



**SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 4 JUNE 2014**

**CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND COMMENDATIONS ANNUAL  
REPORT 2013 – 2014**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present for the Commission's consideration the Corporate Complaints and Commendations Annual Report, covering the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. A new Corporate Complaints Procedure was adopted by the Authority in April 2010 which requires an Annual Report to be produced, analysing and reviewing complaints received during the preceding 12 months.

**Background**

**Key Issues in the Report**

3. The number of complaints has increased by 16% compared to the previous year. From a total of 271 complaints received, 52% have been upheld either partly or totally. This is slightly up on the previous year (44%).
4. The Environment and Transport Department received the most complaints (148). However, it should be noted that the bulk of the Adults and Communities and Children's and Young Peoples Service complaints (i.e. those relating to social care matters) fall under statutory complaints procedures and are reported separately.
5. During 2013-14, complaint response times continued to be good and were almost identical to prior year (2012-13 figures in brackets):
  - 82% of all complaints received a response within 10 working days (83%)
  - 97% received a response within 20 working days (98%)
  - 100% received a response within the maximum 60 days set by Local Government Ombudsman (100%)

The average response time for all complaints was 6.85 working days, an improvement on last year (7.12).

6. The top three issues complained about were as follows:
- Quality of Work - 61 - 22% of cases
  - Professional Judgement / Decision making - 26 - 10% of cases
  - Keeping Informed - 26 - 10% of cases
7. The top three issues most likely to be upheld were as follows:
- Collaborative working - upheld in 6 of 7 cases
  - Keeping Informed - upheld in 20 of 26 cases
  - Delays in providing service - upheld in 17 of 25 cases
8. Of the 46 complaints submitted to the Ombudsman (24), financial remedies totalled just £1,000, significantly down on last year (£7,500).
9. Commendations continued to rise with 128 recorded (excluding Social Care) compared to 103 in 2012/13.

### **New Developments**

10. Complaints are now mapped against the Council's new Customer Service Standards (see Appendix B) in order to align these two important issues. As a key source of customer feedback, complaints can help assess how well the council is delivering against the key promises we have made to customers in the Standards.
11. The Customer Relations Manager is increasingly adopting a more pro-active role in championing good customer service practice (acting as the 'voice of the customer') and also continues to work closely with departments to assist with making improvements to the overall customer experience.
12. There is now increased visibility of queries including informal complaints (i.e. customer concerns that do not become formal complaints). It has always been the case that a number of complaints were handled informally and outside of formal procedures but, this year, the Annual Report offers for the first time some analysis of these and other miscellaneous interactions.

### **Recommendations**

The Scrutiny Commission is asked to:

- (i) Note the contents of the Corporate Complaints Annual Report, covering the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014; and
- (ii) Provide comment and feedback on the content and analysis within the Report.

**Equal Opportunities Implications**

13. Whilst there are relatively low numbers of complainants completing equalities information, there are no apparent trends or evidence of any barriers to accessing the complaints service.
14. A full Equalities Impact and Human Rights Assessment (EIHRA) will be carried out during 2014-15.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

None.

**Background Papers**

Corporate Complaints and Commendations Annual Report 2013/14 – Scrutiny Commission – 5 July 2013

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**List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Corporate Complaints & Commendations Annual Report 2013 – 14  
Appendix B - Customer Service Standards (April 2014)

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