



Executive Committee

No Direct Ward Relevance

22 September 2009

QUARTERLY MONITORING OF FORMAL COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS QUARTER 1, APRIL 2009 – JUNE 2009

(Report of the Head of Strategy and Partnerships/Head of Customer & IT Services)

1. Summary of Proposals

This report provides a view on aspects of the Council's Formal Complaints Procedure. It shows the numbers of complaints at each Stage (Formal, Complaint Appeal and Ombudsman), whether they were responded to on target and what has been learnt/service improvements that have been made.

The report also shows the compliments recorded during the same period and the Ombudsman 'Annual Review 2008/09'.

This report provides Members with an opportunity to review the Council's performance for quarter 1 of the 2009/10 financial year and to comment upon it.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

the update on complaints and compliments for the period April 2009 – June 2009 be noted and commented upon.

3. Financial, Legal, Policy, Risk and Sustainability Implications

Financial

- 3.1 Poor performance may have an impact on the financial position of the Authority.

Legal

- 3.2 No particular legal issues arising from this report – any legal issues arising from complaints or compliments are dealt with on a case by case basis.

Policy

- 3.3 No particular issues arising from this report – any policy issues arising from complaints or compliments are dealt with on a case by case basis.

Risk

- 3.4 Without analysing the Council's complaints or compliments, the Council cannot identify whether there are any patterns to complaints / compliments which need to be addressed and any lessons learned in order to improve the Council's performance and service to the Customer.

Sustainability / Environmental

- 3.5 No particular issues arising from this report – any issues arising from complaints or compliments are dealt with on a case by case basis.

Report

4. Background

- 4.1 The Council's Formal Complaints Procedure has the following stages:

Formal Complaint	Relevant Director/Head of Service for that service area responds. Target for response 10 working days.
Complaint Appeal	Joint Chief Executive investigates and responds. Target for response 10 working days.
Member Complaint Appeal	Panel of Members consider complaint. Committee Services respond on Panel's behalf. No target set for response time.
Ombudsman	Joint Chief Executive investigates and responds. Target of 28 working days (set by Ombudsman)

- 4.2 This is the first time that such information has been reported to Committee, including the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review 2008/09.
- 4.3 Quarterly reporting is intended to drive improvement based on organisational need and local priorities.

- 4.4 A report 'Reviewing and Refreshing the Complaints Procedure' is due to be brought to Executive in September 2009.

5. **Key Issues**

Basis of Quarterly Reporting

- 5.1 The report sets out the statistical details of Formal Complaints, Complaint Appeals, Member Complaint Appeals and Ombudsman Enquiries.
- 5.2 This will enable a baseline to be set for further reporting and monitoring. Member involvement in monitoring performance for the remainder of the 2009/10 reporting year will involve:

Quarter	Period	Member Group	Purpose of reporting
2	July – Sept	November Executive Committee / Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Receive quarter 2 statistics and to recommend improvements to services.
3	Oct – Dec	February Executive Committee / Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Receive quarter 3 statistics and to recommend any improvements to services.
4	Jan – Mar	May Executive Committee / Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Receive annual outturn statistics and to recommend any improvements to services.

- 5.3 The response times for Formal Complaints and Complaint Appeals needs to be improved and actions have been put in place to achieve this. Currently only 50% are responded to within the 10 working day target.
- 5.4 There are a number of reason for these delays:
- a) time taken to investigate and receive information from officers, especially if other agencies are involved.

-
- b) to investigate those for housing, officers may need to contact tenants for access. Normally cards are left and in some cases have to write to the tenant to arrange a date. This can then delay the date for replying formally to the complaint.
 - c) administrative delays i.e:
 - i) officer responding has been on leave;
 - ii) information received from officers but Director has required additional information;
 - iii) waiting for HofS to agree draft letter.
- 5.5 Holding letters are sent if there is a delay to keep the Complainant informed.
- 5.6 To improve performance:
- a) there will be closer control on response times and Officers administering the complaints process will be much stricter.
 - b) If requests for information are sent to non-Town Hall offices, they will be scanned and e-mailed, as well as sending a hard copy to speed up response times.
 - c) Officers keeping records to track where there are delays and the reason.

This is the process used successfully to improve the Ombudsman response times.

- 5.7 The Audit Commission monitors the Ombudsman Response times and these are used in Audit Commission reports/reviews including Direction of Travel and Service Reviews.
- 5.8 The Ombudsman Response times have improved greatly over the past two years, following efforts by Officers:

Year	Number of Enquiries	RBC average days
06/07	8	39.6 days
07/08	6	26.7 days
08/09	5	14.6 days

- 5.9 Appendix five provides the detailed report from the Ombudsman.

6. Other Implications

Asset Management - None specific.

Community Safety - None specific.

Human Resources - None specific.

Social Exclusion - None specific.

7. **Lessons Learnt**

Appendix 4 shows the lessons learnt and service improvement.

8. **Background Papers**

The details to support the information provided within this report are held by Joint Chief Executive/Directors/Personal Assistants.

9. **Consultation**

There has been no consultation other than with relevant Borough Council Officers.

10. **Author of Report**

The author of this report is Susan Tasker (Senior Personal Assistant), who can be contacted on ext. 3299 (e-mail: susan.tasker@redditchbc.gov.uk) for more information.

11. **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Monitoring data 1st Quarter (April-June).

Appendix 2: Quarterly Complaints Statistics.

Appendix 3: Quarterly Compliments Statistics.

Appendix 4: What has been learnt and Service Improvements

Appendix 5: Local Government Ombudsman - Annual Review 2008/09

Appendix 5a: Covering letter e-mailed document;

Appendix 5b: Local Authority Report – Redditch BC;