



MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE 15 JUNE 2006

Report of the Director of Corporate and Adult Social Services

Complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure – 2005/06

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is recommended to note the report

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The information contained in Appendix 2 of this report, which has been provided in response to a request by the Committee, gives information on the complaints that have been dealt with during 2005/06 under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

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Background papers: Appendix 1 – Implications
List of appendices: Appendix 2 - Details of Complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure between April 2005 and April 2006

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None arising from this report.

Legal

2. None arising from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. Effective complaint investigation is of benefit to all Derby people.

Corporate Objectives, Values and Priorities

5. This report has the potential to link with all of the Council's priorities.

Appendix 2

Details of Complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure between April 2005 and April 2006.

Two sets of data have been used to provide this information. These were:

- The quarterly reports of the Corporate Complaints Officer (CCO) to the Chief Officer Group (COG)
- The reports from Performance Eye relating to CSP16 – the number of complaints responded to in 10 working days.

Please note there are three steps to the complaints process:

- Step 1- Informal Stage- When the complaint is first raised either with the department concerned or the Corporate Complaints Officer
- Step 2- Formal Stage-This must be made in writing to the Corporate Complaints Officer who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated within 10 working days.
- Step 3-Stage 2-If the complainant is not satisfied with the response they have received at the Formal Stage, they can ask the Chief Executive to review their complaint.

1. Reports to the Chief Officer Group

1.1 Report for the period April to June 2005

Formal Complaints Data

	Received	Acknowledged within target by CCO	Responded within target by Department
Corporate Services	2	2	1
Commercial Services	3	3	3
Development and Cultural Services	10	7	6
Finance	5	5	4
Policy	2	2	0
Total	22	19 (86%)	14 (64%)

Other Complaints Data

Informal Complaints	62
Stage Two complaints	3
Ombudsman complaints closed	11

Informal Complaints Received by the Corporate Complaints Officer

	Received
Corporate Services	10
Commercial Services	9
Development and Cultural Services	29
Finance	4
Education	1
Social Services	3
Derby Homes	4
Policy	2
Total	62

Analysis

The performance target for responses (85% within 10 working days) was not met during this period. Four complaints missed the target by only one or two days, but this has contributed to a disappointing response rate. Also two complaints were delayed by the need to arrange a meeting first with the complainant and one by the need to wait for information from a partner organisation. In such cases, the delay may ultimately have provided a better quality response, which was more satisfactory to the complainant but it has still had an adverse effect on the response rate.

Trends in Complaints

The most common complaint theme during this quarter was failure to provide a service to the standard expected of the Council (7). The next most common theme was delays or neglect in responding to enquiries (4).

Other Issues

The Complaints Database, which has been developed within the Scrutiny and Complaints Team is now live and has improved the management of complaints in the last quarter. Cherry Hayes, the Team Administrator, took up her post in April and has already made a valuable contribution to the working of the Corporate Complaints function.

I have included a breakdown of informal complaints by department (see above). Most informal complaints are about the areas covered by Streetcare and Waste Management. The majority of these contacts are recycling and refuse collection enquiries. Please note that as Departments are expected to resolve informal issues themselves, the above table only reflects the matters complainants have raised with me directly.

Each department now has a nominated complaints co-ordinator to help improve response times and keep a record of complaints and responses for each department. A training event for co-ordinators took place on 10 June with further sessions being arranged for those who could not attend.

Ombudsman

There has been a reduction in the number of Ombudsman complaints received, 6 as compared to 13 for the same quarter of 2004, with most continuing to be settled in the Council's favour.

1.2 Report for the period July to September 2005

Formal Complaints Data

	Received	Acknowledged within target by CCO	Responded within target by Department
Corporate Services	1	1	1
Social Services	1	1	1
Education	1	1	0
Development and Cultural Services	8	8	8
Finance	9	9	8
Policy	4	4	2
Total	24	24 (100%)	20 (83%)

Other Complaints Data

Informal Complaints	44
Stage Two complaints	2
Ombudsman complaints closed	9

Informal Complaints Received by the Corporate Complaints Officer

	Received
Corporate Services	9
Commercial Services	5
Development and Cultural Services	17
Finance	4
Education	2
Social Services	1
Derby Homes	3
Policy	3
Total	44

Analysis

There has been a substantial improvement in response times this quarter although the performance target for responses (85% within 10 working days) was not met during this period. All formal complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days.

Trends in Complaints

The most common complaint theme during this quarter was failure to provide a service to the standard expected of the Council (13). The next most common theme was delays or neglect in responding to enquiries (4).

I have included a breakdown of informal complaints by department (see above). Most informal complaints are about the areas covered by Streetcare and Waste Management. The majority of these contacts are recycling and refuse collection enquiries. Please note that as Departments are expected to resolve informal issues themselves, the above table only reflects the concerns complainants have raised directly with the Corporate Complaints Officer.

Stage Two Investigations

There were two stage two investigations completed during this quarter by the Corporate Complaints Officer. One of the complaints was upheld with compensation being accepted by the complainant.

Complaints Co-ordinators

Each department now has a nominated complaints co-ordinator to help improve response times and keep a record of complaints and responses for each department. The co-ordinators meet quarterly to undertake training and share best practice.

Ombudsman

Mrs Patricia Thomas, Ombudsman, retired on 30 September 2005. Her successor, Mrs Anne Seex is expected to start later this month.

Ms Karen Hill is the new Assistant Ombudsman that has been appointed to head the team of investigators assigned to investigate complaints about the Council. There continues to be a reduction in the number of Ombudsman complaints received with most being decided in the Council's favour.

1.3 Report for the period October to December 2005

Formal Complaints Data

	Received	Acknowledged within target by CCO	Responded within target by Department
Corporate Services	3	3	2
Commercial Services	1	1	1
Development and Cultural Services	6	6	6
Finance	2	2	2
Policy	2	2	2
Total	14	14 (100%)	13 (93%)

Other Complaints Data

Informal Complaints	40
Stage Two complaints	2
Ombudsman complaints closed	7

Informal Complaints Received by the Corporate Complaints Officer

	Received
Corporate Services	10
Commercial Services	4
Development and Cultural Services	11
Finance	9
Education	0
Social Services	2
Derby Homes	0
Policy	4
Total	40

Analysis

There has been a substantial improvement in response times this quarter and the performance target for responses (85% within 10 working days) was met during this period. All formal complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days. The improvement in response times may partially be due to the fact that far fewer complaints, 14 as opposed to 24, were received than in the second quarter.

Trends in Complaints

The most common complaint theme during this quarter was failure to provide a service to the standard expected of the Council.

I have included a breakdown of informal complaints by department (see above). Most informal complaints are about the areas covered by Streetcare and Waste Management. The majority of these contacts are about refuse collection and street cleaning. Please note that as Departments are expected to resolve informal issues themselves, the above table only reflects the concerns complainants have raised directly with the Corporate Complaints Officer.

Stage Two Investigations

There were two second stage investigations completed during this quarter by the Corporate Complaints Officer. One of the complaints was upheld with compensation being accepted by the complainant.

Complaints Co-ordinators

Each department now has a nominated complaints co-ordinator to help improve response times and keep a record of complaints and responses for each department. The co-ordinators meet quarterly to undertake training and share best practice.

At the last co-ordinators meeting, co-ordinators were asked to bring along examples of complaints reports they had produced for departmental management meetings. The co-ordinators also provided valuable feedback on the draft complaint leaflet.

Ombudsman

Ms Karen Hill is the new Assistant Ombudsman that has been appointed to head the team of investigators assigned to investigate complaints about the Council. She visited the Council on 1 December 2005, meeting with the Corporate Services Director and the Corporate Complaints Officer. There continues to be a reduction in the number of Ombudsman complaints received with most being decided in the Council's favour.

1.4 Report for the period January to March 2006

Formal Complaints Data

	Received	Acknowledged within target by CCO	Responded within target by Department
Environmental Services	1	1	0
Regeneration and Community	12	12	11
Resources	6	6	6
Total	19	19(100%)	17(89%)

Other Complaints Data

Informal Complaints	33
Stage Two complaints	3
Ombudsman complaints closed	4

Informal Complaints Received by the Corporate Complaints Officer

	Received
Corporate and Adult Social Services	8
Environmental Services	2
Regeneration and Community	16
Resources	4
Derby Homes	3
Total	33

Analysis

The improvement in response times seen during the last quarter has been sustained and the performance target for responses (85% within 10 working days) was again met during this period. All formal complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days.

Trends in Complaints

The most common complaint theme during this quarter was failure to provide a service to the standard expected of the Council. Development Control, Streetcare and Derby Benefits were the most complained about services this quarter.

I have included a breakdown of informal complaints by department (see above). Most informal complaints are about the areas covered by Streetcare and Waste Management. The majority of these contacts are about refuse collection and street cleaning. Please note that as Departments are expected to resolve informal issues themselves, the above table only reflects the concerns complainants have raised directly with the Corporate Complaints Officer.

Stage Two Investigations

There were three second stage investigations completed during this quarter by the Corporate Complaints Officer and the Complaints and Scrutiny Manager.

Complaints Co-ordinators

Complaints co-ordinators help to improve response times and keep a record of complaints and responses for each department. The co-ordinators meet quarterly to undertake training and share best practice.

The complaints co-ordinators are currently being reorganised to ensure they cover all departments within the new corporate structure.

At the last co-ordinators meeting, co-ordinators discussed proposed changes to the complaints procedure and expressed a wish to visit Derby Direct, which was arranged on 23 March 2006.

Ombudsman

The Ombudsman continues to receive a steady number of complaints (approximately fifteen a quarter) about our services, most of which are decided in the Council's favour.

2. Performance Eye Reports

The figure below summarises the last year's performance in respect of Performance Indicator CSP16 – the number of complaints responded to in 10 working days and is a good indicator of the way in which the Council's service departments are responding to complaints about their services



The following commentary was provided for each quarter.

First Quarter

Of the 22 formal complaints that were dealt with in the first quarter of the year, 14 (64%) were responded to within the 10 day period specified in the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

It is however of note that a further four complaints were responded to within

12 days. Also in some cases the delay in providing a written response to a complaint was occasioned by the need to obtain more information or to arrange a meeting with the complainant. In such cases the delay may ultimately have provided a better quality response which was more satisfactory to the complainant.

During the coming quarter steps will however be taken to encourage service departments to respond in writing to complainants within the time period specified in the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Second Quarter

During the second quarter of 2005/06, 24 formal complaints were made under the Corporate Complaints Procedure. Of these, 20 (83%) were investigated and responded to within the 10 working day period specified in the Procedure. Of the remaining four complaints, one was responded to within 17 working days (Policy), one within 26 working days (Finance), one within 50 working days (Education) and one is still awaiting a full response following 18 working days (Policy). Holding letters were sent to advise the complainants that their responses would be delayed.

The target is for 85% of all formal complaints to be investigated and responded to within 10 working days. Although the target of 85% was not met in the last quarter, there has been a marked improvement on the 2005/06 first quarter's response rate. Based on the figures for the first two quarters of 2005/06 the end of year forecast is now 75%.

Third Quarter

Fifteen complaints were received in the third quarter of the year and of these, 14 (93%) were responded to within the 10 day working period specified in the procedure. This represents a marked improvement over the second quarter figure of 83%, but this may partially be due to the fact that far fewer complaints, 15 as opposed to 24, were received than in the second quarter.'

So far in 2005/06, 61 complaints have been received with 48 being responded to within the 10 day target period. This equates to an average so far of 78.69% against an 85% target.

Fourth Quarter

Nineteen complaints were received in the fourth quarter of the year and of these, **Seventeen** (89%) were responded to within the 10 working day period specified in the procedure.

The target was of 85% of all formal complaints to be investigated and responded to within 10 working days was met during this quarter.

DRR 9 May 2006.