

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 12</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2020</b>	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (CORPORATE RESOURCES)</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>KEVIN STACKHOUSE (595811)</b> <a href="mailto:kevin.stackhouse@southderbyshire.gov.uk">kevin.stackhouse@southderbyshire.gov.uk</a>	<b>DOC:</b> s:\cent_serv\complaints\committee reports\working papers for Dec 2020\Complaints and FOI report for Dec 2020
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS &amp; FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS 01 APRIL 2020 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2020</b>	<b>REF: KS/SH</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM11</b>

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## **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 2020 to 30 September 2020. Details of individual complaints and requests etc, can be found at: <https://www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/about-us/open-data-and-transparency>. Figures for the corresponding period in 2019/20 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 0 comments, 93 compliments and 55 complaints have been received between 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020.
- 3.3 The number of complaints received in the first half of this financial year has increased compared to the corresponding period of 2019/20, and the number of compliments received has decreased.

- 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. A copy of the response letter sent to the complainant has been provided to Ward members from 01 June 2019.

### **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.southderbyshire.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/data\\_protection\\_and\\_freedom\\_of\\_information/default.asp](http://www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/data_protection_and_freedom_of_information/default.asp)

- 3.7 A total of 287 Freedom of Information requests have been received from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020. This is a decrease of 58 over the corresponding period for 2019/20.

## **4.0 Background**

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

[http://www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/complaints/comment\\_compliment\\_or\\_complaint\\_form/default.asp](http://www.southderbyshire.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 01 January 2005, is to extend the right to allow public access to information that the Council holds.

## 5.0 Detail

### Comments

- 5.1 0 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 2019 – 30 September 2019	1 April 2020 – 30 September 2020
Operational Services	1	
Planning and Strategic Housing	1	
Environmental Services	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

### Compliments

- 5.2 The table below compares the number of compliments received for the first half of 2020/2021 against the first half of 2019/2020. Compliments generally relate to the quality of the service provided and/or actions of individuals. The increase for Operational Services was due to the response to the Covid-19 situation. The decrease for Cultural and Community Services was due to no events and play schemes taking place over the Summer of 2020 due to Covid-19.

Department	1 April 2019 – 30 September 2019	1 April 2020 – 30 September 2020
Organisational Development and Performance	1	0
Customer Services	1	8*
Housing Services	0	19
Cultural and Community Services	139*	5*
Operational Services	28*	58*
Planning and Strategic Housing Services	1	2
Environmental Services	3	1
Legal and Democratic Services	1	0
Partner Organisations (CVS)	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>93</b>

\* This indicates where one compliment has referred to two separate services

### Complaints

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

	1 April 2019 – 30 September 2019	1 April 2020 – 30 September 2020
Resolved at Stage 1	33	43

Stage 1 still ongoing	1	0
Resolved at Stage 2	6	11
Stage 2 still ongoing	1	0
Withdrawn	0	1
<b>Total received</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>55</b>

5.4 The 55 complaints received can be broken down as follows:-

<b>Department</b>	<b>1 April 2019 – 30 September 2019</b>	<b>1 April 2020 – 30 September 2020</b>
Corporate Resources	1	0
Finance Services	1	1
Corporate Property Services	0	1*
Customer Services	4*	2
Housing Services	9*	15
Cultural and Community Services	3*	5*
Operational Services	7*	15
Planning and Strategic Housing Services	7*	9
Environmental Services	4*	3
Legal and Democratic Services	5*	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>55</b>

\* This indicates where one complaint has referred to more than one service

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

<b>Department</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
Corporate Resources	2*	0	0
Organisational Development and Performance	0	1*	1*
Finance Services **	0)	1)	1
Corporate Property Services **	1)	2)	2
Customer Services	12*	13*	18*
Housing Services	22	24*	26
Cultural and Community Services	6	7*	10
Planning and Strategic Housing Services	15	16*	14*
Environmental Services **	25)	26*)	12*
Operational Services **	)	)	22
Legal and Democratic Services	6	7*	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>111</b>

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

\*\* This indicates where Finance & Corporate Property Services and Environmental & Operational Services were counted as one service for the Years 2017/18 & 2018/19.

- 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 2019/2020 against the first half of 2020/2021.

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

	<b>1 Apr 2019 - 30 Sept 2019</b>	<b>1 Apr 2020 - 30 Sept 2020</b>
Total Number of Requests Received	345	287
Less passed to other organisations	53	42
Less those withdrawn or duplicate requests	0	3
Less exemptions/partial exemptions	8	3
<b>Total Requests Answered</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>239</b>
Number replied to within 20 statutory days	273	226
Number replied to after 20 statutory days	11	13
Percentage replied to within 20 statutory days	96%	95%
Percentage replied to after 20 days	4%	5%

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

<b>Department</b>	<b>1 April 2019 – 30 September 2019</b>	<b>1 April 2020 – 30 September 2020</b>
Corporate Resources	13*	2*
Finance Service	9*	15*
Organisational Development & Performance	16*	13*
Business Change & ICT	23*	25*
Corporate Property Services	4	7*
Customer Services	71*	47*
Environmental Services	55*	49*
Housing Services	26*	19*
Cultural and Community Services	19*	17*
Operational Services	5	12*
Planning and Strategic Housing Services	32*	19*
Legal and Democratic Services	20*	19*
Economic Development & Growth	0	1
Passed to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Parties	53	42*

\* 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.