

**Report to:** Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016

**Lead Member/Officer:** Lead Member for Customers and Libraries  
Principal Manager: Business Support

**Report Author:** Corporate Complaints Officer

**Title:** Your Voice report – Q3 2015/16

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**1. What is the report about?**

1.1 The report provides an overview of compliments, suggestions and complaints received by Denbighshire County Council under the council's customer feedback policy 'Your Voice' during Q3 2015/16.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

2.1 To enable the Committee to fulfil its scrutiny role in relation to the council's performance in dealing with customer feedback.

2.2 To provide the Committee with information regarding specific examples where council services have been learning from complaints (Appendix 2).

2.3 To provide the Committee with information regarding the process for dealing with complaints about commissioned services (Appendix 3).

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

3.1 That the Committee note the content of this report and, if appropriate, identify any areas that require further scrutiny.

**4. Report details**

4.1 Headlines for Q3 (please see Appendix 1 for further detail):

- The council received 96 complaints during Q3 (down 21% compared to Q2).
- The council received 106 compliments during Q3 (up 19% compared to Q2).
- The council received 12 suggestions during Q3 (one more than Q2).
- There has been a downward trend in the overall number of complaints received during the past 4 years (Chart 3: Appendix 1). Changes to the way in which complaints are now recorded account for this in part, but the number of complaints received continues to reduce year on year.

#### 4.2 Performance – Quarter 3 2015/16

- 89% (80/90) of stage 1 complaints were responded to within the 'Your Voice' timescale (10 working days). This does not meet the corporate target of 95%.
- Chart 1 in Appendix 1 provides a four year trend of performance in relation to responding to stage 1 complaints. Of the fifteen quarters highlighted, the target was met four times.
- 73% (11/15) of stage 2 complaints were responded to within the 'Your Voice' timescale (20 working days). This does not meet the corporate target of 95%.
- Chart 2 in Appendix 1 provides a four year trend of performance in relation to responding to stage 2 complaints. Of the fifteen quarters highlighted, the target was met five times.
- 90% (81/90) of complaints were successfully dealt with at stage 1, e.g. they did not escalate to stage 2 of the procedure.
- Two service areas are highlighted as having RED status for stage 1 complaints (table 1, appendix 1). RED status means less than 90% of stage 1 complaints were dealt with within the timescale of 10 working days:

**Education:** 1 complaint received, and 1 complaint not dealt with within timescale:

- The complaint concerned a member of staff who was off sick and could not be interviewed immediately.

**Planning and Public Protection:** receive a high volume of complaints, due to the nature of their work. In Q3, the service received 29 stage one complaints, 23 of these were responded to within timescale, however 6 were late. This was mainly due to the complexity of the issues raised which involved much investigation. The service has stated that they would rather provide a quality response, which may take longer, than a sub-standard response which does not address all the issues and more likely to be escalated to the next stage. However, the service will review their processes and try to respond within timescale in future to improve their performance. The service has provided the following additional information in relation to the 6 complaints which missed the deadline:

1. Investigating officer on leave when letter of complaint received. Upon return a holding response was sent by email after unable to contact by phone. Further delays as relevant officer was away from office as a result of training, leave and site visits.
2. Investigating officer on leave shortly after complaint received. On return the officer was aware that the complainant had appealed against the decision made by the relevant officer and it was necessary to consult with the adjudicator on that outcome as to whether the complaint would be addressed also. Additionally, the relevant officer was away from office as a result of training, leave and site visits.
3. Complex case.

4. Complex case involving partnership.
  5. Complex case.
  6. Response was due over Christmas period and much work is required to investigate such a complaint and attempts will be made in future to achieve deadlines.
- One service area is highlighted as having AMBER status for stage 1 complaints (table 1, appendix 1). AMBER status means between 90% - 95% of stage 1 complaints were dealt with within the timescale of 10 working days:

**Highways:** 35 complaints received, and 3 complaints not dealt with within timescale:

1. Customer's refusal to pay an invoice and a subsequent insurance claim delayed the response.
  2. It was unclear which service the complaint related to initially. Once this was established the complaint was dealt with promptly.
  3. This complaint concerned school transport and education officers attempted to resolve it before passing it on. Once passed to the service, the complaint was dealt with within ten working days.
- One service area is highlighted as having RED status for stage 2 complaints (table 2, appendix 1). RED status means less than 90% of stage 2 complaints were dealt with within the timescale of 20 working days:

**Planning and Public protection:** 6 complaints received, and 4 complaints not dealt with within timescale:

1. This was a complex case requiring professional input. Communication was exchanged between officers and the complainant during the investigation. Four FOI requests were also received from the complainant, during the investigating period.
2. Several correspondence received from the complainant during the investigation and many issues needed to be addressed. A site meeting was also held between DCC officers and North Wales Police, which delayed the process.
3. The investigating officer had other work pressures which resulted in this complaint being late.
4. This was a complex case where we had to liaise with officers at Liverpool City Council and conduct a site visit, which resulted in response being delayed.

#### 4.3 Social Services complaints performance in Quarter 3:

- 5 out of 6 (83%) Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within the expected timescales during Quarter 3. The written response for the complaint exceeding timescales was sent out three days after the deadline due to workload pressures. The complaint related to Children & Family Services.

- 1 out of 1 (100%) of stage 2 complaints were dealt with within the expected timescales during Quarter 3.

#### 4.4. Complaints about commissioned services:

- In the previous meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee, Members asked for information regarding the process for dealing with complaints about commissioned services. Appendix 3 includes an extract from the Your Voice procedural document which describes this process. Currently, these complaints are included in the overall figures, for example complaints about Civica are included within complaints about Revenues & Benefits, and complaints about Kingdom Security (who are commissioned by Planning and Public Protection and issue Fixed Penalty Notices on our behalf) are included within complaints about Planning and Public Protection. This is something we are working on, and in future we intend to identify these complaints separately within the report.

#### **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

The Your Voice scheme directly contributes to the corporate priority of: *Modernising the Council*.

#### **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

All costs relating to customer feedback are absorbed within existing budgets.

#### **7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.**

This is a performance report and no decision is being sought to make any changes that would impact on staff or the community. Therefore an EqIA is not required for this report.

#### **8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

Monthly reporting to the Senior Leadership Team.

#### **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

There are no obvious financial implications arising from the report.

#### **10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

By not dealing with complaints effectively, the reputation of the Council may suffer.

#### **11. Power to make the Decision**

Articles 6.1 and 6.3.4(b) of the Council's Constitution outlines the Committee's powers with respect to complaints and service's performance.

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