

Brighton & Hove City Council

For general release:

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee

Date: 17th January 2005

Report of: Director of Strategy and Governance

Subject: Corporate Complaints Update – Corporate Services

Ward(s) affected: All

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information about complaints received during quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2004/2005 about Corporate Services.

2. Recommendations

2.0 The Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee is asked to note the report.

3. Information about Complaints and Compliments

3.1 The report is divided into four sections

- Compliments
- Local Government Ombudsman enquiries
- Stage 2 Corporate Complaints
- Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

4.0 Compliments for quarters 1,2, and 3 in 2004/05

4.1 The following chart shows the number of compliments received by teams within Corporate Services. Managers are encouraged to forward the compliments they receive to Standards and Complaints to be recorded.

Section	Q1	Q2	Q3
Major Projects			1
Research			2
Standards and Complaints	1	3	3

Venues		1	1
Total	1	4	7

12 Compliments in total for quarters 1,2 and 3.

4.2 The number of compliments are modest in total but viewing them against the number of complaints helps to provide a balanced picture of public perception of services provided by this directorate. There were 10 stage 1 complaints made.

5.0 Complaints for quarters 1,2 and 3 in 2004/05

5.1 Very few complaints are received about Corporate Services, largely because this directorate is involved in proving supporting functions.

5.2 The few complaints about the directorate make it impossible to carry out a realistic analysis of trends. However it is useful to look at a summary of the complaints received and report on what learning has been established as a consequence.

5.3 The following table illustrates the numbers of complaints received by division. Divisions not included have received no complaints.

Corporate Services	Q1			Q2			Q3		
	S1	S2	LGO	S1	S2	LGO	S1	S2	LGO
Finance	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	1
Human Resources	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Venues	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Estates	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Facilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Legal Services	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Standards & Complaints	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	1	0	4	2	2	2	2	1

5.4 Summary Local Government Ombudsman enquiries
3

Stage 2 Complaints 5
Stage 1 Complaints 10

6.0 Local Government Ombudsman enquiries.

6.1 Members of the public have made three complaints about Corporate Services to the Local Government Ombudsman during quarters 1,2 and 3

of 2004/05. The Local Government Act 1974 places limitations on what the Local Government Ombudsman may investigate.

- 6.2 Two issues, one about an insurance decision and a second about a personnel matter were found to be outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman.
- 6.3 The Local Government Ombudsman did however consider a third matter related to an insurance claim. The complaint was about a significant period of delay where no progress had been made in assessing a claim. The LGO was satisfied that the council had given a commitment to review with its insurer what action could be taken to prevent such delays in the future. The Ombudsman recorded this issue as a Local Settlement.

7.0 Stage 2 Complaints

7.1 Insurance services

- 7.1.1 There have been four cases regarding dissatisfaction with insurance services referred to Standards and Complaints for investigation. The complaints procedure does not permit investigations to be made into decisions reached by the council's insurers.
- 7.1.2 However, in one of the four cases referred for investigation it was apparent that there had been shortcomings in the quality of communication between the insurance company and the claimant. The council's insurance company acknowledged this was the case and apologised to the claimant and the council. The insurance company have assured the council that future correspondence will be dealt with in a timely manner until the claim is concluded

7.2 Legal services

- 7.2.1 A complaint was raised about the delay in responding to the complainant's solicitor. The delay was identified as being caused by the need to prioritise child protection issues within the legal team.
- 7.2.2 To minimise the possibility of correspondence being delayed in future a lawyer has been assigned to deal with wider issues. An apology was given and an explanation of what action had been taken to prevent delays in the future.

8.0 Stage 1 Complaints

- 8.1 The following 'landscape' table gives a summary of all the complaints received at stage 1, included are the outcomes and details of action taken.

- 8.2 The table shows how many working days it took for the head of service to respond to the complaint. The complaint procedure says that the council will try to reply within 10 working days. This was achieved in all but one case where the complaint was part of a number of issues about various services provided across the council.

Summary of Stage 1 Complaints				
Department	Description	Days To Reply	Outcome	Action taken in response to complaint
Finance	Unhappy about council tax levels	21	Explanation provided giving context for increase	
	Felt it was unfair that a deficit in the council's pension fund should be made up by a rise in Council Tax	3	Explanation of how pension funds are accumulated including legal context for this	
Venues	Complaint why is it necessary to go through Ticketmaster to buy tickets from the Brighton Centre - why is it not possible to purchase tickets directly?	2	Explanation: commercial decision but reminded of option to purchase tickets in person.	
	Issue with glass bottles being allowed into auditorium of Brighton Centre during a concert.	8	No response yet	
Property & Design:Estates	That BHCC provided information to a contractor about a confidential reference given by another local authority	1	Apology	Commitment to review procedures and provide training
Property & Design:Facilities	The high temperature in Hove Town Hall prevented person from attending the Policy & Resources Committee meeting.	2	Apology and assurance that temperature can be adjusted by staff if situation arises again	

Summary of Stage 1 Complaints (continued)				
Department	Description	Days To Reply	Outcome	Action taken in response to complaint
Legal Services	Delay in responding to a solicitor.	1	Apology provided	
	Time taken by legal team to process freeing order application for a child.	4	Apology with explanation and clarification of current position	
	Delay/failure by Council's lawyer to forward papers for nearly 4 months.	6	Apology and explanation	
Standards & Complaints	That complainant had to wait 8 months for a reply to the complaint she had raised.	1	Apology	Change to the way cases are monitored

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Financial implications None
Legal implications None

Corporate/Citywide implications None	Risk assessment Failure to identify complaints issues where there are recurring themes and emerging trends could result in unnecessarily high levels of dissatisfaction with council services among the public
Sustainability implications None	Equalities implications Equalities elements of complaints made to the Council to continue to be monitored and acted upon as issues arise.
Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder None	

Background papers None
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