



**EVERY CUSTOMER, EVERY TIME -
“Everybody Matters”**

**Making Experiences Count
Quarterly Customer Service Report**

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

1st October – 31st December 2012



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

1. Introduction

This report provides some of the key customer service information for the organisation, including:-

- analysis of the complaints and compliments received during this quarter and any other relevant feedback.
- Customer Service Centre management information, including transactional statistics for information.

2. Customer Feedback Analysis

47 complaints were received during this quarter because we did not meet the customer expectations, failed to meet our own standards, or the customer was unhappy with the outcome.

32 complaints (68%) were answered in 15 working days or less. 15 complaints took longer than 15 working days to respond to and details of these complaints are detailed below. There are 5 cases still open at the time of writing. This shows a slight increase in the percentage dealt with within our agreed timescales.

We also received **29 compliments**.

These figures compare with last quarter and last years totals as follows:-

Quarter 3 11/12		Total 11/12		Quarter 1 12/13		Quarter 2 12/13		Quarter 3 12/13	
L	J	L	J	L	J	L	J	L	J
37	19	146	109	43	21	37	37	47	29

The complaints received this quarter related to:

- Not doing what we have said we will do
- Staff being rude to customers
- Not listening to customers
- Giving customers incorrect or confusing information
- Not responding to customers calls and queries
- Delays in taking action
- Wasting tax payer's money.

Although, the overall level of complaints is very low compared to the number of customer interactions. We continue to work with staff to improve customer care. We have recently held further staff briefings based on customer care. The majority of managers have now attended customer care training courses aimed at improving their communication with the customers and managing the customer care performance within their teams.

We are reviewing our process in relation to dealing with complaints using systems thinking principles. A trial has started which sees far greater verbal contact with the customer at the earliest opportunity to improve understanding of the issues and reduce the need for responses

by letter which may not address the real problem. We are also looking to remove the target time for handling complaints as this appears to be driving behavior which see some complaints taking longer to respond to than might be necessary. Instead we are aiming to work on the basis that the complaints should always be dealt with as quickly as possible and that communication with the customer should provide meaningful updates as to progress. We will continue to monitor response times and address concerns if they arise. The outcome of the trial will inform the process in future

The following table shows the total of the complaints and compliments received by department. Those departments with the highest demand inevitably have higher number of complaints but compared with the total demand the numbers are low.

We also see an increase in complaints in those services undertaking transformation reviews as staff gain greater understanding of the importance of customer feedback being recorded and monitored.

Complaints and compliments by department

The following table provides a more detailed breakdown of complaints by service.

Dept	Compliments	Complaints	Responded to within 15 working days	Still open
Community Services	9	2	1	0
Customer Services	3	2	2	0
Environmental Services	12	26	16	1
Legal and Democratic Services	1	1	1	0
Leisure and Culture	4	3	3	0
Planning and Regeneration	0	7	5	2
Resources	0	6	4	2
	29	47	32	5

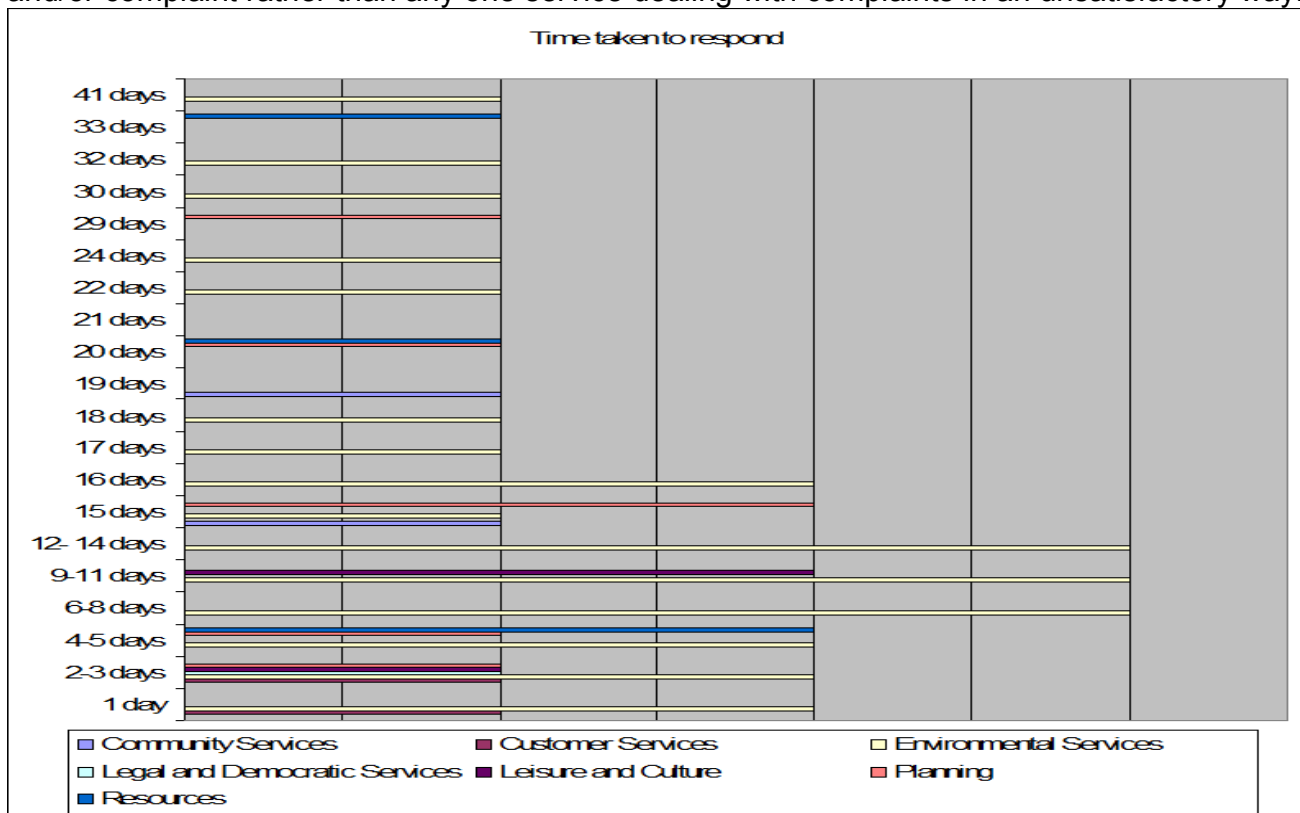
There has been an increase in complaints recorded relating to car parking. This is due to a change in process. In the past all issues were dealt with through the appeals process but this is not necessarily the right course of action for some of the matters raised hence we are now reporting them through our complaints policy.

Time taken to respond to complaints

We aim to respond to customer complaints within 15 working days and 68% of complaints received during this quarter were dealt with within that timeframe. Where it has taken us longer to respond than expected, (15 cases) customers were informed that there would be a delay, except where the delay was only 1 day (2 cases), or where the customer could not be contacted (8 cases).

Time taken to respond to complaints by service

The following chart shows the break down of all complaints by response time. This suggests that the end to end time for responding to complaints is generally based on the nature of the service and/or complaint rather than any one service dealing with complaints in an unsatisfactory way.



The nature of Leisure and Culture complaints is such that they can usually be dealt with either on the spot or within a few days. In the majority of cases, where we have been unable to close the case within 15 working days the delays have been due to difficulties making contact with the customer for further information.

Details of Complaints

The complaints received this quarter are detailed below, along with the outcome of the investigations, actions taken and the days taken to deal with the matter.

Complaint details	Outcome of investigation	Action taken	Days taken to respond
Community Services			
Customer unhappy with the service received from Care and Repair in respect of his guttering	Customer had not been available to give access.	Guttering was fitted by a home improvement agency and Council is making arrangements to inspect the guttering to see if it is fit for purpose.	19 Customer unavailable and not answering messages/ emails.

Customer rang to complain that BURT hadn't arrived on time and the response on the telephone was not very friendly - very abrupt/not helpful.	Complaint about BURT service provider.	Service provider will monitor calls to ensure that customers are being spoken to appropriately	15
Customer Services			
Customer unhappy that she was put through to RBC when attempting to call the council tax department and they redirected her to a telephone support service where she was redirected again	This was received whilst we were having extreme problems with the telephone system. The caller had called BDC and the call transferred to RBC under the business continuity plan. The member of staff who then picked up the call was unable to help and had to transfer the call through to a Council Tax expert.	Apology was given to the customer and query resolved. The call flow was amended to improve service to callers and greetings at the switchboard were modified to reduce confusion.	1
Customer had made numerous attempts to find CSC and feels the signage is inadequate. She feels more effort needs to be made with clear signage.	Explained that we had to remove the large sign which was damaged in the high winds.	We need to improve the visibility of the hub for visitors.- have requested new signage from WCC	3
Environmental Services			
Customer unhappy with the way she was spoken to by a member of the car parking team.	It was found that the person involved was not a Council employee.	The person concerned may have worked for the fairground. Apology was given on their behalf.	3
Customer slipped on the School Drive car park path and injured his knees due to a raised level on the concrete.	Customer contacted to discuss matter but has not responded.	Apology sent but still awaiting further details.	5

<p>Customer complained that car park sign states car park open until 10pm but when she returned at 9.53pm it was locked and she had to drive over the kerb to get out thus damaging her car.</p>	<p>This car park is locked at 2145 due to recent anti social behaviour although the machines still state that it is open until 10pm.</p>	<p>Car park charges refunded and still waiting to hear further details about damage to car but matter will be addressed through insurance procedure.</p> <p>Closing time of the car park has been changed to after 10pm and is not locked in bad weather.</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>Customer unhappy that a car park enforcement officer came in to her shop and was asking questions about a car parked outside. His manner was very aggressive and rude. time.</p>	<p>Staff member indentified Parking Assistant had gone in to the shop intending to be helpful.</p>	<p>Apology given to customer.</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Customer is an elderly man and on returning to his car he found the attendant about to issue a fine because his blue badge was the wrong way up. He spoke to the attendant who alleges spat at him. He was very upset by this.</p>	<p>The customer reported this in person on the day it happened along with is daughter at the CSC. He was able to speak to a manager who apologised and confirmed that he would investigate. Manager of the Car Park Services interviewed the member of staff concerned and found that his account differs from the customer and the allegation of spitting is contested and cannot be evidence. A valid blue badge was produced.</p>	<p>Formal apology sent to customer and ECN cancelled. Member of staff reminded of appropriate behaviour and this will be monitored.</p>	<p>13</p>
<p>Customer unhappy that she lost money in car park machine and attendant couldn't refund it. She then had to put more money in.</p>	<p>Manager of Car Parking Service spoke to the customer, apologised and explained that the attendants do not carry or refund cash for security reasons.</p>	<p>Car park charge refunded to customer.</p>	<p>10</p>

Customer unhappy that cesspool hadn't been emptied because neighbour hasn't paid his bill.	Manager spoke to both customers and resolved situation.	Cesspool emptied and new arrangements put in place.	11
Customer unhappy that one of her bins hasn't been emptied for a couple of months.	This was due to building rubble being left in the bin and customer had been informed.	Crew removed the rubble so bin could be used.	16
Customer has bin that won't shut properly and maggots are forming in it. She has reported it and been told that a new bin will be delivered but this hasn't happened.	Error in process system identified.	Apology given and new bin delivered.	10
Customer objects to the on going price increase in the garden waste service.	Manager spoke to customer to explain the reason behind the increase.	Customer happy with explanation	32 Several calls had to be made and messages left before contact made with customer
Customer unhappy that although she uses the communal recycling boxes at the flat where she lives, the crews just empty them into the general waste bin.	Although boxes have been delivered to this site, there was no vehicle available to access it.	Boxes taken away and residents informed that there will be a new service as soon as the new vehicle is available	17 Delays with contacting customer
Customer unhappy that bin has been missed twice.	Unsure why this has happened as there are only two collections on this road.	Informed crews to monitor this. Apologised to customer but also explained why it is important to get bin out on time.	6
Customer not happy that the refuse crew empty the bins then leave them all bunched up together outside her property. She is in her 80's and she is constantly having to push her neighbours bin back	The crews do leave bins together as part of their collection.	Apology given .Although the customer is not on assisted collection the crews will ensure that her bin and her neighbours will be placed outside their properties.	8

to her neighbours property who is also in her 80's			
Customer unhappy with the attitude of refuse vehicle driver when he spoke to her about the way she had parked blocking the road.	The crew member had taken the customers remark as being offensive when he meant something else entirely.	Manager spoke to crew member and the customer and resolved the situation.	41 Customer not available
Crew regularly leave both bins on the footpath where the dropped kerb is so she has to keep getting out the car and removing the bin before she can pull on the drive.	Our crews are asked to consider the public as they go about their daily tasks. On this occasion we have left bins that have been emptied in a position that caused the customer to have to move them before parking her car.	Apology given, Crews asked to be more considerate, this will be monitored	24
Customer has an assisted collection for her refuse. She walks using 2 sticks with a great deal of difficulty. On numerous occasions her bins are emptied with no problems but the refuse crews do not put the bins back.	Crew collecting bin for emptying and not returning the bin back to the correct place.	Apology given. Crews asked to make sure this doesn't happen again.	16 Christmas Holidays
Customer leaves his bin out for collection outside his property. After emptying the customer observed the crew member chucking it across the road in to the hedge .He asked for it to be put back and the customer states that he was given an unpleasant look and the bin was not put back.	<p>Manager called customer to discuss the complaint. Customer admitted he was stressed due to personal circumstances and therefore reacted in a way that may have antagonised the crew.</p> <p>He advised he would apologise to the crew if he saw them again.</p> <p>Manager advised that the crews would also be spoken to about the</p>	<p>Apology given.</p> <p>The crews have been spoken to about the situation and advised of the upset caused to the customer. This will be monitored.</p>	12

	situation and reacting as they did.		
Lack of notification concerning the changes to bin collection over the Christmas period, and this has resulted in bins being put out on Friday 28th and excess litter has been put out which is now blowing round the estate.	Bin collections arrangements had been posted on the website, social media, local newspapers and Together Bromsgrove but customer does not read any of these.	Waste Team to look at possibility of posting leaflets to all houses next Christmas.	3
Customer emailed to say please ensure bins are not put out before 7am on the day of collection. This problem of blocking footpaths many hours before collection is causing obvious problems for women with pushchairs and the public in general.	No other complaints reported from this collection round. Our policy does state that bins should be out by 7am on collection day and placed where they will not cause a hazard to residents and road users.	Apology given along with confirmation of the instruction to residents.	6
Customer unhappy and says that a bin crew caused a huge tail back when they could have easily pulled over but they left the vehicle in the middle of the road and strolled about.	No evidence found of this.	Crews have been reminded to consider other road users when making collections.	22 Customer not getting back to us.
Customer unhappy that her bin has been missed again.	This was an error by the crew.	Apology given. Supervisor to monitor this collection.	1
Customer unhappy that the crew arrived at 7:10 to empty bin when they usually come late in the day. He didn't have time to get it out but the bin was on the edge of his house and could be easily seen by the crew.	This was a mop up crew who were sent on before the normal crew.	Apology given, bin collected same day.	1

He is unhappy that they are so inflexible.			
Customer unhappy that his bins are collected and not returned or left half way up his drive. He has a lot of medical waste and needs his own bins and a regular reliable collection.	Customer is on an assisted collection and we were not always returning the bins to his property and we also failed to deliver a grey bin	Apology given, supervisor will monitor this collection.	30 Customer not returning calls or responding to letter.
Customer unhappy about dogs fouling the area	This has been passed to the enforcement team for investigation.	Customer did not contact us again although the team did try to contact her several times.	14
Customer unhappy that several roads in Wythall seem to be always littered with rubbish.	The roads in question had been recently cleaned and will be part of a more rigorous schedule in the future.	Customer informed of the new schedule and asked to contact us again if he spots any further problems	18 Customer not responding to phone calls or emails.
Legal and Democratic Services			
Customer unhappy that elections staff parked their cars on the grass next to the polling station when it was already very wet and muddy and there was a proper car park a minute away.	The polling station staff parked their cars their cars on the grass adjacent to the temporary polling station leaving deep ridges and damages to the grass.	Apology given. The minor works team from the Depot will be making remedial repairs and this will be looked at for the next election	3
Leisure and Culture			
Customer unhappy about the redevelopment of a play area. A disappointing spend of tax payer's money.	Some of the items of equipment had come to the end of their useful life along with continual issues with the safety surfacing and decking areas which had become buckled and in poor condition.	Explanation given to customer.	9
Customer unhappy about the Spadesbourne Suite	One of the two boilers failed on this day.	Apology given. Team to look at improving the	9

being too cold for their dance sessions.		heating in the Spadesbourne Suite if continuing to let the room out for hire.	
Catshill Parish Council unhappy about closure of play area at Bracken Grove, Catshill	The play area has been a target of continued vandalism and visits by youths during unsociable hours due to its location and poor surveillance.	Consulted with local ward members who agreed to remove the damaged equipment and close the area down to prevent any further incidents. The play area will be relocated to a more suitable site.	3
Planning and Regeneration			
Customer (an agent) believes that his client has been discriminated against in relation to a planning application.	The proposal amounted to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there was a presumption against it. The decision was based on policy and not due to discrimination against the customer.	This was explained to the Agent	20 Delays in getting in touch with the agent.
Customer frustrated by the outcome of his planning application	This application was dealt with in accordance with current and adopted Council policies and guidance.	Full explanation given to customer	15
BDHT did not receive notification of application 12/0531 despite being a neighbouring land owner	It is not part of the Council's publicity procedure to identify and consult the owners of nearby land containing no property address. It is considered that the site notice and press notice issued served the wider publicity requirements.	Letter of explanation sent to BDHT.	29
Customer unhappy about a planning application	After investigation it was found that there were no	No further action taken and explanation given to	15

being breached	breaches of the application.	customer.	
Customer aggrieved by the handling of various enforcement complaints he has submitted and the length of time it has taken to respond to these.	This has in part been due to a number of resource issues affecting the enforcement function	Apology given and customer provided with an explanation for delay in responding to enforcement enquiries. This will be monitored to ensure this does not happen in future.	12
Customer unhappy about an error on the planning portal on the website. This means that no one could access planning applications to object to planning applications currently open for comment.	Planning portal was down just before planning meeting when customer wanted to make objection	Apology given and this will be looked at to make sure that customers have an alternative method if this should happen again.	4
Customer unhappy with the rude attitude of a planning officer when she visited the planning surgery.	Head of Service met with the customer to discuss her concerns.	Apology given and officer will be reminded of our customer care standards.	3
Resources			
Customer was interviewed under caution complained about the interviewing officers aggressive style and the detail that he was being expected to recall about his financial affairs going back 6 years.	Reasons given to the customer for the sequence of events during the investigation.	Apology given for aspects where complaint was justified (reduced rate of Council Tax taken after being advised that benefit claim would be suspended further information could have been given for the reason for the interview on the invitation to attend).	20
Customer unhappy that direct debit wasn't changed after she called in and gave instructions.	Error by member of staff	More care needs to be taken when processing any kind of Direct Debit work. All staff will be advised that care is needed.	33
Customer upset that when he wrote to Council Tax in August to let them	Error made by member of staff	Apology given and processes for informing other departments of	5

know that his wife passed away, it wasn't passed on to other Council departments. He has just received a poll card for his late wife.		deaths are going to be examined.	
Customer unhappy with the way we have dealt with her Council Tax arrears and has several issues she wants answers to.	Error made with recovery charges	Apology and refund given - bank charges are also to be refunded. Direct Debit to be set up with customer. Staff to be reminded of correct recovery processes.	5

“You said – we listened” – what did we change as a result of complaints?

Some of the changes made as a result of complaints include:-

- A new procedure is being developed to inform all departments when we receive information about the death of a resident.
- Changes are being made to our Planning Portal so customers know that they can also access information at the Council House
- A robust process for assisted bin collections has been introduced.

Number of complaints escalated to Head of Customer Services

There was one complaints escalated to the Head of Customer Services for further investigation or action during this period. This relates to a long standing dispute relating to benefits overpayment and investigation is ongoing.

Happy Customers!

The compliments received suggest that customers appreciate the range of services the Council provides, especially when we deal with their requests in a timely and professional manner. We received **29** compliments during this quarter. Here are some of the compliments we have received.

Team	Compliment Detail
CCTV	Wanted to thanks Dawn Withers for her help and her care in calling on him on the morning of 14.10.12.
Customer Services	Thanks to Jo for help in dealing with a Parking Charge Notice
Customer Services	The staff in the service centre at Bromsgrove and also on the telephone are extremely helpful, kind and courteous and probably don't get thanked enough!
Refuse and Recycling	Thank you for a prompt, efficient response and service.

Street Cleaning	Many thanks for the excellent work done by the cleaning team.
Waste management	Excellent clear information on the website regarding Christmas bin arrangements.
Arts and Events	I would like to congratulate you on organising such an outstanding firework display which I thoroughly enjoyed along with many others.
Parks and Open Spaces	Customer would like to compliment us on the sensory garden in Sanders Park as she felt that this looked the best it ever had and was a real pleasure to visit
Events	Congratulations to Bromsgrove Council and the responsible department for buying and erecting the Christmas lights. Above all we thank the Work Gang, responsible for erecting the Christmas Lights.

3. Local Government Ombudsman Complaints

During this quarter there were no complaints referred from the Local Government Ombudsman.

4. Customer Service Centre Information

This section provides some statistical information in respect of the service provided at the Customer Service Centre (CSC). The purpose of the Customer Services team is **to help resolve customer's problems or requests.**

Customer numbers

The following table shows the numbers of customer transactions recorded by the Customer Service Team:

	Totals for 2011/12	3rd quarter 2011/12	1st quarter 2012/13	2nd quarter 2012/13	3rd quarter 2012/13
Face to face (enquiries)	14,121	3,571	3,478	3,546	2,549
Telephone (enquiries)	110,036	25,873	20,176	21,422	17,850
Email (enquiries handled by CS team)	3,496	983	322	904	923
Payments (through cash office)	26,100	7,233	6,073	5393	6,207
Payments (online)	8,814	3,073	1,458	1,315	2,851
Payments (automated telephone service)	6,280	1,985	1,037	1,008	1,897

Payments (assisted telephone service)	10,144	2,612	2,455	2,237	2,558
Total customer contacts	178,991	45,330	34,999	35,825	34,835

We are seeing a gradual decrease in customer enquiries handled by the CSC team. This is due to the transfer of customer contact back to experts within the services. Our transformation reviews are showing that this approach to dealing with customer enquires ensures greater resolution of the issue at first point of contact and reduces the need for repeat contacts. Staffing levels in the CSC have gradually reduced over time thus resulting in savings in the CSC budget and the recharge to the Worcestershire Hub.

There has been a significant increase in payments online which suggest customers are becoming more confident in the use of our online payment method. However, take up of the automated payment line remains low.

Telephone answering performance remains good. 83% of all telephone calls handled at the CSC were answered within 30 seconds and the vast majority (77.6%) of all calls being answered in less than 8 seconds.

As a result of CSA's spending less time handling complex and lengthy enquiries the average wait time has been reduced from 28 seconds to 20 seconds. The shortest wait times were recorded in October. Despite the problems encountered with the telephone system, due to the success of the business continuity plans we were able to answer calls quickly. However, we may not have been able to provide the usual level of service as we did not have access to the same systems.

Amanda de Warr
Head of Customer Services
January 2013