

POLICY REVIEW & DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Type of Report: Monitoring	Portfolio(s): Cllr Nick Daubney
Author Name: Ray Harding	Consultations: Ray Harding
Tel: 01553 616245	
Email: ray.harding@west-norfolk.gov.uk	
OPEN	

PR&D Panel: Resources and Performance
Date: 1 September 2015
Subject: Complaints against the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Summary

In August 2011, the Resources and Performance Panel resolved that they would continue to receive the annual report on the complaints received. Presented are the figures for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

The Local Government Ombudsman Annual Report 2014/15 is also attached for information.

The report also sets out the number of MP enquiries received.

Recommendation

Panel Members are invited to note the report.

1. Background

Each year the breakdown of MP enquiries, Corporate and Ombudsman complaints are presented for Members information.

Set out below are the breakdowns for 2014/15 for each category.

For Members information, the report for the previous year should have also included an additional justified corporate complaint (CB07) within the Leisure Portfolio. The corporate complaint was upheld.

2. Analysis

MP Enquiries

Although strictly speaking not complaints, but enquiries, MP enquiries are also logged.

212 MP enquiries were dealt with during 2014/15, compared with 206 during the previous year. These were broken down by service area with Leisure (29),

Finance (38), Planning (41), Central Services 21) and finally Chief Executive (83).

Corporate Complaints

32 Corporate complaints were received during 2014/15, compared with 37 during the previous year. Of these complaints, 8 were considered to be justified and 4 were considered to be partly justified.

Attached at Appendix A is a summary of justified complaints. It should be noted that although a complaint can be considered justified, in most instances, the resulting action is rectifying the service received by the member of the public rather than any direct financial compensation.

Of the 32 corporate complaints which had been received, 16 went to an Appeal to the Chief Executive (Stage 2) and out of the 16 complaints, 3 were considered to be justified and 3 partly justified.

Ombudsman Complaints

In total 7 complaints that had exhausted the Council's corporate complaints procedure went to the Local Government Ombudsman. Further cases had gone straight to the Ombudsman and therefore we had no input and were only informed of the decisions.

Attached at Appendix B is the brief Ombudsman Annual Report 2014/15 for information. Of these 7 complaints, 1 was upheld.

3 Policy

The complaints procedures were reviewed in early 2012 and approved by Management Team. The new procedures came into effect on 1st April 2012 and are made available to the public at all Borough Council reception points and facilities and can also be downloaded from the Borough Council website <http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=21672>

4 Financial

There is no specific budget allocated for the compensation of complaints as each case is considered on its own merits. In 2014/15, 4 complaints were awarded a total of £310 between them.

5 Risk Assessment

To ensure a fair and transparent service, it is imperative that the Council's complaints are dealt with effectively and in accordance with procedure to ensure that the Borough Council is subject to minimal challenges. As a result, this should result in less cost implications and subsequently less bad publicity.

6 Access to Information

Formal Ombudsman Report 2014/15.

Historic complaints records

SUMMARY OF JUSTIFIED CORPORATE COMPLAINTS**April 2014 – March 2015**

Service Area	Ref	Justified	Summary
Finance	DT01	Justified	Customer's correspondence had not been dealt with in a timely manner and a summons was issued for an incorrect amount.
Finance	DT02	Justified	An error was made on the account, therefore £75.00 refunded for costs incurred.
Finance	DT03	Partially	Claim for damage to car window by Council grass cutter refused by insurance company.
Leisure	CB02	Partially	Wheeled bins not replaced in a suitable position to assist with the needs of the complainant.
Finance	DT06	Justified	Proceedings wrongly issued.
Chief Executive	RH02	Justified	Information withheld incorrectly due to incorrect advice from Housing Officer.
Central	DG04	Justified	Upheld complaint in Complaints Summary on R&P Report 2013-14 not recorded due to clerical error.
Central	DG01	Partially	Incurred extra costs due to remedial works not being fully funded.
Central	DG05	Justified	Upheld complaint in Complaints Summary on R&P Report 2013-14 not recorded due to clerical error.
Leisure	CB03	Justified	Complainant did not receive a response to his original request after being sent a holding letter.
Planning	GH11	Justified	Complainant did not receive a personal response to a submission.
Planning	GH10	Partially	Believed that the consultation process is flawed.

APPENDIX B

OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT

Planning	GH12	Upheld	The Council should have written to complainant about the decision on abandonment.
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