

Agenda Item No 9

Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions**Customer Focus Manager**

This report summarises trends in customer feedback over the past 6 months from the corporate complaints, compliments and suggestions system. The report alerts members to the issues raised and what has been done about them. The report also identifies enhancements to the current system that will improve future reporting on these trends.

Cabinet member(s): Cllr Martin Wilby	Ward(s) affected: All
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1. Background

- 1.1. This report summarises all complaints, compliments and suggestions received by South Norfolk Council for the period April to September 2009. There are two summary analyses attached as appendices, in addition to a copy of the corporate complaints process.
- 1.2. All compliments, complaints and suggestions are a form of customer feedback and this information is considered vital to the ongoing improvement in customer care and providing services our customer's value.
- 1.3. The complaints process is available to all customers and staff. The procedure is clearly structured and information relating to this is available in paper format as well as on the website.

2. Current Position and Issues**2.1. Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions by Directorate**

- 2.1.1. Appendix A shows the volume of complaints, compliments and suggestions received by directorate.

2.1.2. Since the last report the corporate restructure has been completed and the analysis is by the new directorates. The two areas with the largest volume of activity are Environment, Health and Leisure and Planning, Housing and the Built Environment. This information confirms the representative volumes of the previous report and these are the two directorates where the highest volume of activity would be expected.

2.2. Analysis of Complaints

2.2.1. Appendix B is a subjective analysis of all complaints received over the period coded loosely into one of 10 categories to see if there were trends or recurrent themes.

2.2.2. The last report highlighted that the main themes were information and advice, a poor service or a policy decision, with the following recurrent issues:

- MRC's – shredded paper container issues, and containers being moved and those not emptied
- The Link – both its content and use of plastic wrapping
- 'No Ball Games' signage – the information about what villages can do about ball games has not been publicised widely enough.
- Bus passes – not arriving promptly enough.

The following action was taken as a result of these issues being identified:

- We have increased the number of location across the district where shredded paper can be recycled. These are primarily in MW White paper banks that are clearly identified at MRC's. These banks can take Christmas/Birthday cards, wrapping paper, envelopes and shredded paper. There is a regular schedule for emptying these sites and we have introduced a "Man with a Van" who checks all sites across the district on a weekly basis to ensure they are clean and have no issues.
- The Link has altered the layout and now focuses on our customers and how they interact with us. This is proving popular as it is more relevant to our customers and they can identify with stories. We have stopped the procedure of delivering the council magazine in plastic wrapping.
- The restrictions and Information regarding the use of "No Ball Games" signs has been advised to villages and parish councils when requested. The use of these signs is as a deterrent only and cannot be legally enforced.
- Bus Passes are now processed within 48 working hours of arrival at the council. These are then sent to the manufacturers where they are produced and delivered direct to the customers within 5 working days.

Members should note that these issues have not appeared in any of the complaints received in this reporting period (April to September 2009).

2.2.3. The findings of this reporting period show that there are now two main categories of dissatisfaction: information and advice or a poor service. The recurrent issues that cropped up are:

- Concerns with the gypsy and traveller consultation process and unauthorised gypsy and traveller sites in the district
- Repeated missed bins

2.3. Comparing the complaints regarding the gypsy and traveller consultation process to those received last year (November 2008); there is a significant reduction in the volume received. This is due to a change in the consultation process and methods employed in event held in March and April this year. Although the new approach required increased resources, improvements to the process were appreciated by residents and Wymondham Town Council, as part of its formal response to the latest consultation, complimented the District Council on the improvement.

2.4. The successful marketing of the brown bin service has seen the number of customer rise since from 10,226 to 11,470. Since April 2009 the increase has been over 1000 customers requiring collection rounds to be reviewed. As these customers come from across the district this requires periodic review of the rounds to ensure demands are met. The service reached such a point during the summer months where sales in some geographical areas exceeded daily capacity. To overcome these issues an additional disposal site has been identified reducing travelling time and collection rounds have been re-organised over five working days instead of the previous four. This has now provided the opportunity to expand the service to meet future sales targets. The number of complaints has now reduced to previous levels.

2.5. Examples of where the complaints have been resolved satisfactorily include a member of staff personally visiting a complainant and apologising. The complainant subsequently wrote in to say that the matter had been resolved satisfactorily. One complaint involved a refuse crew not placing a bin back to the property and the supervisors instructing the crews to place all bins back where they find them resolved this satisfactorily. There have not been any further complaints on this subject.

2.6. The Current Process

2.6.1. The online corporate complaints, compliments and suggestions system has been in use for many years. The system is used by external customers to record their views and officers recording feedback from customer responses. The "Help us to Help You" scheme provides an effective means of monitoring our service delivery.

2.6.2. There are two nominated complaints officers for each directorate. These staff are responsible for ensuring that complaints are

accurately logged onto the system and replies sent within agreed timescales.

- 2.6.3. Whilst the current system works it would now benefit from an upgrade to improve its reporting functionality. The existing reports are cumbersome to produce and the information available limited to specific fields only and we would like to expand this facility.
- 2.6.4. A proposal has been passed to IT requesting an enhancement to the current system. This will enable officers to produce more detailed reports identifying issues, by area, how quickly they were resolved and the frequency of the type of complaint e.g. regarding provision of service. This information can be used to ensure we are effectively targeting the areas that matter the most to our customers.
- 2.6.5. The anticipated timescale for an upgraded system is 3 months, based upon current in house workload. Until an upgrade has been installed we will continue to use the existing system as it is fit for purpose. During the transition, we will ensure corporate complaints officers are regularly monitoring the system and updating information to ensure it is up to date. This information can then be extracted into a Crystal report for analysis.

2.7. Member Involvement

- 2.7.1. Member involvement in the corporate complaints system is incorporated as part of The Protocol for liaison between Officers and Members. This protocol recognises that members need to be aware of significant developments in their ward. The protocol advises Officers will use their judgement as to what matters should be reported but should consider the “need to know” of the local member concerned.
- 2.7.2. Similarly, Members are in a unique position to act as a link between the Council and its communities and are a very valuable source of local information. Two way contact between both Members and officers is encouraged to promote good communication and ensure significant matters are responded to; and where possible resolved both quickly and to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

3. Relevant Corporate Objectives

- 3.1. Be businesslike and efficient providing services people value the most.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The trend in complaints logged onto the corporate system remains in line with previous reports. We have encouraged all departments to record complaints, as complaints are positive feedback and a valuable way of giving us information about the way we operate. Complaints that are resolved satisfactorily improve the resident confidence and satisfaction, improve our credibility and image as well as an early warning system to a directorate where a service is failing so that we can prevent repeat complaints. The current method of recording complaints using both the online form and the paper version, is working well and enhancements to reporting will improve management information and feedback.

5. Action Required

- 5.1. For Scrutiny to note the proposed enhancements to the online corporate system to improve the way in which we report from the "Help Us to Help You" scheme..
- 5.2. Report six-monthly to Scrutiny on trends in complaints, compliments and suggestions.