

**Report of the Chief Officer, Customer Access and Welfare
Report to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee**

Date: 23 November 2018

Subject: Customer Contact and Satisfaction

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, 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 delivered through Customer Access on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 It provides:
 - An update on the questions raised at the January (2018) Corporate Governance and Audit Committee in response to the annual report presented then;
 - An overview of customer contact, satisfaction and developments through the Council's corporate customer services function – Customer Access;
 - Information about customer contact with members;
 - An analysis of formally logged compliments and complaints through the Customer Relations teams;
 - Progress on the recommendations from the Corporate Review of Compliments and Complaints;
 - An introduction to the Voice of the Customer work which is taking place to put customers at the heart of changes.
- 1.3 The report outlines the work which has taken place in order to ensure services are delivered in the most cost effective way whilst aiming to put customers first at a time of budgetary constraint. Whilst satisfaction levels with Customer Access remain high there are ongoing challenges and teams are working hard to mitigate these.
- 1.4 Based on the information provided in this report, it is the view of the Chief Officer for Customer Access and Welfare that the Council's processes and procedures around

customer contact and satisfaction are deemed adequate and acceptable, given the prevailing financial climate and the demand for services. Improvements will continue to be made in order to deal with the challenges faced and to deliver a more consistent experience for customers who contact the Council.

Recommendations

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are asked to:

- note the information provided;
- support the work outlined to develop the approach further;
- recognise that the Customer Satisfaction Audit due to take place shortly will inform further developments, and;
- suggest areas where they would like to see further focus.

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report responds to the queries from the January 2018 Governance and Audit Committee report on customer satisfaction and provides an update on customer contact and customer satisfaction with Council services. It does this by considering the component factors i.e. scale and scope of customer contact; levels of customer satisfaction with the provision of customer services; and, information from the Council's formal compliments and complaints process.
- 1.2 In addition it provides an update on progress on the recommendations from the 2016 Review of Compliments and Complaints, and also outlines information from the Ombudsman.
- 1.3 Finally it assesses the information and asks Governance and Audit Committee to note the assessment and provide challenge and comment to support further development in this area.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee have received regular annual reports for a number of years on the Council's contact and satisfaction. At the January 2018 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting the Annual Report on Customer Contact and Satisfaction report was discussed, and further information was requested on the following areas. These are addressed below:
 - Further details be provided to Members about the volume of contacts made with the Council by social media and to also provide clarification as to what the 1.5m community libraries contacts represented. This information was provided to Members in March 2017 and an update position is included in the report below;
 - That constituency case work be captured and included in future annual assurance reports to this Committee. Work has taken place on this as described below in paragraph 3.6.11;
 - That complaints about staff attitude/conduct in Adult Social Care be referred to the Scrutiny Board for Adults and Health with a view to further investigation of the matter and classification of the breach of complaints data reported by the Directorate. Adults and Health Scrutiny Board held a working group meeting on 6 April 2018 where assurances were given in relation to staff attitude and it was agreed that an Adult Social Care Annual Complaints report should be routinely reported and considered by the Scrutiny Board (Adults and Health);
 - That a report be prepared by the Director of City Development with a view to providing assurance as to the governance arrangements to manage/maintain and make best use of council buildings including those with Listed Status. A report on Estates Governance was considered by CGAC on 26 June 2018, which provided this assurance.
- 2.2 Information has been collected from a variety of sources to inform this report and to provide a picture of customer satisfaction. It aims to provide assurances that the customer is at the heart of service delivery and to show a focus on continuous improvement.

2.3 Channel shift has been seen as a way of reducing costs within the Contact Centre. In anticipation of this, budget reductions in the region of 25% or £1.21m have been made over the past 3 years. In that period of time, significant developments have been taking place such that savings of approx. £800k have been achieved, however, as detailed below, due to the complexity of the IT changes required, the changes have not yet delivered the level of channel shift originally envisaged and has therefore impacted Contact Centre performance.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 The following outlines a range of component factors which together give a picture of how customers contact the council and how the council understands satisfaction. Data and information is provided along with an outline of developments which are planned in order to improve performance.

3.2 The majority of customer contact with the Council is managed at the first point of contact through Customer Access. The customer contact and customer satisfaction information and data highlighted here is in relation to this. Contact is 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 which has now moved from Westgate to Merrion House;
- Digital access through the Council’s website, on-line transactions and e-mail.

3.3 Face to Face - Community Hubs and One Stop Centres

3.3.1 **Face to face progress:** Since the last reporting period new Community Hubs have opened at Headingley, the St Georges Centre and the new city centre Hub at Merrion House.

3.3.2 The Post Office has agreed the relocation of their branch to the new Headingley Community Hub, and the new Post Office is due to open in late November 2018.

3.3.3 The opening of the City Centre Hub at Merrion House has seen the introduction of a queue and appointment system to manage the customer flow as the public area is now over 3 floors. This new queue and appointment system has also been introduced at Compton Centre and Dewsbury Road.

3.3.4 At the new City Centre Hub Customer Services and Housing Options have merged their front lines so there isn’t a separate Housing Options floor as there was at 2 Great George Street. Since moving to Merrion we have seen a 20% increase in enquiries being made.

3.3.5 **Face to face contact:** The level of contact is shown below:

Channel	Apr 17 – Sep 17	Apr 18 – Sep 18
Community Hubs / One Stop Centres	330,815	See notes below
Community Libraries Visits	1,100,916	869,862

- 3.3.6 Due to the need to conform to PSN security requirements, significant IT changes have, and continue to be made, within Customer Access. This has impacted on full performance reporting capability within Face to Face services. Therefore, whilst work has been ongoing to develop and implement the new IT infrastructure, the new reporting system is still in development and performance data is not available to the level of detail required for reporting. This is being rectified and will be resolved to enable reporting in future reports.
- 3.3.7 The reported figure for community libraries visits shows as reduced in the current year. It is important to note that this data is for visits rather than enquiries as, at the moment, this is all that can be measured. However in reporting on visits, during this period some of the libraries were closed for refurbishment and in line with the above, work has been taking place to improve IT systems which provide performance data. The data reported is for visits only at sites where systems are still in place to record visitor numbers. As per para 3.3.6, further data will be available in due course when the new IT system is in place.
- 3.3.8 **Face to face satisfaction:** For face to face contact, the average customer satisfaction score for the past 4 years has been 99% and it remains at this level for this year.
- 3.3.9 **Face to face developments:** Currently Morley library is being refurbished to create a Community Hub and will reopen in January 2019.

3.4 Corporate Contact Centre

- 3.4.1 **Contact centre progress:** There have been two main drivers for change in the contact centre, as follows:
- work from the Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Inquiry into Failure Demand in 2016;
 - the Voice of the Customer work which has resulted in a pilot project taking place.
- 3.4.2 The Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board carried out a review into reducing failure demand within the corporate contact centre in 2016/17. This work focussed the high-volume services of housing and council tax and benefits looking at the causes of repeat contact to the Council. This work helped to identify the factors which contribute to service failure and which often lead to increased complaints to the Council.
- 3.4.3 The outcomes from this inquiry was to provide the three service areas with ten recommendations to support them with their joint working to achieve reduced repeat contacts due to service failures.
- 3.4.4 One of the areas highlighted in the recommendations was closer working between these services. From this, a new Tier Two support service was proposed, based within Customer Access to support front-line staff to deal with customer enquiries at first point of contact.

- 3.4.5 Housing are currently providing an officer full-time to work within the Customer Access Development Team to support the closer work brought about by this work. Tier Two support is also in place on a full-time basis now for council tax admin and benefits services with two officers based full time in the Contact Centre.
- 3.4.6 Further development work is currently underway with council tax and housing to re-visit areas of high contact where Customer Access's involvement is not adding sufficient value. This work is looking at options for moving more of these contacts to self-service or in some cases, where Customer Access are only able to take and pass messages, options for these enquiries going direct to the service are being explored.
- 3.4.7 As part of the Voice of the Customer work (see para 3.7 for more detail) a pilot has taken place within the Contact Centre where Customer Services Officers were asked to identify processes which had not been identified as part of the service failure work but that they felt were creating frustrations for customers and staff alike.
- 3.4.8 Using this feedback, analysis of call volumes was done and, where appropriate, changes were introduced. These have provided a range of improvements to the customer experience and where call times have been reduced due to simplifications in process / improved handling, financial savings are also made.
- 3.4.9 A further positive from this has been that staff involved in the pilot have felt engaged, included and listened to as shown by the improved staff satisfaction from the teams involved in the pilot. Analysis of both pre and post staff and customer surveys showed improvements achieved.
- 3.4.10 The pilot provided six clear recommendations that are currently being used to roll out this way of working to our housing telephone teams and will shortly be extended throughout the Contact Centre.
- 3.4.11 All service improvements that are introduced are tracked to ensure that they result in improving service delivery for customers within the available budget. The financial savings that are made are monitored and recorded.
- 3.4.12 Examples of changes made during the pilot are:
- change automated messages to make it easier for customers to get to the service they need;
 - website improvements based on what customers are telling us, and;
 - changes to the way we ask for information to make it easier to manage a call.
- 3.4.13 Contact Centre Contact: The level of contact is shown below.

Channel	Apr 17 – Sep 17	Apr 18 – Sep 18
Telephone	690,058	816,165
E-Mail	141,965	135,316

- 3.4.14 For the period April 2018 to September 2018, the Contact Centre has received more telephone contact than in the same period last year, and less emails where customers have moved to use on-line forms. The key services which have experienced increased call volumes are: waste management, housing (general and

repair) and children's social care. Work is taking place to better understand the reasons for this. In addition, the contact centre has taken on an additional service in planning calls.

3.4.15 As reported above, whilst the Contact Centre has achieved approx. £800k in savings through Channel Shift, the complexity of the IT infrastructure and service process changes required to deliver the necessary self-serve platforms has meant that the level of savings included in the budget have not been achieved to the required level nor have telephone volumes decreased to the levels expected. This is therefore having an adverse impact on the contact centre's ability to maintain performance at target levels.

3.4.16 As a result of these reductions, time spent waiting to be answered has increased from five minute average wait time to ten minutes. The lines struggling the most are the council tax and benefit lines where there is most movement of staff, and recruiting and training new staff takes several months. Work is taking place to influence reductions in call volumes, but this work is heavily reliant on technology to enable self-service, and services to bring about reductions in service failure. We have had issues with third party suppliers being able to deliver their self-serve products on time and to quality requirements. An Action plan has been put in place to get performance back on track. The Action Plan focusses in the main on addressing the following actions:

- User-centred service design to improve processes for customers, thus reducing repeat contact and encouraging self-service where appropriate;
- Developing the contact centre as a career pathway for apprentices to a range of customer-related jobs within the council;
- Engaging staff within the contact centre through greater involvement in improvements and recognition for a job well done, and;
- Planning for the future to ensure technology supports our vision for customer access now and in the future.

3.4.17 Further to this, conversations are ongoing corporately about how best to address the short-term problem ahead of the actions from the action plan making a difference.

3.4.18 **Customer Contact satisfaction** In previous years the average customer satisfaction score for telephone contact ran at 98%. In 2017, customer satisfaction was 93%. The primary reason for this reduction, from a customer services perspective, is the increase in wait times for callers. The service is acutely aware that performance in this area needs to improve and work continues to address this issue through a focus on channel shift and the introduction of a call-back functionality on specific lines. Indeed, there is some evidence that this is beginning to work with current satisfaction scores having increased to 95%.

3.4.19 Email satisfaction is currently running at 73% year to date, which is a slight increase on last year's 72% and is continuing to improve.

3.4.20 **Contact Centre development:** During the next 12 months the following will take place to improve satisfaction:

- Evaluate the results from the new telephone surveys and make changes as required;
- Develop service specific telephone surveys to identify issues within each service area;
- Bring together reporting of all surveys results across all channels to allow for better analysis and comparison;
- Continue to develop a performance dashboard which will pull together information from across several different areas to provide enhanced details on the changes needed to improve the customer experience.
- Developing a team leader dashboard that will allow team leaders to assess team member survey results and evaluate the call that initiated the survey, and;
- Develop and roll out a staff suggestion scheme, which will allow staff to see updates and comments from suggestion owners.

3.5 Digital Services

3.5.1 **Digital Services progress** – Work continues with customers as part of the ongoing web content review work. This involves using information taken from our website survey and all other related customer feedback to help to get a clearer picture of customers’ needs. The user testing techniques which have been demonstrated to councillors, also give us a much better insight as to how areas of the website should be set up and written. The ever-growing user network now has around 800 members.

3.5.2 An integral part of this work is to review and evaluate the impact of any refinements that are made e.g. council tax has seen a 70% increase in page visitors and subsequently an increase in self-service transactions.

3.5.3 **Digital Services contact** The following table gives an overview of the level of contact through the different digital channels

Channel	Apr – Sep 17	Apr – Sep 18
Website ‘Residents’ page visits	2,317,393	1,799,144
Mobile/Tablet users	63%	65%
On-line transactions	995,747	1,763,708
Emails received for digital services	24,293	17,984
Facebook reach (weekly average)	94,738	114,945
Twitter impressions (weekly average)	29,658	38,900

3.5.4 The fall in web page visits coupled with the increase in online transactions suggests that more of our customers are accessing the information easier (rather than having to search through several pages). Ongoing research work with customers shows that most of them prefer to go straight to the information that they need via the council site search, or other search engines such as Google or Bing.

3.5.5 In 2018, there was a steady increase in customers self-serving. The main areas where this has happened are:

- Online form usage has increased, especially since the online Waste service was introduced;

- Check your bin day page visits and use of the bin app have gone up significantly.

- 3.5.6 These improvements have contributed to a reduction in the number of customer calls and emails received for those services where there is an online option. However, it should be noted that subsequent issues in dealing with self-service requests can lead to further follow-up contact by phone, nullifying the channel shift benefits. Self-service is only as good, ultimately, as the service delivered in response to customer requests. Work is ongoing to ensure that self-service fulfils the needs of the customer without needing to contact the council further contact.
- 3.5.7 From May 2018, a dedicated team of Customer Services Officers was established to take calls from customers for the services which are available online. This has enabled these colleagues to focus on supporting customers with channel shift, where appropriate. The team provides the appropriate promoting of, and signposting to, council online services. For example they, together with Customer Services Officers working on Council Tax enquiries, use email to send customers' links that get them directly to the information that they need on the website rather than the customer having to call.
- 3.5.8 Close work with customers continues as part of the ongoing web content review work. Within this there has been an increase in the percentage of online customers surveyed who find it easy to make an online request, but a downturn in those happy with the service provided and being kept informed by the service. Based on this feedback the results have been shared with each of the relevant services with a view to address the issues e.g. working with refuse to look at how we can provide better information on the website to help manage expectations re missed bins.
- 3.5.9 The council's social media Leeds Council 'Help' accounts continue to grow, messages which are posted/tweeted are varied and have played a significant role in helping to spread the word on a number of campaigns, events, service changes and self-service options. An example of this is getting messages out about bad weather – reassurances and information was provided to many people about road closures, gritting and bin disruption.
- 3.5.10 There is also a positive correlation between the amount of posts/tweets from Customer Access and the amount of people they reach. However, customer feedback is clear that quality of information provided rather than quantity is preferred.
- 3.5.11 **Digital Services satisfaction** - There has been an increase in the percentage of MyLeeds customers surveyed who find it easy to make an online request (from 70% to 72%), but, a downturn in those: happy with the service (from 69% to 61%); being kept informed (from 74% to 62%) and saying that the updates that they received were clear and accurate (from 86% to 85%). As highlighted above, work is taking place with service partners to address these issues.
- 3.5.12 **Digital Services development:** The future focus for this area is to help facilitate better co-ordination between, and management of, the social media accounts spread across the Council.

3.6 Compliments and Complaints

3.6.1 **Compliments and Complaints – overview** Whilst the above information provides a picture of customer contact and where proactive work has taken place to understand satisfaction levels, compliments and complaints are unsolicited and provide an additional view of our customers’ experiences.

The table below gives an overview of compliments and complaint numbers for the council.

Overall	April – Sept 17/18	April – Sept 18
Compliments	693	667
Stage 1 Complaint	1788	2,737
Stage 2 Complaint	188	310
Ombudsman	70	94

3.6.2 There have been higher numbers of complaints during April – Sept 2018 than the same period last year, and paragraph 3.6.4 seeks to provide further explanation of this.

3.6.3 The table below gives an overview of the number of compliments and complaints that have been received between 1 April and 30 September 2018, for each directorate

April – September 2018	Compliments	Complaints (Stage 1)	Complaints (Stage 2)	Ombudsman Cases
Communities & Environment	149	1086	75	11
Resources & Housing	65	1095	147	32
City Development	21	176	40	10
Adults and Health	354	210	34	12
Children and Families	78	170	14	29*
Total	667	2,737	310	94

* Education processes include an appeals stage, rather than a complaints procedure, and then recourse to the Ombudsman, so this figure includes 18 for Education.

3.6.4 The services which have received the largest number of complaints have been housing and waste management. Appendix 1 includes commentaries for the services in each directorate which have received the largest number of complaints. A very brief overview of these show the following:

- It is believed that the rise in complaints in relation to housing (primarily around missed appointments and quality of repairs, communications, and staff conduct), has been due to actively seeking feedback and engaging with customers. Training and development is being planned to address the issues raised;
- The increase in complaints within Waste is primarily due to the bad weather (the Beast from the East for example) resulting in suspended services. Service performance in waste is currently being scrutinised by the Scrutiny Board for Communities.

- Analysis of the increase in complaints to cleaner neighbourhoods show these are in relation to the domestic pest control service, which is provided through a contractor. Although the warm weather contributed to the increase, and the service was very busy, the contractor had a number of vacancies meaning that they could not meet the response times that were being promoted. As a result of conversations with the contractor, detailed guidance has been provided for front line staff, and changes have been made to staffing resources;
- The increase in complaints concerning SEN issues has coincided with the rise in the number of children within this cohort. To address these and other complaints within Children's and Families, work has focussed on communication and setting clear expectations;
- Although only 11% of complaints to Adults and Health are in relation to finance, the numbers have increased, and these revolve around the assessment of people's contributions to care costs.

3.6.5 The above highlights those areas where complaints have increased, and therefore it is of particular concern to understand why and address this. However, it is important to understand the full picture and learning is being assessed across all complaints with a view to reducing the volumes received as services respond to complaints by, where appropriate and possible, improving services.

3.6.6 **Ombudsman contact** The Ombudsman has stated that the volume of complaints considered does not, in itself, indicate the quality of a council's performance. The Ombudsman has indicated an intention to investigate and address a larger number of complaints as a means for Councils to identify improvements.

3.6.7 The number of Ombudsman enquires increased in 2017/18 and is likely to increase again this year. In his annual letter to Leeds City Council received in July, the Ombudsman has stated:

“Over the year my investigators have noted your Council's positive approach to complaint handling. It is very pleasing to see an example of a Council who constructively engages with us to ensure complainants are properly heard and matters resolved where appropriate.”

3.6.8 The Ombudsman's letter recognises the importance of complaints and ensuring positive outcomes for customers alongside the potential for learning for services. This is in line with the work that is taking place, following the Customer Relations review to ensure focus on performance, improvement and learning. In continuing with this approach the council should maintain the positive comments that have been received from the Ombudsman.

3.6.9 **Customer Relations progress:** A pilot began in July 2016 in the Contact Centre with the aim to resolve calls at first point of contact on the Customer Relations line. Under this pilot calls were taken by experienced/supervisory staff within the contact centre, and as a result 1 in 3 potential complaints were resolved at that point. The pilot was completed and it was anticipated that learning would be taken back into Contact Centre Teams.

3.6.10 Due to pressures on Contact Centre staff it was agreed, in May 2018, that the Customer Relations line would transfer to the Customer Relations Team. Resolving

complaints at the first point of contact remains a focus however this has been challenging due to resourcing levels. Work is ongoing to resolve this.

- 3.6.11 **Member casework** Questions have been raised when previous reports on Customer Satisfaction have been presented to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee on how member casework sits in the context of complaints.
- 3.6.12 Currently the two are viewed separately, with bespoke processes existing in particular high-volume areas for managing member contact. Recording takes place in services in different ways as appropriate and within the Group Support Offices via a common database. There is currently no easy way to bring the information together and to understand the full position. The following gives information in relation to the separate pieces of information that are held and work is taking place to better understand and address the full picture.
- 3.6.13 Whilst there is generally no central contact point for member enquiries those in relation to Housing are processed through the central Customer Relations Team. This shows that the volume of member contact received by Housing is two and a half times larger than the volume of complaints they have received. These member enquiries are handled in a similar manner to complaints and responses are provided, however through analysis, in the majority of cases, the enquiries are classified as requests for service such as those made through standard communication channels.
- 3.6.14 Upon reviewing information provided by Group Support Offices in relation to the types of enquiries logged as member casework, this broadly mirrors the same services generating the largest numbers of complaints.
- 3.6.15 Of the information provided which covers the period October 2017 to October 2018 (which is not exhaustive but is a fair reflection of the volumes of contact received), the issues generating the most member casework has been in relation to Housing, covering both repairs and tenancy issues, which has accounted for 23% of contact.
- 3.6.16 However, contrary to the trends seen in complaints where the numbers have been relatively low, member casework relating to Highways issues (maintenance, traffic management, pot holes and street lighting) has accounted for 17% of all cases logged. Following this, 7% of member casework has related to refuse collection and 5% to anti-social behaviour.
- 3.6.17 It is understood that planning enforcement cases are often raised with members and do not appear to be reflected in the volume of formal complaints received. Planning enforcement itself is handled directly by planning and often will be addressed through internal procedures. Complaints are typically an expression of dissatisfaction at the level of service the Council has provided, however planning enforcement issues are generally addressed as a result of actions of those who have (or haven't received) planning permission and it is the responsibility of the Council to assess whether development has taken place within the permission granted. The number of complaints logged following standard planning enforcement procedures has accounted for only 15% of formal complaints received by planning ie 12 out of 78 complaints

3.6.18 Work continues to take place to better understand the position and how to support this area better. It is anticipated that the Customer Satisfaction audit that CGAC agreed in the Audit Plan 2018/19 to 'provide assurance over the processes that support continual improvement in respect of the customer experience' will help to inform this.

3.6.19 **Financial Remedies:** On occasion, as a result of a complaint investigation, financial remedy has been offered in settlement of a complaint. Between April – September 2018 there were 37 cases totalling £14,044.52 financial redress at stages 1 and 2. It is not possible to show a comparison with stage 1 and stage 2 complaint settlements in 2017 due to reporting not being collated centrally at that time. The Ombudsman settlements for this period covered 2 cases and totalled £5,037. Figures for the same period in 2017 show there were 9 cases which totalled £12,902.74 in settlements.

3.6.20 As can be seen there are relatively few cases where financial redress takes place. It is only considered where this is manageable within service budgets, proportionate to the inconvenience or level of service the customer has received and considered that settlement is beneficial to minimise and offset impact on officer time.

3.6.21 **Corporate Review of Compliments and Complaints 2016/17.** The ambition to develop integrated compliments and complaints teams across the Council with streamlined and efficient and common processes in place was described in the annual report to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee in January 2017.

3.6.22 Since this report work has continued to take place to develop the recommendations and meet the ambition. In particular the following changes have been made:

- A small working group has reviewed and refreshed the Corporate Compliments and Complaints Policy and ensured it is in line with the recommendations from the audit report. Consultation has taken place on this with housing tenants and it is in the process of being launched;
- A new set of corporate customer service standards have been drafted and internal consultation is currently taking place. Plans are being made to engage with customers on these and any comments from members are very welcomed. These standards will support services in assessing their customer contact and will provide part of the framework for quality assurance and performance;
- Formal performance reporting to senior leadership teams about compliments and complaints takes place regularly for Adults and Health and for Children's and Families, however it has been more ad hoc in other areas. This is currently being reviewed and a paper is going to CLT in November which will provide a corporate view of compliments and complaints and will begin this regular performance reporting to each director and their leadership teams.

3.6.23 **Customer Relations** developments will focus on:

- Better understanding how to improve responses to member enquiries – this will follow from the internal audit report referenced earlier;
- Improving the performance framework and reporting;
- Closer working with areas where there are high levels of complaints and queries and ensure clear links and strengthening common processes;

- To better understand the IT requirements for compliments and complaints and it remains a longer-term ambition to have a common solution;
- Ensuring robust training which takes account of all the changes which have been taking place so that these are more widely understood and the relevance and importance of learning from customer feedback is fully supported. This training will encompass the work which is being done to develop the customer standards, complaints investigations and quality assurance;

3.7 Voice of the Customer.

3.7.1 In order to better understand and to further develop the approaches used the Voice of the Customer concept is being taken forward. Fundamental to this is using information received from customers to get a more holistic view of customers' wants and needs. Intelligence will be brought together from a number of sources with initial touch points being feedback from Customer Service Officer's, telephone, compliments and complaints, emails, LCC Webpages, web forms and Contact360 online forms.

Assessments will take place to inform how to better utilise this information to change and improve service delivery to all customers regardless of their contact methods.

There is information available which is not being used to its full "customer insight" potential. The work on the Voice of the Customer is to better understand this information and how to utilise this to improve service delivery to customers.

3.7.2 During the next 12 months the focus will be on:

- Improving customer survey questions. New questions are being developed for using in monthly customer surveys. The additional information will provide further opportunities to improve service delivery. These new surveys will continue to be developed and improved to take into account feedback from our customers;
- Working with council tax colleagues to identify processes which are resulting in avoidable contact eg customers do not understand what they need to do or the process is confusing for them. Following analyses of the customer contact information a number of short, medium and long term actions have been developed to address this. Any proposed solutions will be tested with customers before implementing them to ensure that they are clear and understandable;
- Working with civic enterprise colleagues' team to help support digital solutions for staff. An engagement event will be held to better understand the issues and to develop solutions. This will help colleagues to respond to enquiries from citizens about other services within the council.
- The "voice of the customer" service design methodologies and the learning gained will be shared widely to ensure that customers' needs are identified and included from the beginning.

4.0 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 This report has not been consulted on as it outlines the progress and developments in relation to different aspects of customer contact and satisfaction. However, it highlights where consultation is taking place or planned to take place with the public.

4.2 Equality and Diversity/Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 An equality impact assessment has not taken place in relation to this report, but specific work areas described within it have, where appropriate.

4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The work described above is in line with council policies and the city priorities. The following key performance indicators are in the Best Council Plan 2018 – 2021:

- Level of complaints
- Proportion of customers using self-service when getting in touch with the council.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 All work takes place within the agreed budgets and with a focus on making improvements so that efficiencies can be achieved.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call in

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

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 There are significant risks of an organisational, reputational and service delivery nature, associated with poor customer contact and satisfaction levels. The actions taken to improve council processes and procedures around customer contact and satisfaction help to mitigate the risks.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The above sections have highlighted a range of information and data showing customer contact, satisfaction levels and compliments and complaints, which together provide a holistic picture. As has been demonstrated, significant work has taken place to understand how, and make changes to, improve contact using the most cost effective routes without compromising accessibility, given the prevailing financial climate. And whilst work continues to find new ways of working to improve customer contact further, this brings challenges which the organisation will continue to address as best as possible.

5.2 Further to this, considerable opportunities exist to share learning across the council, to better understand our customers and provide the focus on getting things right first time for them. In the next 12 months further improvements will be made, as outlined above and these should impact positively on customers.

5.3 Based on the information provided in this report, it is view of the Chief Officer for Customer Access and Welfare that the Council's processes and procedures around customer contact and satisfaction are deemed adequate and acceptable, given the prevailing financial climate and the demand for services. Improvements will continue to be made in order to deal with the challenges we face and to deliver a more consistent experience for customers who contact the Council.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are asked to:

- note the information provided;
- support the work outlined to develop the approach further;
- recognise that the Customer Satisfaction Audit due to take place shortly will inform further developments; and
- suggest areas where they would like to see further focus.

7.0 Background Documents

7.1 None.

Commentaries on Complaints in Key Services Areas

The section below highlights the services generating the highest level of complaints in each directorate, and trends and learning identified from these complaints.

Resources & Housing

Top complaint issues – Housing

The service area generating the largest number of complaints is the repairs service, delivering responsive and planned repairs to some 57,000 council homes. Repairs related complaints account for 48% of all complaints received, and whilst this is the highest type by volume, should be put into the context of the service carrying out over 200,000 repairs a year – during 2017/18 this equates to receiving approximately one complaint for every 120 repairs completed. The number of complaints received has been higher within the East of the city, with some 44% of repairs complaints being received from this area, 33% from the West and 22% from within the South. The main concerns raised by tenants related to missed appointments and the quality of work carried out.

Complaints have been lower in respect of tenancy and estate management activity, making up 28% of the complaints received. The main causes for these complaints are around the effectiveness of our communication and feedback to tenants about the progress and status of their enquiry, and what is perceived by customers as staff conduct. The tenancy and estate management function is broad, covering a range of responsibilities including individual tenancy matters, grounds maintenance and the provision of services in communal areas, how we manage reports of anti-social behaviour, neighbour disputes or how we manage other tenancy breaches through enforcement action.

Key trends - Housing

The total number of complaints received across Housing from April to September has increased by over 30% from the corresponding period in the previous year, largely attributable to the repairs service which delivers many thousands of repairs, and is the part of the service that tenants regard as the most important to get right. Despite the increase in the number of complaints received in the East of the city there has been progress within the service in terms of the ongoing improvement activity with Leeds Building Services. Due to investment in improved technology and embarking on a wide change management programme, there has been an increase in the number of repairs jobs started and finished on the same day, an increase of over 10% in repairs completed within target date and an overall improvement in customer satisfaction for repairs amongst East tenants of some 20%.

Whilst complaint numbers have increased, using the current categorisations and classifications, it has been difficult to identify a single process or particular service failing that would be identifiable as contributors to the number of complaints increasing. Overall, complaints are upheld in 54% of cases (38% fully upheld and 16% partially upheld) – which is an increase from just under half being upheld in the previous year.

Learning points – Housing

In response to the overall trend relating to communication, some examples of how the service is responding include a joint review of how we manage ASB with Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team, which includes as a theme how we improve the customer experience in terms of being kept up to date with cases, and has also recently updated its practices in terms of how we manage high rise joint block inspections. These are now undertaken monthly to all 116 high rise blocks and require local teams to feed back the findings of joint block inspections to block residents.

In response to the trend regarding missed appointments and the quality of works, the service have introduced new IT for all repairs operatives in the East, making it easier for them to manage workloads and get repairs completed right first time. Improvements have been made to the way the service allocates repairs, meaning that the communication is becoming better between tenants and operatives as support teams are able to schedule further visits to resolve outstanding issues. Additionally, all repairs staff, including contractors, who are involved in complaint handling have undertaken complaint handling training via the Housing Ombudsman portal.

Customer Care training remains a key component of training for customer facing staff and is an integral part of the week long induction programme of new starters within Housing Management. Housing Leeds Matters – a weekly internal bulletin to all staff, highlights examples of where staff and teams have adopted a ‘can do’ approach to their role and supporting customers and is also used to share staff compliments.

The Government’s recent Green Paper on social housing has prompted a national conversation about the quality of social landlords complaints handling. Housing are keen to participate in this debate and welcome what is likely to be forthcoming national good practice guidance in complaints management and will work further with tenants and tenant representatives about this as the outcomes of the Green Paper become clearer. The service will also be reviewing with the corporate customer relations team the classification and categorisation of compliments and complaints to help identify areas for service improvement more clearly so that Housing’s responses to trends and complaints information can become more targeted depending on the customer group impacted, team giving the service, geographical area, or type of home etc.

Communities & Environment

Waste Management

Top complaint issue - Waste Management

Missed bin collections have been the most common cause for complaints related to Waste Management. Complaints have also been received in relation to policy, bin deliveries and crew issues, although the numbers in relation to these have reduced. These 4 categories up the end of August account for over 90% of the complaints, with missed bins accounting for over 70%.

Trends - Waste Management

The volumes of complaints received tend to remain consistent throughout the year, with peaks occurring at various points. For example, complaints tend to slightly increase when our garden waste collection service resumes during February/March, and often peak during the summer months.

Extreme weather conditions can have a huge impact on missed bin collection figures. In 2018 the city experienced the reminiscence of the 'Beast of the East' which had a significant impact on the service. During this period alone the service was completely stood down three times (all 68 daily routes). Standing the service three times affected around a quarter of a million regular collections.

The prolonged cold weather which ran on into March, was very quickly followed by one of the wettest then hottest spring seasons on record. During this period garden waste collections were inundated with material as residents kept up to their gardens relentless growth. The very high brown bin presentation rates, coupled with the weight of material in bins, meant that a number of suburban brown bin collection routes were failing some days to collect all bins on the scheduled collection day. By late July and into August, as the weather dried out, collections stabilised closer to normal rates as did the associated levels of complaint.

There was an increase in missed bin collection complaints due to introduction of a new CRM system and the way these are now being recorded, the introduction of the Customer Contact platform (CCP) where customers can report missed collections online (making contacting the council more accessible) and also a staff resourcing issue at the end of May which resulted in a number of routes being stood down, which led to a spike in contact in June. The main causes of missed collections are:

- Access issues (e.g. parked vehicles, skips, other obstructions);
- Roadworks;
- Vehicle breakdowns;
- New developments (e.g. inaccessible roads when bins are delivered or inaccessible bin stores);
- High presentation rates (e.g. excess bins, residents not recycling resulting in heavy residual rounds or where routes may require re-alignment);
- Health and safety issues (e.g. overhanging trees, unsafe bins, uneven surface);
- Unfamiliarity (i.e. regular crew members not on a route).

Learning Points - Waste Management

Complaints are reducing following the spike in June/July. When new systems of recording data are introduced, it is not always easy to compare year on year or month on month data, as the way this is now collected and the access to council customer portal systems has changed. As in previous years the complaints relating to missed bins will decline following the suspension of the garden waste for the winter period.

Contact Centre

Top complaint issue - Contact Centre

There has been an increase of 5.5% in the number of complaints received relating to the contact centre in the year to date (April 2018 to September 2018) compared to the same

period in 2017. With such a small increase it is hopeful that with some improvements that the yearend figure could be lower than the 2017/18 total.

Complaints are classified in several broad categories, the most common cause for complaint this year to date has been dissatisfaction with the service customer has received which occurred in 63% of complaints, in 16% of complaints staff conduct had formed an element and 21% of cases concerned issues with either wait times or delays

Trends - Contact Centre

In the context of the number of calls received from April to September 2018, the volume of complaints received is low. Nearly 400,000 calls have been answered over this period, on average one complaint is received for around 3500 calls.

Nonetheless, complaints remain a valuable source of feedback about the level of service provided. With the Contact Centre managing calls for 20 services over 26 lines, some areas receive larger volumes of complaints than others.

The service receiving the largest number of complaints has been Council Tax, making up 29% of complaints being received. The nature of these complaints has varied with these typically relating to wait times and individual billing errors. No wider process issues have been identified, however the feedback from these complaints has formed part of the support and development provided for Customer Service Officers.

Benefits made up 14% of complaints received by the contact centre, Housing 10% and Refuse 8%. All other services received much lower percentages.

Learning Points - Contact Centre

Whilst no common trends beyond wait times and isolated process errors, service improvement opportunities have been identified through process errors. Examples of this have been seen in staff guidance around emergency repair protocols being updated as a result of one complaint and processes with third party service providers have been clarified in relation to disabled bus pass applications.

Wait times have been a cause for complaint for some customers. Staffing levels have reduced at the contact centre as a result of budget cuts and this has impacted on staffing levels. Continued effort is made towards promotion and development of the online and self-service facilities available to customers to reduce the need for customers to speak with an agent. This will, in turn, reduce the wait times for those customers who need to speak with an agent.

Environmental Action

Top Complaint Issues - Environmental Services

Complaints received through environmental services have concerned both issues related to cleaner neighbourhoods and parking services, with these split 83% and 17% respectively.

Key Trends - Environmental Services

This year has seen a higher than usual number of complaints about the domestic pest control service that is offered. The complaints have largely been regarding the service provided by our contractor Mitie and these have been fed back to the supplier

There have been a large number of contacts in relation to parking services however, these are similar in nature to previous years. Many of the complaints received have been appeals against parking fines or fines for driving in a bus lane and so they have been dealt with through Parking Services appeals process, not through the complaints process.

Learning Points - Environmental Services

The pest control manager has been aware of the challenges with contractor staffing levels and has met them to discuss performance on a regular basis. This has impacted on the service in terms of causing delays in the contractor undertaking visits within timescales and also the quality of service offered. As a result of this detailed guidance has been provided to frontline customer service staff concerning timescales for response and the Mitie has committed to bring staffing resources in from other areas to improve the situation within an agreed timescale.

The service has also responded to a small number of complaints from customers who found it difficult to meet the cost of paying for a bulky collection by allowing collections to take place without charge for those who meet certain criteria and are in genuine need of the service. By responding swiftly the service has aimed to limit the number of complaints. Managers from across environmental health and the cleaner neighbourhoods teams continue to deal with the complaints received and this ensures that where failings in the service are identified during the investigation, they can be addressed directly by the service concerned.

Adult Social Care

Top complaint issues

25% of complaints received by the Adults & Health Directorate were about community social work teams; 12% of complaints related to independent sector home care providers; and 11% related to Finance.

The majority of complaints about social work teams referred to a perception that social workers had not been sufficiently supportive. Specific issues ranged from failure to arrange for care services when required, lack of information or referrals around finance, questions over impartiality in complex family situations and social worker availability.

The majority of complaints about independent sector home care providers related to various inconsistencies in service provision, including issues related to failure to arrange visits, the duration of these and cancellations. Complaints were also received relating to there being too many different care workers on a person's care team. Complaints were also received concerning care provision concerning medication, cleaning and anxieties around care.

Complaints concerning Finance were mostly appeals against the outcome of the assessment of someone's contribution to the cost of their care. Often complaints feel that

their disability related expenses (DREs) had not been taken into account. The national regulations on DREs are precise, therefore most complaints were not upheld unless new evidence was provided on appeal that the assessor had not had seen. A small number of complainants felt that assessors had asked intrusive questions.

Trends

Complaints about staff conduct appear to have reduced this year. In the first half of 2018/19 there have only been 35% of the number of complaints of this nature as had been received in the full 2017/18 financial year.

Whilst last year saw a significant reduction in complaints about Finance, this year has seen an increase closer to, although not as high as, historical levels. The nature of complaints about Finance has changed and now revolve in the most part about the assessment of people's contribution to their care costs. Whilst we may therefore be seeing the results of the Finance service's initiatives described above in terms of the nature of people's complaints, we can also see an underlying dissatisfaction amongst service users and their families to having to contribute to cost of their care.

Complaints about Independent Sector Home Care Providers appear to have reduced in the first six months of this year, to 27, when compared to the previous year's figure of 167 and they are no longer the most complained about services. This is a dramatic decrease and requires further investigation.

Therefore, although complaints about community social work services have not increased, this is now the area that receives the most complaints.

Learning points

One case where a service user was left without care provision, resulted in revised guidance being issued to workers in respect of cancelling ISAs. Where complaints about social work teams were upheld they were often resolved by reviews of care packages and the provision of care services. In a number of cases managers informed complainants that they had supported workers to reflect on their practice by way of identifying training, setting new objectives at their appraisal, and discussion and monitoring at supervision sessions.

The Complaints Team and Contracts Team have launched a Joint Protocol requiring all commissioned providers to inform the Council of any complaints made by Council funded service users under the providers' internal complaints procedures to ensure that complaints are investigated and responded to within statutory timescales are adhered to. This has been briefed to all relevant staff, internal and external care providers.

The Adult Social Care Finance Team has carried out a major revision and relaunch of information provided to service users and their representatives about charges for care fees. It has accompanied this with a training programme for social workers. It has also reduced the time taken to complete financial assessments. It has also issued guidance to care homes to advise people that if they are assessed as being ineligible for state support they shall be charged from the point of admission

City Development

Top complaint issues

Within City Development, the services receiving the largest number of complaints have been Planning and Highways, with these making up $\frac{3}{4}$ of all complaints received, Planning accounting for 49% of complaints and Highways 26%.

Trends

The common issues raised in planning complaints have been in relation to the outcome of planning applications, both from applicants and those who oppose an application. The most common issue raised in relation to Highways has been road closures.

The complaints received by planning are often in relation to the outcome of an application, both where this has been denied and the applicant is unhappy at this, or where an application has been approved and those who have made objections are unhappy with this. With planning applications, once a decision has been made, there is no route of appeal, complaint investigation will only consider if the application has been considered correctly, but will not change the outcome. This can lead to a higher than average escalation to stage 2 of the complaints policy.

The common issues relating to Highways complaints have concerned the condition of road surfaces and road closures.

Learning points

The volumes of complaints received by City Development are low in the context of the volumes received elsewhere within the Council and often complaints can be as a result of dissatisfaction at a decision, particularly in relation to planning, which has been arrived at correctly.

There have been cases however which have highlighted errors in process relating to the assessment of an application and in one case this had led to an Ombudsman case which involved the payment of compensation to a number of complainants. As a result of this case processes were reviewed in relation to site measurements and briefings were issued to all staff to prevent a recurrence of the incorrect use of information in future.

In respect of Highways complaints, it can often be the case that these are more requests for service or can be considered under separate procedures (compensation for issues relating to damage to vehicles for example) and there has been a proactive effort to direct customers towards these channels as opposed to logging formal complaints to ensure that these issues are dealt with quickly and correctly for customers.

Children's Services

Top complaint issues

Social work support - Included under this heading are lack of support and manner of support from the social worker. This is consistently the most common reason for complaint and as the bulk of social work is regarding relationships with families it is not unexpected.

Restorative conversations are at the heart of resolving these issues. They can often arise due to time pressures but once the worker or their manager sits down with the complainant and gives full explanations they are often resolved quickly.

SEN Issues - There has been a marked increase in these complaints over the last year. This coincides with a rise in the number of children within this cohort. There have been issues arising from delays in completing plans but also in responding to enquiries. The SEN Statutory Assessment and Provision (SENSAP) service has sometimes been challenged to meet unexpected demand and in ensuring children are in the appropriate school/setting to meet their needs.

Use of Information - This area includes complaints about how we have shared information and also the accuracy of the information we hold. When a family is being assessed under child protection procedures, information is sought from a number of sources and is then presented within a child and family assessment report. Parents and other family members sometimes raise issues around this information. There are also complaints about how we involve other agencies and who we share the information with. Under child protection procedures there are duties on the local authority to share information in order to protect a child and the majority of the complaints were not upheld. Some complainants stated we were in contravention of GDPR but their interpretation of the regulations was inaccurate.

Trends

We have continued to see a steady rise in the number of care leaver complaints but as stated in last year's report, this in some ways is due to the fact that more efforts are being made to keep in contact with this group. Complaints are the usual concerns raised by young people and would perhaps be sorted by parents for other young people. They include requests for laptops, sorting out benefits and grants and also obtaining items such as passports and driving licences. Complaints about looked after children moving placement have dropped considerably this year as there has been concentrated effort to ensure these are done in a consultative and planned manner.

Learning points

There has been learning for services including the customer relations team, around communication and setting clear expectations. The customer relations team has set up templates for stage three panels so that complainants and panellists are clear about procedure and also timelines. Team managers are trained in complaint handling and this has included new material around investigation planning and avoiding bias which will support more effective stage one responses.

In our special educational needs and disability services, we have learned lessons around ensuring provision is appropriate and meeting the child's needs but also that communication is ongoing with the family so that people are given to the opportunity to contribute and their needs are met too. The Resource Allocation, Decision and Review (RADAR) panel has changed its format for submissions so that thorough assessment and outcomes drive the allocated provision.