Council could choose not to monitor complaints handling but this would impact severely on the Council's ability to use complaints as a business improvement tool.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Customer service is a core value and one of the Council's priorities is Corporate and Customer Excellence. Management of complaints is critical to the success of this objective.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 Failure to manage complaints in a robust fashion represents both a financial and reputational risk to the Council. Regular reports are produced for CMT and also presented to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Standards Committee. Monitoring is carried out by the Policy and Performance Manager.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

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1.7.2 One payment of £250 was made in relation to Council Tax on recommendation from the Ombudsman.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

- Appendix A Complaints breakdown Q2
- Appendix B Surveys Q2

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

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This is a Key Decision because:

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Wards/Parishes affected:

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