

Report to: Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 9th June 2016

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

Report Author: Corporate Complaints Officer

Title: Your Voice report – Q4 2015/16

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 Q4 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).

3. What are the Recommendations?

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

4. Report details

- 4.1 Headlines for Q4 (please see appendix 1 for further detail):

- The council received 121 complaints during Q4 (26% more than Q3). The overall total number for the year is 418 stage 1 complaints, and 56 stage 2 complaints. As discussed at the meeting on 17th March 2016, the number of complaints per quarter tends to fall within the range between 80 and 150, and officers agreed that it would be worth doing some additional analysis if we see numbers outside of that range (particularly if the numbers are ever significantly higher than 150).
- The council received 120 compliments during Q4 (13% more than Q3).
- The council received 30 suggestions during Q4 (more than twice as many than Q3).

Performance – Q4 2015/16

- 87% (103/118) 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 sixteen quarters highlighted, the target was only met four times. However, as previously discussed with the committee, the corporate targets are purposely very ambitious, and to meet the targets would represent a position of “excellence”.
- 100% (9/9) of stage 2 complaints were responded to within the ‘Your Voice’ timescale (20 working days). This exceeds the corporate target of 95%, and should therefore be considered as “excellent” performance.
- Chart 2 in appendix 1 provides a four year trend of performance in relation to responding to stage 2 complaints. Of the sixteen quarters highlighted, the target was met six times.
- 97% (115/118) of complaints were successfully dealt with at stage 1, e.g. they did not escalate to stage 2 of the procedure.
- Five 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. Further detail regarding the complaints where timescales were exceeded for those services are provided below:

Planning and Public Protection

- i. The planning department did not receive the letter of complaint for several days after the council had received it. It is not certain where or why the letter had been delayed but this reduced the time given for planning to investigate and respond to the complaint.
- ii. The Investigating Officer spoke to the complainant on the telephone twice to substantiate and clarify a serious allegation against an officer. The lack of substantiated evidence to support the allegations led to the delay, through no fault of the Investigating Officer.
- iii. No specific reason for delay (1 day late), but much work is required to investigate such a complaint and attempts will be made in future to achieve deadlines.
- iv. Attempts were made to meet the complainant, which delayed the process. The complainant was contacted by telephone on the target date and agreement was reached to follow up the telephone conversation in writing the following week.
- v. There has been a lot of communication (emails and telephone calls) between the Investigating Officer and the complainant around this case, even though a formal letter of response is yet to be sent.
- vi. A high volume of complaints have been received regarding the increase in car park charges and we are trying to respond to them all within time-scale, but on this occasion we failed to respond within the deadline by 4 days.

Legal, HR and Democratic Services/ Revenues and Benefits

- i. The complaint related to several different issues and teams. The information was provided promptly but the full response addressing all of the issues was not ready within timescale.

Education

- i. The delay in being able to respond was due to the coordination of a number of services, including the school, in meeting with parent to address the concern.

Library Service

- i. One complaint was late as a result of staff illness. Three other complaints were late due to a lack of clarity around process, roles and responsibilities. This has now been addressed.

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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