

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Date: 15th July 2013

MAKING EXPERIENCES COUNT - QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Mark Bullivant
Portfolio Holder Consulted	√
Relevant Head of Service	Amanda de Warr – Head of Customer Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report provides the Board with customer feedback data for the fourth quarter of 2012/13

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report.**
- 2.2 Consider whether it is still necessary to continue to receive the report at Overview and Scrutiny Board,

and if not,**
- 2.3 Agree that the report be made available to members through the Orb and Members Room.**

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Planning Policy Task Group recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Board receive a quarterly report giving details of customer feedback. This is the report for the 4th quarter of 2012/13 and details complaints and compliments, including Local Government Ombudsman complaints and information on how well we have handled these within the timescales we aim for.

There are no targets in respect of numbers of complaints and compliments as enforcing targets can lead to complaints not being recorded and compliments being solicited in order to meet targets which have little meaning. Instead we focus on learning from the feedback we receive.

- 3.2 The report also provides some information on the Customer Service Centre's work as well as an update on progress against the 'Every

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Customer, Every Time – Everybody Matters' Customer Experience Strategy.

- 3.3 The Planning Policy Task Group recommended that this report be received and considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board due to concerns about the recording of customer complaints.
- 3.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Board has now received the report for over 12 months and the data indicates that there are no major problems being identified in respect of how complaints are dealt with.
- 3.5 Lessons have been learnt in respect of the issues investigated by the Planning Policy Task Group and the planning service is undergoing significant changes to make it more customer focused.
- 3.6 All of the data contained within this report can be made available to members through the copies of the appendix being available on the Orb and in the Members Room.
- 3.7 Members are therefore asked to consider whether it remains necessary to receive the report at Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Financial Implications

- 3.8 There are no direct financial implications.

Legal Implications

- 3.9 There are no specific legal issues arising from this report. Any legal issues arising from complaints are dealt with on a case by case basis.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.10 The Every Customer, Every Time, Customer Experience Strategy was launched in March 2011 and sets out our vision for excellent customer service provision and improving the customer experience when having contact with the Council.
- 3.11 The strategy was supported by a three year Action Plan. This action plan has now been completed, ahead of schedule, and many of the actions have now become on-going normal business.
- 3.12 Quarterly reporting is intended to ensure Members of the Council and customers are updated in respect of customer feedback, especially complaints made in respect of service provision.

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- 3.13 Good customer service has improved value for money by reducing failure demand. Improvements to the way we handle complaints has resulted in less officer time spent chasing responses and re-investigating.
- 3.14 Customer service and excellent customer care is embedded in every transformation work strand. The Customer Services Management Team continues to work closely with services in transformation to support their work and to ensure a consistent approach to customer care quality.
- 3.15 The Customer Service Team provide a range of support from guidance to training, assistance with difficult situations to help with writing complaint responses. Customer Feedback also continues to be closely monitored by Customer Service officers and concerns escalated to the Head of Customer Service to address with the relevant Head of Service.
- 3.16 Although led by the Head of Customer Services, the customer experience strategy applies to all services and all customers and progress against the action plan involved officers from many services working together to the benefit of customers.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.17 It is important to monitor aspects of customer service to ensure that we are improving and developing. Customers need to know that we respond properly to complaints and act on the issues raised to reduce the possibility of them happening again.
- 3.18 Customer feedback is a valuable tool for understanding what is going well, and what not so well, within the organisation. These form vital information for all transformation reviews, and complaints, along with other forms of customer feedback, are used by service managers and Heads of Service as a measure of what is happening in their system.
- 3.19 Some managers are now responding to complaints in person and more quickly, thus resulting in a more responsive service and one which better understands the real issues. This in turn is leading to better outcomes for customers. All services will be rolled into this new model for handling complaints.
- 3.20 Customer Service is an integral part of our transformation towards a systems thinking organisation and as such we are now using systems thinking principles to develop customer care and customer service provision

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 It is important to use the Council's complaints or compliments to measure how well the system is meeting its purpose and to act on those complaints to fix the system where it is failing.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - **Making Experiences Count - Quarterly Customer Feedback Report Quarter 4 2012/13**

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The details to support the information provided within this report are held by Head of Customer Services

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