

**Report of the Chief Officer, Customer Access**

**Report to the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee**

**Date: 27 January 2017**

**Subject: Customer Contact and Satisfaction – Annual Report.**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

- 1.1 This report provides the annual update on customer contact and satisfaction levels with customer services within the Council. The intention behind the report is to provide a range of information and data pertaining to customer access and satisfaction which together provides a more rounded picture of the Council's processes and procedures around customer contact.
- 1.2 Specifically the report covers:
- An overview of customer contact through the Council's corporate customer services
  - A statement on customer satisfaction within customer services
  - An analysis of corporate compliments and complaints logged via the Council's Compliments and Complaints policy, including those that have progressed to the Ombudsman
  - High-level information pertaining to actions taken in the past 12 months by Customer Services to improve access and satisfaction levels; and
  - Actions to be taken in the next 12 months to address the issues raised as a result of the recent Internal Audit into customer contact and satisfaction.
- 1.3 Based on the information provided in this report, coupled with the recent findings from the Internal Audit report, it is the officer view that the council's processes and procedures around customer access and satisfaction are deemed adequate and acceptable. However there are areas where the processes and procedures can be improved to deliver a much more consistent experience for customers who contact

the Council. This will be addressed as part of the actions that are to be taken over the next 12 months to respond to the Internal Audit report and which are reported in para 3.35.

- 1.4 Further to this, it is important to note that Member enquiries are out of scope for this particular report given that there are no processes in place to monitor member enquiries consistently across the organisations. Again, the actions planned for the next 12 months to respond to the Internal Audit report do include the establishment of processes for monitoring the levels of Member enquiries so that this can be included within future reports.
- 1.5 It is felt that this is needed as it is recognised that there is a difference between the 'formal' data associated with contact and complaints as reported here and the experience of local Members who deal with issues raised with them by their constituents on a daily basis.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.6 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are asked to note the officer view that based on the information provided in this report, coupled with the recent findings from the Internal Audit report, the council's processes and procedures around customer access and satisfaction are working effectively. There is however further room for improvement and there is an agreed set of actions to be taken in the next 12 months to improve levels of assurance further.
- 1.7 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are asked to consider any further information they wish to see added to future annual reports.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report is intended to provide an annual update on customer contact and customer satisfaction with Council services. To do this, the report provides information and data covering the scale and scope of customer contact, levels of customer satisfaction with the provision of customer services and data pertaining to the council's formal compliments and complaints process.
- 1.2 The report also provides a high-level update on actions taken in the past 12 months to improve access and customer satisfaction and outlines actions that have been agreed for the next 12 months to standardise processes across the council with regard to customer contact and satisfaction as a result of the recent internal audit report.
- 1.3 Based on the information provided in this report, coupled with the recent findings from the Internal Audit report, it is the officer view that the council's processes and procedures around customer access and satisfaction are working effectively. However there are areas where the processes and procedures can be improved to deliver a much more consistent experience for customers who contact the Council. This will be addressed as part of the actions that are to be taken over the next 12 months to respond to the Internal Audit report and which are reported in para 3.35.
- 1.4 It is important to note that Member enquiries are out of scope for this particular report given that there are no processes in place to monitor member enquiries consistently across the organisations. Again the actions planned for the next 12 months to respond to the Internal Audit report do include the establishment of processes for monitoring the levels of Member enquiries so that this can be included within future reports.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee have received regular annual reports for a number of years on the Council's formal Compliments and Complaints policy and procedure.
- 2.2 At the previous Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting when the Compliments and Complaints report was discussed (early 2016), Members of the Committee felt that it did not fully address the areas they wished to receive information on and requested that future reports cover issues such as customer contact and levels of customer satisfaction alongside the compliments and complaints process. Member also asked for information pertaining to actions that had been taken during the previous 12 months to improve customer contact and satisfaction and any actions planned for the subsequent 12 months.
- 2.3 Alongside this, Members also requested an internal audit into customer contact and satisfaction to assess the level of assurance that could be given to existing processes and procedures. This report has taken account of the findings from this internal audit report and the actions identified have been built into the action plan for the next 12 months.

- 2.4 This report is therefore the first to bring this information together for consideration by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. To this end the report provides information on the following:
- An overview of customer contact through the Council's corporate customer services;
  - A statement on customer satisfaction with customer services;
  - An analysis of corporate compliments and complaints logged via the Council's Compliments and Complaints policy, including those that have progressed to Ombudsman;
  - High-level information pertaining to actions taken in the past 12 months by Customer Services to improve access and satisfaction levels; and
  - Actions to be taken in the next 12 months to address the issues raised as a result of the recent Internal Audit into customer contact and satisfaction.
- 2.5 As this is the first report of this nature presented to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, any further information requests made as a result of consideration of this report will be met through in-year reports in 2017/18 and will be factored into future annual reports.

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 To enable the organisation to have the assurance that the Council has robust policies and procedures in place to manage customer contact and satisfaction levels it requires an understanding of a range of factors which together can give an overall picture for Members to consider.
- 3.2 In this regard, this report seeks to provide this overall picture through the provision of data and information pertaining to:
- Levels of customer contact
  - Levels of customer satisfaction
  - Levels of formal compliments and complaints; and
  - Actions taken and planned to improve further the policies and procedures in place.
- 3.3 It is worth noting that the information and data provided for customer contact and customer satisfaction is based purely on that pertaining to Customer Services within the Council and cannot be deemed as wholly representative of all services within the Council. However, over 90% of customer contact with the Council is managed at the first point of contact through Customer Services, then it does provide the most appropriate proxy measure for the council as a whole.

#### ***An overview of Customer Contact***

- 3.4 Customer Access provides customer service functions for over 90% of the Council's services through the following 'channels':
- Face to Face access through the Council's community hubs, one stop centres and community libraries.
  - Telephone access through the Council's corporate contact centre at Westgate.
  - Digital access through the Council's website, on-line transactions, e-mail and webchat.

3.5 Detailed below are the approximate 2016/17 YTD volumes and monthly averages for contacts received across all these channels:

Channel	16/17 Year To Date	Monthly Average
<b>Face to Face Access</b>		
Community Hubs / One Stop Centres	521,481	57,942
Community Libraries	1,644,431	182,715
<b>Telephone Access</b>		
Corporate Contact Centre	929,485	103,276
<b>Digital Access</b>		
Website	2,783,870	347,984
On-line transactions	1,231,394	153,924
E-Mail	82,365	9152
Webchat	14,568	1,821
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,207,594</b>	<b>856,814</b>

Please note the website data shows visits to Customer Service pages only for the period Apr-Nov.

3.6 As can be seen from the above table, to date in 2016/17, Customer Services has dealt with over 7 million customer contacts about Council Services through the full range of channels provided. This is a significant number of interactions with the citizens of Leeds on a daily basis; be that face to face, on the telephone or on-line.

#### ***Customer Satisfaction for Customer Access***

3.7 Given the significant levels of customer contact being managed by Customer Services, levels of satisfaction with the service delivered by Customer Services is an important measure of whether the policies and procedures in place within the Council for managing customer contact are robust.

3.8 To this end, Customer Services has customer satisfaction surveys running on all of the contact channels outlined in para 3.5 and the results for each are highlighted below:

- For the past three years the average customer satisfaction score for telephone contact has been 98%.
- Likewise for Face to Face contact, the average customer satisfaction score for the past 3 years has been 99%.
- From October 2016 Customer Services introduced an email survey, and based on the first two months of data, email satisfaction is running at 71% with work already taking place to look at the comments made by customers and feed this into improving this service going forward.
- With regards to our digital access, we use a wide range of information from our customers to help us to continually improve our website and online services; for example
  - On the majority of our web pages there is a site survey questionnaire which asks customers if they found the information that they were looking for and also asks for any supporting comments. In December 2016, 56% of our customers who completed the survey said that they found the information that they required.
  - MyLeeds customers (Self-service portal for Highways and Environmental Services), receive a customer satisfaction questionnaire when their job

has been completed. The latest set of data shows that 59% of customers who have used their MyLeeds account to access Council services have been satisfied with the service they received.

- Via our Facebook and Twitter social media account we receive over 500 enquiries each month. We now have over 15,000 Facebook fans and 21,000 Twitter followers. Facebook's automated monitoring shows that we are 'very responsive'. To achieve this accolade we need to respond to customer enquiries within 15 minutes. We are not aware of any other council achieving this standard of service.
- As part of our programme of ongoing improvement, we have made changes to the way we work so that any new developments to the site are fully informed by customer research. This is achieved by having a number of our customers involved in reviewing and providing feedback on our website. Based on this and other feedback we will be making further refinements to the website content early in the New Year.

3.9 As the above information shows, levels of customer satisfaction are very high for telephone and face to face and relatively high for digital access. This slight dip for digital access is largely due to this being an emerging channel of choice and one where the Council lags behind companies who have invested significantly in their digital access channels. However this is an area where the Council has improved significantly over the past 3 years and will continue to do so as it provides much more digital and on-line capacity for accessing Council services.

3.10 Finally, it is worth highlighting that the satisfaction levels highlighted here are for the provision of customer services rather than satisfaction with the service provided. In this regard, and in the absence of any reported service level customer satisfaction data, we are reliant on the level of compliments and complaints made to the Council through the Council's published policy. The next section of the report provides details on the Council's performance in this regard.

### ***Compliments and Complaints – Council Wide***

3.11 Given the volumes associated with customer contact across the Council (see para 3.5), the levels of compliments and complaints within the Council are very low.

3.12 The table below provides a high level breakdown of the number of compliments, complaints (Stage 1 & 2) and Ombudsman Cases for all Council Directorates for the 12 months from October 2015 to November 2016.

Directorate	Compliments	Complaints (Stage 1)	Complaints (Stage 2)	Ombudsman Cases
Environment & Housing	380	2172	243	25
Citizens & Communities	297	413	40	17
City Development	206	314	28	33
Adult Social Care	504	275	105	14
Childrens Services	46	236	9	29
Strategy & Resources	196	105	17	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,629</b>	<b>3,515</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>118</b>

- 3.13 The following table shows the trend in compliments and complaints over the previous 4 years.

	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Compliments	1031	1429	1196	2014
Stage 1 Complaint	5409	4795	4134	3792
Stage 2 Complaint	440	329	284	397
Ombudsman	88	145	129	135

- 3.14 As the data tables show the number of compliments has increased significantly in the four year to the end of 2015/16 with this year to-date showing continued strong levels. Likewise the number of complaints dealt with at Stage 1 has seen a significant drop in the four years to the end of March 2016, although results for the rolling 12 months to the end of November 2016 show similar levels to the 2015/16 levels.
- 3.15 Alternatively both the Stage 2 and Ombudsman cases have fluctuated in the four years to the end of March 2016, with both showing increase in 2015/16 on 2014/15 levels and again although comparison is not like for like, the rolling 12 months to the end of November 2016 do show increased levels of complaints at Stage 2 compared to previous years and relatively consistent levels of Ombudsman cases. Whilst it is unclear as to the reasons for this, there is an expectation that complaints will rise as a result of the impact of budget cuts on service delivery across the city.
- 3.16 With regard to the cases which have progressed to become Ombudsman cases in the period October 2015 to November 2016, the Ombudsman found fault with the Council in 20 cases; and of these 8 were awarded compensation which totalled over £30,000.
- 3.17 More detail on the compliments and complaints received by each Directorate is provided in Appendix 1 along with commentary as to trends identified with regards to complaints and any actions taken by the services to address these issues.

***Actions taken in the previous 12 months to improve customer access and satisfaction***

- 3.18 The above sections have highlighted a range of information and data pertaining to customer contact, satisfaction levels and compliments and complaints and together provide a more holistic picture of high levels of customer access with high levels of satisfaction and relatively low levels of complaints.
- 3.19 However we continue to take action to improve and have undertaken a number of improvements over the past 12 months which it is hoped further improve access to services and improve customer satisfaction. A number of these changes are highlighted below.

3.20 **Community Hub Developments.** The Council has embarked on an ambitious programme to develop community hubs which integrate services and deliver easy access to a range of Council services at the first point of contact. The initial three pathfinder Hub sites of Compton, Armley and St Georges Centre have been running since April 2014 and over the last 18 months have been joined by a number of other sites which were previously either One Stop Centres or community Libraries. These sites are now Hubs providing not only Customer Services, Libraries and Job Shops but are now also providing full front line services for Housing Leeds.

3.21 The full list of current community hubs across the city are:

- Middleton Hub
- Armley Hub
- Compton Centre
- Reginald Centre
- Moor Allerton Hub
- Pudsey Hub
- Yeadon Hub
- Horsforth Hub
- Kippax Hub
- Rothwell Hub

3.22 Footfall at all of the above sites has increased since becoming Hubs due to the wider range of services customers can now access in these sites. Examples of increased footfall at some of these sites post-opening are; Horsforth 14%, Kippax 81%, Rothwell 30% and Yeadon 98%

3.23 Executive Board agreed further funding in June 2016 to develop the Hub network across the city and further sites are planned for delivery over the coming months with Bramley, Deacon House (Seacroft), Morley, Dewsbury Road, Headingley, Otley and Garforth all having works scheduled to deliver increased community facilities during 2017.

3.24 **Improving Customer Satisfaction with the Complaints process.** In quarter two of 2016/17 a pilot commenced in the Corporate Contact Centre looking at how we could improve the experience and outcomes for customers contacting the Council's Customer Relation (Complaints) Team.

3.25 Early results from this pilot are very encouraging and has led too;

- A reduction in call handling times on the customer relations line.
- An improvement in the answer rate of the customer relations line.
- A reduction in the number of complaints logged by email and the Customer Relations line.
- An estimated saving of 1,200 hours on complaint investigation and response time for services.

3.26 These improvements have been achieved through the transfer of the customer relations telephone and email contacts to a small team of officers empowered to work with the customer and the relevant service to get resolution to the customers issue and stop a complaint being logged for investigation, resolution and response.



- 3.27 From the information captured by the Contact Centre over this three month period, it was identified that 293 potential complaints were prevented. This presents a saving of around 1,200 hours' investigation and response time for officers all over the Council, using a conservative estimate of 1 hour for administration and 3 hours for investigation and response for each complaint.
- 3.28 Further changes being made through the pilot are:
- Updating the complaints section of the Leeds City Council website to signpost customers to other forms of assistance rather than direct to formal complaint.
  - Assessing the viability of using webchat to further assist in guiding customers to information available on the website rather than submitting complaints.
  - Greater focus is now being given to looking at the root causes of complaints, in particular those resolved through calls to the Customer Relations line. Work is currently taking place to focus on the specific types of complaints received and the key services / areas identified that would benefit from process change/improvement.
  - Capturing the lessons learnt and best practice being carried out by the officers answering customer relations calls and emails to identify transferable skills and techniques which can be utilised by all officers when handling complaints.
- 3.29 Due to the success of this approach, the pilot has been extended to March 2017, so that sustainable processes can be put in place to ensure we continue to reduce the number of complaints in line with the findings from the pilot.
- 3.30 **Corporate Review of Compliments and Complaints.** A review is underway to look at how the compliments and complaints process across the whole Council can be delivered in a much more streamlined and efficient way. This review is part of the wider Support Services Review and has been tasked with identifying savings of £100-£150k in 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- 3.31 The review is still being undertaken with options being developed for discussion with Staff and Trade Union colleagues. The expectation is that there will be an integration of compliments and complaints teams across the Council to better reflect the new organisational structure and to bring the required consistency and process and procedure that is required and which has recently been highlighted by the Internal Audit report on Customer Access and satisfaction.
- 3.32 **Citizens and Communities Inquiry into Failure Demand.** The Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board is in the process of undertaking an Inquiry into reducing failure demand within the corporate contact centre. This work is focussed on the high volume services – Housing and Council Tax and Benefits – and is looking at the causes of repeat contact to the Council for Council services. This work will help identify the factors which contribute to service failure and which often lead to increased complaints to the Council.
- 3.33 The outcomes from this inquiry (which is due to conclude at the end of February 2017), will help the authority address areas which are known to cause repeat contact to the Council and which therefore have a detrimental impact on customer contact and satisfaction.

***Actions to be taken in the next 12 months to improve customer access and satisfaction***

3.34 The following sections details the actions that are being taken in the next 12 months to further improve the processes and procedures associated with customer contact and satisfaction and increase levels of assurance from satisfactory to good. These actions have been identified through two review processes; the Internal Audit report on customer contact and satisfaction and the corporate review of compliments and complaints being undertaken as part of the broader Support Services Review.

3.35 Given this the actions being taken forward in the next 12 months to improve processes and procedures around customer contact and satisfaction are:

- To review the Compliments and Complaints Policy in line with the findings from the internal audit review and to ensure it is consistent with the new way of working developed as a result of the corporate review into compliments and complaints.
- To ensure that each Directorate has a Departmental Customer Relations Officer.
- To have clarity on roles and responsibilities for the enforcement of customer service standards and the investigation of complaints (including protocols for the independent investigation of complaints).
- To ensure the consistent roll-out to relevant officers of the 'Quality Complaints Handling and Investigation' training.
- Introduce a consistent approach to Quality Assurance to ensure that investigations and responses meet expected standards. This to include the development of best practice complaint response templates.
- To have clarity on any services where complaints are handled outside of the framework defined in the Compliments and Complaints policy and to maintain a register of processes and procedures in place for these exceptions.
- To consider the inclusion of Member enquiries and complaints into the processes and procedures around customer contact and satisfaction.
- To introduce a new set of corporate customer service standards to enable services to assess the overall approach to customer contact within their service
- Introduce robust monitoring and QA arrangements on performance data around customer contact and satisfaction (including compliments and complaints)
- Undertake an exercise to ascertain levels of customer satisfaction monitoring within services across the Council
- Agree processes for the reporting of performance associated with customer contact and satisfaction at service, directorate and organisational level and consider how a corporate measure of customer satisfaction can be developed and measured for the Best Council Plan.
- Introduce a more consistent IT system for the recording, management and monitoring of compliments and complaints across the Council.

3.36 These actions will be taken forward as part of the new ways of working which will be introduced as part of the corporate review of compliments and complaints. An update on each of the actions will be presented in the next annual report in January 2018.

3.37 The above information and data provides a more holistic view of the Council's approach to managing customer contact and satisfaction. Based on this and the findings from the Internal Audit report, it is the officer view that the council's processes and procedures around customer access and satisfaction are deemed adequate and acceptable.

3.38 However there are areas where the processes and procedures can be improved to deliver a much more consistent experience for customers who contact the Council and these will be addressed as part of the actions taken over the next 12 months as outlined above.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **Consultation and Engagement**

4.1 This report is based on information and data obtained through the day to-day operation of customer services; through information obtained as a result of the Internal Audit review of customer contact and satisfaction and the corporate review of compliments and complaints. To this end, services have been involved and engaged through these processes and reviews.

### **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2 Previous reports have raised the risk that the council may be under-reporting and potentially not paying appropriate attention to complaints where there are equalities or alleged discrimination aspects, or where vulnerable people do not complain. The cross-council customer relations meetings discuss ways to make sure that we are learning from the very best practice.

### **Council policies and City Priorities**

4.3 The Council's approach to customer contact and satisfaction has implications for council policies and city priorities in that it covers effectively all contact made to the Council. Therefore it is important that the actions identified above are taken to ensure that all services within the Council are able to provide excellent customer access and satisfaction given the impact this has on council priorities and city priorities.

### **Resources and value for money**

4.4 Any feedback we receive from customers (be that through day to day contact, customer satisfaction surveys or compliments and complaints) is free feedback from our customers. We use this feedback to identify areas of improvement, to make our services more effective, in particular more joined up and responsive to people's individual needs and circumstances (see Appendix 1).

4.5 Each Ombudsman investigation and equality/discrimination complaint uses a case conference approach, the aims of which are to ensure that the investigation is i) thorough and timely, and ii) actions are put in place to prevent similar problems from occurring.

- 4.6 The cost of financial settlement and compensation is significantly outweighed by the amount of staff time spent administering and investigating complaints and it is true to say that the earlier faults or mistakes are identified and addressed, the more cost effective the process is. This is why the pilot approach outlined at para 3.24 to 3.29 is seen as an important development as it is focussed on tackling issues before they become complaints.

#### **Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.7 There are no legal implications, Access to Information and Call in issues associated with this report.

#### **Risk Management**

- 4.8 There are significant risks of an organisational, reputational and service delivery nature, associated with poor customer contact and satisfaction levels and therefore it is important that actions are taken to ensure that the processes and procedures that are in place within the authority around customer contact and satisfaction are acceptable and appropriate so as to mitigate the risk to the organisation.
- 4.9 To this end the actions taken and to be taken (as outlined in section 3 of the report) are important in delivering further assurances on the processes and procedures in place to deliver excellent customer contact and satisfaction.
- 4.10 As stated above, given this, the actions identified will be taken forward as part of the corporate review of compliments and complaints within the Council and the risk and issues will be managed through a new council-wide Customer Access Chief Officer group.

### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 This report has provided an update on customer contact and satisfaction levels with customer services within the Council. The intention behind the report has been to provide a range of information and data pertaining to customer access and satisfaction which together provides a more rounded picture of the Council's processes and procedures around customer contact.
- 5.2 Based on the information provided in the report, coupled with the recent findings from the Internal Audit report, it is the officer view that the council's processes and procedures around customer access and satisfaction are working effectively. However there are areas where the processes and procedures can be improved to deliver a much more consistent experience for customers who contact the Council.

### **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are asked to note the officer view that based on the information provided in the report, coupled with the recent findings from the Internal Audit report, the council's processes and procedures around customer access and satisfaction are working effectively. There is however further room for improvement and there is an agreed set of actions to be taken in the next 12 months to improve levels of assurance further.

6.2 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are asked to consider any further information they wish to see added to future annual reports.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Data and commentary on compliments & complaints - Nov 2015 to Oct 2016