

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	11 October 2022
Subject:	Have Your Say (4Cs) Annual Update
Report of:	Head of Corporate Services
Head of Service/Director:	Head of Corporate Services
Lead Member:	Lead Member Customer Focus
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

This report provides a summary of Compliments, Comments, Concerns and Complaints received during 2021/22. These four Cs make up the 'Have your say' approach, which sits alongside our formal complaints process. The report at Appendix 1 also includes the annual letter received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) on complaints it has decided. The 4Cs framework was introduced in May 2021 using the digital platform, Liberty Create. The new framework widens the options available for our customers to feedback to us, we can get a better understanding of any performance trends or areas of concern. Building it on our platform also means customers can get in touch with us about any issue they wish to at a time that suits them.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the annual update to provide assurance that complaints are managed effectively.

Financial Implications:

None directly from this report but under the Formal Complaints Policy, on some occasions remedies include compensation to the complainant.

Legal Implications:

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has power to investigate complaints of maladministration against the Council (subject to certain exceptions) and may make recommendations as to how such complaints may be resolved. Where considered appropriate, the Ombudsman has the power to issue a formal report on any particular case for consideration by the Council. Although not legally bound to accept any recommendations from the Ombudsman, it is important that the Council takes careful note of them and learns from any recommendations.

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

None directly.

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

There is a manpower resource to investigate any complaints that are received. Throughout the financial year complaints were impacted by the Council's response to COVID-19. This saw stage two formal complaints put on hold to allow Officers to respond to the national emergency.

Safeguarding Implications:

None.

Impact on the Customer:

None directly from this report but the impact of poor customer service leading to formal complaints being raised can lead to unnecessary delays, stressful situations for the customer, and reputational damage to the Council.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As a result of annual monitoring of formal complaints, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members and Officers felt a review on the complaints framework was required as it had been in place since 2016. Members agreed that introducing more ways for customers to feedback to the Council would give a clearer picture of residents' satisfaction. It would also prevent some issues which were being logged as formal complaints to be treated more as a service issue, for example, one-off missed bin reports.
- 1.2 The review resulted in a new 'Have Your Say' approach being approved at Executive Committee in March 2021. The approach sits alongside our Formal Complaints Policy and introduced the four 'Cs': Compliments, Comments, Concerns and Complaints.
- 1.3 The four C's framework sits on the digital platform, Liberty Create, to help ensure feedback from customers is responded to appropriately and that the process is simple as possible for the customer. The system went live at the end of May 2021 and Appendix 1 set out the first annual report using the new framework.
- 1.4 The framework is monitored by a designated officer within the Corporate Services team, and a quarterly analysis is presented at Corporate Management Team and annually to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The reporting and monitoring system has helped ensure that complaints are handled to the same standard and their progress can be closely monitored so that responses are made in a timely manner. Complaints may be reported onwards to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) by the complainant once the complaint has been dealt with through the Council's complaints framework.

2.0 HAVE YOUR SAY APPROACH- THE FOUR Cs.

2.1 Whilst there is no statutory requirement for us to report the details contained within Appendix 1, we recognise the importance of ensuring our customers feel they will be:

- Listened to.
- Treated honestly, fairly, and politely.
- Given help and advice as quickly as we can.
- Individual needs and right to privacy will be respected.
- Kept informed about what is happening.

This annual report provides an overview of how we are performing in respect of customer feedback and helps to inform our Customer Care Standards and customer first Council Plan (2020- 2024) priority.

3.0 COMPLIMENTS

3.1 A compliment is defined as 'a polite expression of praise or admiration for a service received'. It could be about a person, a team, a service, a single event, or a chain of circumstances that made the experience a positive one. Overall, there was an increase of 56.25% in the number of compliments received during 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. A selection of compliments received can be found under section one of Appendix 1.

4.0 COMMENTS

4.1 We consider a comment to be 'a verbal or written remark expressing an opinion or reaction about a standard of service, policy or decision made by Tewkesbury Borough Council.'

4.2 Comments is a new strand to our Customer Care framework so yearly comparison data is not available but in 2021/22 a total 340 comments were received. Examples of comments received varied from queries relating to applying for licenses to change of circumstances for Council Tax accounts. Under section two of Appendix 1, you will find a breakdown of comments received by service area.

5.0 CONCERNS

5.1 We let our residents know that we consider a concern to be something that is bothering the customer, but they don't feel they need to go through our more formal complaints procedure route to reach a resolution. An example of a common concern is if a bin has been missed on more than one occasion.

5.2 This too is a new strand to the framework as we recognised that not all customers wanted to submit a formal complaint but wanted to raise their concerns. By introducing 'concerns' to the framework it benefits the customer, as raising a concern instead of a formal complaint will generally see a quicker response time. Formal complaints have a statutory response time of 20 working days, whereas concerns should be responded to within our Customer Care Standards expectation of five working days.

5.3 Details of the number of concerns received by service area and examples of concerns can be found under section three of Appendix 1.

6.0 COMPLAINTS

6.1 Unlike compliments, comments and concerns, there is a statutory process in place for formal complaints. Our formal complaints policy sets out what customers can expect from the two-stage process including how we receive, manage, and respond to complaints. Section four of Appendix 1 provides the following breakdown in relation to complaints received during 2021/22:

- the number of complaints received for both stage one and stage two;
- four year trend of complaints;
- service areas the complaints related too and how many were justified;
- the nature of the complaint issues;
- how many were answered within the 20-working day timescale across a four year period; and
- how we are performing compared to other local authorities.

6.2 If complainants remain dissatisfied after the second stage of our formal complaints procedure, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). On an annual basis every Council receives an Annual Review Letter from the LGSCO, which sets out the number of complaints it has received in the year and the decisions made. These decisions are published on its website at <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/tewkesbury-borough-council/statistics> but can also be found attached to the annual report.

7.0 LESSONS LEARNT

7.1 We consider a lesson learnt to be when 'knowledge or understanding is gained by an experience'. This could be as a direct result from a positive or negative experience. When it is positive, we will look to see if it can be applied elsewhere, and when it is negative, we want to ensure that the issue is not repeated. Key learning points identified following formal complaints can be found within section 6 of Appendix 1.

8.0 LOOKING AHEAD

8.1 As a Council, we agree that it is important we place importance on the information we gain from complaints, and we continually look to ensure our complaints process is robust. A training session has been organised in November 2022 for those Officers who respond to complaints.

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 None.

10.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

10.1 If complaints are not handled in accordance with the approved framework and the Council does not learn from the complaints received there is a potential reputational risk.

11.0 MONITORING

11.1 The Council will continue to report on a quarterly basis to the Management Team and Operational Managers, where necessary, providing a summary report for each quarter. Formal complaint response times are monitored through a key performance indicator in the Council Plan Performance Tracker which is reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

12.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

12.1 Corporate Formal Complaints Policy
Customer Care Strategy
Council Plan 2020-2024

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: Appendix 1 - 'Have your Say' (4C)'s Annual Report 2021/2022.