

Report to Performance Management Working Group

2 February 2011

By the Council Solicitor

INFORMATION REPORT

Not exempt



**Horsham
District
Council**

Report Title: Complaints, Compliments & Suggestions Monitoring & Learning Report for Horsham District Council 1 October – 31 December 2010

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform the Performance Management Working Group of the details of the complaints, compliments and suggestions received by Horsham District Council for the period 1 October to 31 December 2010. The intention is to learn from the feedback that the Council receives to prevent reoccurrence of complaints, improve Council services and promote areas of good practice.

For the period 1 October to 31 December 2010 Horsham District Council received 54 complaints, 0 suggestions and 37 compliments.

Recommendations

The Working Group is recommended:

- i) To note the contents of this report and comment as appropriate.

Reasons for Recommendations

- i) To increase awareness of the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure and the learning from the complaints, compliments and suggestions which the Council receives.

Background Papers: Local Government Ombudsman's good practice guide 1 – Running a Complaints System

Consultation: Corporate Management Team, Monitoring Officer, Communications Manager

Wards affected: All

Contact: Sarah Gill Complaints & Information Officer ext. 5470

Background Information

1 Introduction

The purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to show the number and type of complaints, compliments and suggestions received by Council department to identify trends and help monitor the situation. This excludes any representations, appeals or disagreements with Council policy – these are not classed as complaints under the Council's current definition of a complaint.

This report is intended for managers, staff and Councillors to help everyone at the Council learn and act upon customer feedback.

2 Statutory and Policy Background

Statutory background

- 2.1 Local Government Act 2000

Relevant Government policy

- 2.2 The guidance on good practice in running a complaints system issued by the Local Government Ombudsman states that Councillors and leading officers should receive regular reports which show complaints by (amongst other criteria) number, subject and outcome. Trends can then be identified together with lessons of general importance.

Relevant Council policy

- 2.3 The Council's Code on Comments, Representations, Criticism of Policy and Complaints approved by Council January 2003 and which forms Part 5D of the Constitution.

3 Details

Complaints Statistics

Complaints received by Horsham District Council for the period 1 October to 31 December 2010

- 3.1 With a view to improving as an organisation, reports are produced containing details of complaints, compliments and suggestions received for the quarter along with previous quarterly figures for comparison. Information about the action taken and lessons learned will be included as well as feedback from other organisations such as the Local Government Ombudsman and the Information Commissioner when available.
- 3.2 The number of complaints received for the period 1 October to 31 December 2010 is fifty four.

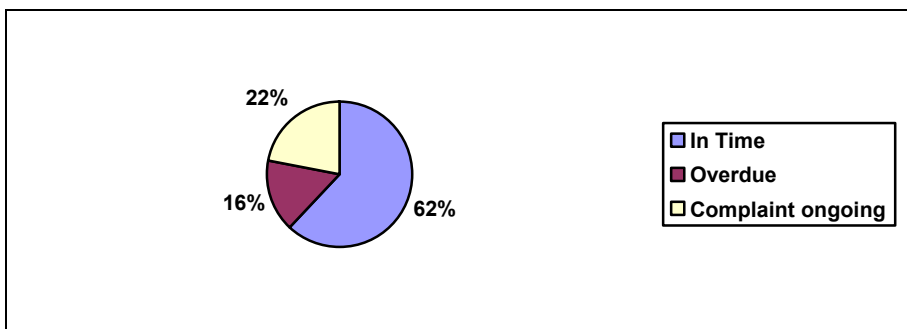
It should be noted that front line Council services such as refuse collections or planning services will by their nature attract more complaints than the services which provide 'in house' functions. Horsham District Council's definition of a complaint is:-

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standards of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on its behalf.

3.3 Table of complaints, suggestions and compliments considered under the Council's procedure 1 October to 31 December 2010.

Department	COMPLAINTS 1 October to 31 December 2010					PREVIOUS QUARTER
	Stage1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Outcome unknown at time of report	Total	Total
Building Control	1	0	0	0	1	1
Housing & Community Development	0	1	0	0	1	0
Leisure & Economic Development	6	0	0	0	6	11
Financial & Legal Services	1	0	0	0	2	0
Corporate Support Services	0	0	0	1	1	1
Strategic Land & Property	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planning Services	3	0	1	3	7	15
Environmental Services	0	1	0	0	1	
Operational Services Refuse/recycling etc	12	3	0	9	24	26
Operational Services Transport	2	0	0	0	2	
Strategic Planning & Performance	0	0	0	0	0	2
Communications	0	0	0	0	0	0
Committee Section & Elections	1	0	0	0	1	0
Revenues & Benefits	6	0	1	1	8	6
Audit	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cross Council – General	0	1	0	0	1	1
TOTALS	31	6	2	15	54	62

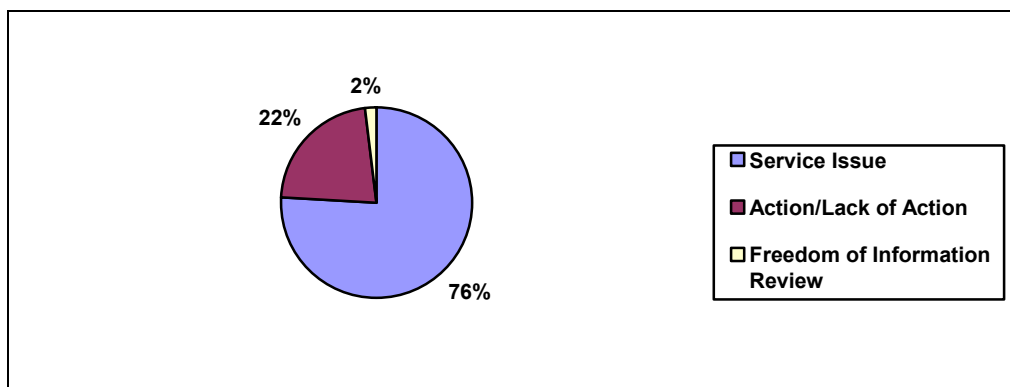
3.4 Chart showing the percentage of complaints responded to within published times scales for the period 1 October to 31 December 2010



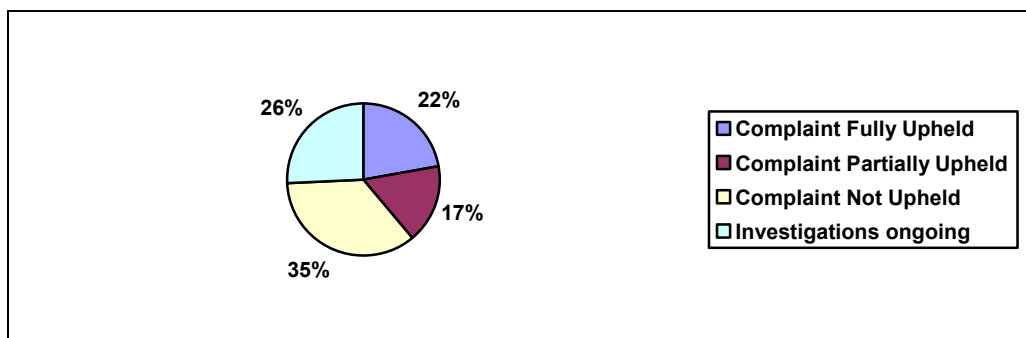
3.5 Table to show complaints received by ward (where this information is known) for the period 1 October to 31 December 2010.

Ward (where postcodes are available)	1 October – 31 December 2010	1 July – 30 September 2010
Billingshurst & Shipley	3	1
Bramber, Upper Beeding & Woodmancote	0	1
Broadbridge Heath	0	2
Chanctonbury	2	3
Chantry	1	2
Cowfold, Shermanbury & West Grinstead	1	2
Denne	3	3
Forest	1	1
Henfield	4	4
Holbrook East	1	1
Holbrook West	2	1
Horsham Park	1	1
Itchingfield, Slinfold & Warnham	1	1
Nuthurst	0	1
Pulborough & Coldwaltham	4	2
Roffey North	2	4
Roffey South	1	1
Rudgwick	0	1
Rusper	0	3
Southwater	11	6
Steyning	1	2
Trafalgar	4	3
Out of District	3	2
Location of complainant unknown	8	16
Total	54	62

3.6 Chart showing the nature of complaints received by Horsham District Council for the period 1 October to 31 December 2010



3.7 Chart showing percentage of complaint upheld/not upheld



Learning from complaints

- 3.8 As to be expected by the nature of the service, complaints about problems with refuse and recycling remain the most common complaint received by Horsham District Council. However, this should be taken in context with the number of bins collected each week being in excess of 100,000.

Following the recent restructure of the waste management department, the method of recording and reporting complaints is currently under review. The Director of Development & Environment, The Head and Assistant Head Operational Services and the Complaints and Information Officer have met to consider what information should be presented to Members and also the public, in order for them to receive a full picture of performance including complaints handling within this department.

Work is now being undertaken to ensure that the current Lagan call system can be amended in order that regular reports on complaints, service requests etc can be routinely produced.

- 3.9 The following action has been taken over the period as a result of complaints being made:

- All residents in block of flats with communal refuse/recycling facilities have been contacted to ensure contamination of recycling is not repeated
- Bailiffs have been requested to tighten internal procedures to ensure a complaint is not repeated
- Work is currently being undertaken to provide recycling facilities to the isolated property round and is scheduled to be in place by end of January 2011.
- Final adjustments have been made to refuse/recycling collection rounds covering Southwater to prevent reoccurrence of collection problems.

- 3.10 No suggestions have been received from customers during this monitoring period.

Compliments

- 3.11 Compliments received by Horsham District Council for the period 1 October to 31 December 2010

Department	Compliments Received 1 October to 31 December	Compliments Received 1 July to 30 September 2010
Housing & Community Development	17	36
Leisure & Economic Development	6	16
The Capitol	1	2
Financial & Legal Services	0	3
Corporate Support Services	0	2
Planning Environmental Services	6	7

Operational Services Refuse/recycling etc Operational Services Transport	2	6
Strategic Planning & Performance	2	1
Communications	0	0
Committee Section & Elections	1	0
Revenues & Benefits	0	2
All departments	2	0
TOTALS	37	75

Significant compliments include:

'We thought it opportune to thank you for your care & diligence in bringing the Bryce Lodge planning application forward. It has been invaluable to have prompt and clear advice' (planning)

'I am so impressed with the service, I am convinced it could not be bettered'
(Housing link alarm)

'Many thanks for all the help in sorting out the grant for my walk in shower - it has changed my life' (Environmental Health)

'I walked into Horsham at 8.30am and was amazed to find the pavements in the middle of town well gritted & cleared of snow. I spoke to come of the local Horsham team who said they had been up since 5am – their efforts were much appreciated'
(snow clearance)

Significant praise has been given for the bin collections carried out throughout the district in recent weeks. A combination of extremely poor weather followed by the Christmas and new year bank holidays have caused collections around the country to be severely disrupted with some councils dealing with huge backlogs of refuse. This has not been the case in Horsham with extra recycling collections being made during the festive period. Full information on the numbers of compliments received will be provided in the next report.

Next Steps

- 4.1 Details of the learning from complaints, compliments and suggestions are disseminated through the Corporate Management Team and the Customer Service Working Group. This will provide evidence that Horsham District Council promotes learning from the feedback that the Council receives from residents and customers,
- 4.2 The system of reporting and recording complaints, compliments and suggestions continues to be reviewed. As part of the Redesign programme a group has been set up under the Director of Development & Environment to look at the wider issues surrounding customer service across the Council. The Complaints & Information Officer will be attending these meetings and complaints handling will form a key part of this topic.

5 Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 All Heads of Service have been consulted and their comments are incorporated in this report.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The Council could take the decision not to produce regular reports; however, this would be in direct conflict with the Local Government Ombudsman's guidance on good practice in complaints handling for local authorities.

7 Staffing Consequences

- 7.1 There are no direct staffing consequences as a result of this report.

8 Financial Consequences

- 8.1 There are no financial consequences arising from this report.

Appendix 1

Consequences of the Proposed Action

What are the risks associated with the proposal? Risk Assessment attached Yes/No	No
How will the proposal help to reduce Crime and Disorder?	The details in this report will have no impact of the Council's duties.
How will the proposal help to promote Human Rights?	By promoting the Council's corporate complaints procedure and the learning from the complaints, compliments & suggestions that we receive we will enhance and promote human rights, particularly Article 8 (right to family life) by providing a mechanism to ensure a fair and non discriminatory method for complaints to be made.
What is the impact of the proposal on Equality and Diversity? Equalities Impact Assessment attached Yes/No/Not relevant	The details in this report will have no impact of the Council's duties re equality and diversity. EIA – not relevant
How will the proposal help to promote Sustainability?	The details in this report will have no impact of the Council's duties re sustainability.