

REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 10
DATE OF MEETING:	29 NOVEMBER 2018	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (CORPORATE RESOURCES)	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	KEVIN STACKHOUSE (595811) kevin.stackhouse@south-derbys.gov.uk	DOC: s:\cent_serv\complaints\committee reports\working papers for Dec 2018\Complaints and FOI report for Dec 2018 .
SUBJECT:	COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS 01 APRIL 2018 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2018	REF: KS/SH/CS
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM11

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the comments, compliments, complaints and FOI requests, as detailed in the report, are considered and noted.

2.0 Purpose of Report

This report provides:

- 2.1 A summary of official comments, compliments, complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by the Council for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018 can be found at:
<https://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/about-us/open-data-and-transparency>. Figures for the corresponding period in 2017/18 are given for comparison purposes.

3.0 Executive Summary

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

- 3.1 The comments, compliments and complaints procedure is designed to encourage people to give informal feedback on our services.
- 3.2 3 comments, 91 compliments and 58 complaints have been received between 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018.

- 3.3 The number of complaints received in the first half of this financial year has increased compared to the corresponding period of 2017/18, and the number of compliments received has also increased.
- 3.4 Members are informed via e-mail (enclosing a copy of the original complaint) when a complaint is received relating to their ward. This is for information purposes only.

Freedom of Information

- 3.5 South Derbyshire District Council is committed to making itself more open. A large amount of information is already available to the public, through our website or through our offices and at local libraries.

Publication Scheme

- 3.6 Under the Freedom of Information Act, South Derbyshire District Council has a duty to adopt and maintain a Publication Scheme describing:
- The classes of information it publishes
 - How and where such information is published (e.g. website, paper copy, etc.) and
 - Whether or not a charge is made for such information

The purpose of a Publication Scheme is to let everyone know what information will be automatically or routinely published by the Council and to ensure that a significant amount of information is available to the public, without the need for a specific request to be made.

In line with guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office, the scheme is updated regularly and the current version is available from the Website at:

http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/data_protection_and_freedom_of_information/default.asp

- 3.7 A total of 415 Freedom of Information requests have been received from 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018. This is an increase of 102 over the corresponding period for 2017/18.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The Comments, Compliments and Complaints customer leaflet and procedure is available for download from the Website at or can be completed using an electronic form:

http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/complaints/comment_compliment_or_complaint_form/default.asp

4.2 The aim of The Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into force on 1st January 2005, is to extend the right to allow public access to information that the Council holds.

5.0 Detail

Comments

5.1 3 comments were received over the past six months. Any comments received are carefully considered and, if appropriate, are investigated under the complaints procedure.

Department	1 April 2017– 30 September 2017	1 April 2018 – 30 September 2018
Planning Services	1	
Environmental Services		1
Various Departments		1
Derbyshire County Council		1
Total	1	3

Compliments

5.2 The table below compares the number of compliments received for the first half of 2017/2018 against the first half of 2018/2019. Compliments generally relate to the quality of the service provided and/or actions of individuals.

Department	1 April 2017 – 30 September 2017	1 April 2018 – 30 September 2018
Customer Services	1*	2*
Environmental Services	10*	36*
Planning Services	1	1
Housing Services	25	39
Community Services	7*	1
Corporate Resources	0	1
Policy and Communications	3	0
Cultural Services	0	11
Total	47	91

Complaints

5.3 The table below compares the number of official complaints received:-

	1 April 2017 – 30 September 2017	1 April 2018 – 30 September 2018
Resolved at Stage 1	29	47
Stage 1 still ongoing	0	0
Resolved at Stage 2	9	11
Stage 2 still ongoing	0	0
Withdrawn	0	0
Total received	38	58

5.4 The 58 complaints received can be broken down as follows:-

Department	1 April 2017 – 30 September 2017	1 April 2018 – 30 September 2018
Planning Services	7	6*
Housing Services	10	16
Customer Services (including Revenue)	6*	8*
Environmental Services	9	19
Community Services	2	0
Legal and Democratic Services	2	2
Corporate Services	1	1
Property Services	0	1
Finance Services	1*	0
Cultural Services	0	5
Total	38	58

* This indicates where one complaint has referred to two separate divisions

5.5 For comparison, the table below shows the total number of complaints over the last four complete years:-

Department	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Planning Services	15	6	7	6*
Housing Services	21	17	10	16
Customer Services (including Revenue)	15	4*	6*	8*
Environmental Services	10	7	9	19*
Community Services	2	1*	2	0
Legal and Democratic Services	6	4	2	2
Finance & Property Services	1	0	1*	1
Corporate Services	3	1*	1	0
Derbyshire County Council	1	0	0	0
Licensing	0	1	0	0
Client Services	0	2	0	0
Communications	0	0	0	1*
Cultural Services	0	0	0	5
Total	74	43	38	58

* This indicates where one complaint has referred to two separate divisions

5.6 Managers dealing with the complaint are asked to complete a questionnaire following each complaint. This provides details of actions taken and improvements made as a consequence of a complaint.

5.7 If a complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 2 of our procedure, it can be taken to the Local Government Ombudsman for independent consideration. These complaints are the subject of a separate annual report.

Freedom of Information Requests

5.8 Although the Freedom of Information Act 2000 creates a general right of access to information, it also sets out information that we do not have to make available for specific reasons. This is information, which, if published, might prejudice the health, safety or security of the Council, our staff, systems, services or property.

5.9 We make as much information available as possible without charging for it. We do however reserve the right to levy a reasonable charge where the information request is extensive and would require more than 2 days' staff time to satisfy the request.

5.10 The Council deals with hundreds of routine requests for information every day by phone and by letter. These are referred to as "business as usual requests". We will deal with these in the normal way. However, information that is not readily available and that has to be prepared or extracted is handled differently. We are entitled to make a charge for this kind of information.

5.11 Requests for information under Freedom of Information have to be processed within 20 working days. However, requests for details under the Freedom of Information Act can be turned down if they fall within certain exemption criteria.

5.12 The table below compares the Freedom of Information requests received for the first half 2017/2018 against the first half of 2018/2019.

Note: the figures also include any requests that have been made under EIR (Environmental Information Regulations).

	1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017	1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018
Total Number of Requests Received	313	415
Less passed to other organisations	45	71
Less those withdrawn	5	2
Less exemptions/partial exemptions	11	32
Total Requests Answered	252	310
Number replied to within 20 statutory days	232	294
Number replied to after 20 statutory days	20	17
Percentage replied to within 20 statutory days	92%	95%
Percentage replied to after 20 days	8%	5%

- 1 request (1819-250) no clarification received from requester, so request closed.
- 1 request (1819-412) Housing Services has not been replied to.

5.13 The requests for information received can be broken down as follows:

Department	1 April 2017 – 30 September 2017	1 April 2018 – 30 September 2018
Environmental Services	57*	81*
Planning Services	19*	26*
Legal & Democratic Services	20*	31*
Financial Services	12*	15*
IT Services	14*	23*
Customer Services	62*	71*
Housing Services	40*	37*
Organisational Dev.	10*	10*
Community Services	13*	6*
Passed to 3 rd Parties	45	71
Corporate Resources	8*	20*
Property Services	9*	8*
Procurement	4*	0
Communications	0	0
Cultural Services	0	13
Economic Development	0	3

* Same request has involved several Services.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 None directly stemming from this report.

7.0 Corporate Implications

7.1 Under the Complaints procedure the Council will write to the complainant within 5 working days, telling them who is dealing with their complaint and when they can expect to receive a reply. In most cases a full reply will be sent within 10 working days.

7.2 Under the Freedom of Information Act the Council has to respond to any requests received within 20 working days. For many requests the information required cuts across areas of the Council. Consequently a coordinated approach has to be taken in the Council's response, with each service area being responsible for providing the information requested relating to their area.

8.0 Community Implications

8.1 None.

9.0 Background Papers

None.