
REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	28 NOVEMBER 2002	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	TERRY NEAVES (595800)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	COMPLAINTS	REF: EF/JHM
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: CE6

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 This report provides a summary of the official complaints received by the Council for the last financial year and the first six months of the current financial year.

2.2 The report also includes information on two other key service areas who deal with the public on a regular basis; the DSO and Environmental Health.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The table below compares the official complaints received for the last full financial year and the first six months of the current financial year.

	12 months to 31 March 2002	6 Months to 30 September 2002
Number received	26	11
Resolved at Stage 1	18	8
Stage 1 still ongoing	1	0
Resolved at Stage 2	2	1
Stage 2 still ongoing	1	0
Complaints received via the Ombudsman	4	2

3.2 Complaints received via the Ombudsman are detailed in the table below:

Financial year	Date	Department	Ombudsman's Decision
2001/02	08.06.01	Building Control	Insufficient evidence of maladministration
	31.10.01	Housing	Insufficient grounds to pursue complaint
	29.01.02	Housing	No or insufficient evidence of maladministration
	08.03.02	Facilities and Development	Insufficient grounds to pursue complaint
2002/03	28.06.02	Planning	Awaiting decision
	03.07.02	Planning	Awaiting decision

3.3 The table below compares the complaints received by the DSO for the last full financial year and the first six months of the current financial year.

As previously reported most of the complaints relate to missed wheeled bin collections.

DSO	12 months to 31 March 2002	6 months to 30 September 2002
Refuse – Domestic	449	177
Refuse – Other	44	20
Cleansing	17	6
Grounds Maintenance	27	Still awaiting figures

3.4 In the case of Environmental Health the table below shows 'complaints' of a different nature. They are not about the service provided by the Environmental Health Department, but reflect requests for service/help. The most significant change is the rise in nuisance complaints.

Environmental Health	12 months to 31 March 2002	6 months to 30 September 2002
Nuisance complaints	617	459
Non-nuisance complaints	759	276
Total complaints	1,376	735
Pest Control Complaints	1306	989

- 3.5 The Citizens' Panel survey indicates that customer satisfaction with the way we handle complaints is rising from 35% to 54%. This compares well with top performing Councils where the level of satisfaction for the top 25% starts at 45%.
- 3.6 Clearly, there is no room for complacency and we want to handle complaints better. Realistically, we are never going to satisfy every person that complains. However, we can make sure we answer their complaint quickly and explain the course of action we have followed clearly **and** apologise when we make mistakes.
- 3.7 A system is now in place that enables us to monitor responses to complaints. We are now looking to get customer feedback to find how they consider their complaint was handled.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None directly stemming from this report.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Overall the Council has few formal complaints. Nevertheless it does receive many requests for service which are set out within this report.
- 5.2 It is encouraging that the level of missed bin collections is reducing, although the level of nuisance complaints adds to the pressure on Council staff resources.

9.0 Background Papers

- 9.1 Complaints schedule

