

**Report To:** Performance Scrutiny Committee  
**Date of Meeting:** 18 October 2012  
**Lead Member / Officer:** Jackie Walley, Head of Customers and Education Support  
**Report Author:** Steven Goodrum, Corporate Complaints Officer  
**Title:** Performance standards revealed through the Complaints process

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**1 What is the report about?**

To present analysis of the feedback received via Denbighshire County Council's customer feedback policy 'Your Voice' for Quarter 1 of 2012/13. The report will also highlight areas of work currently being undertaken to improve performance.

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

To provide information regarding any performance issues identified by 'Your Voice', and to make recommendations to address these accordingly.

**3 What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 That the Committee notes the suggestions about improving council performance in terms of complaints handling.
- 3.2 Members to suggest any additional performance information they wish to be included in future reports.

**4 Report details**

Highlights

The Council's overall response times to complaints according to the 'Your Voice' timescales have improved significantly in Quarter 1, with 91% responded to within timescale. Although still short of the corporate target this is up from 64% in the previous.

The authority received 177 compliments during quarter 1 which was an increase of over 70% on the previous quarter. It was also the highest volume for over 12 months.

Complaint response times

Following the presentation at the Performance Scrutiny Meeting on 28 June 2012, greater emphasis has been placed on monitoring service response times to complaints. Services have been reminded how to use the corporate system for recording and updating complaints and

they have been provided with reports highlighting outstanding complaints.

Quarter 1 closed at the end of June 2012 so the impact of the recommendations from Committee was too late to measure. However, there has been a noticeable improvement in the overall performance of the council in responding to complaints within the 'Your Voice' timescales – up to 91% in Quarter 1 compared to only 64% in Quarter 4.

Despite falling below the corporate target, both Housing Services and Social Services have shown an improvement from previous quarters. With the additional measures proposed in this report it is anticipated that this upward trend will continue for these and all services.

Despite the overall number of recorded complaints received in Quarter 1 increasing by 18%, the volumes remain relatively low, averaging 30-40 complaints per month across the authority. Despite this only half of the service areas were able to respond to 100% of complaints within the relevant timescale.

#### Improving performance

As a council, we need to improve how we handle complaints. The aim is to respond to at least 95% of complaints within the stated timescales.

We need to demonstrate that we listen to our customers and change things for the better based on what they are telling us.

It is proposed that two generic standards be adopted across the authority:

- **Complaints are handled within timescale;** and
- **Service improvements are made as a result of customer feedback.**

#### *Weekly Service reports*

A weekly report will be circulated to officers responsible for co-ordinating responses to complaints in the services. This will list all of the complaints recorded during the week and any outstanding complaints from previous periods. Its aim is to provide them with information that will help their complaints to be more effectively managed, and to prevent timescales being missed.

#### *Presentation at Middle Managers Conference*

In order to raise the profile of 'Your Voice' and focus attention on enhancing the customer experience, a presentation will be given to all 'Middle Managers' on 17 October 2012.

*Focus on the customer*

In order to improve the confidence that our customers have in the authority we need to demonstrate that we listen and respond to feedback. It is intended that a 'pre-complaint' feedback element is introduced into 'Your Voice' to encourage dialogue and interaction with our customers.

*Recognise good performance*

'Your Voice' is currently referred to as the council's complaints policy. However, it also has a wider context and references Compliments under the banner of 'Feedback'. We want to encourage and recognise this aspect of the policy.

Compliments provide the council with examples of where it is delivering good service and getting things right. If analysed properly then compliments can be used to identify best practice that could be applied to other areas or services within the council.

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

An excellent Council, close to its community.

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

No cost – existing role of Corporate Complaints Officer.

**7 What consultations have been carried out?**

Report to Senior Leadership Team on 20 September 2012.

**8 Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Not applicable.

**9 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.

**10 Power to make the Decision**

Not applicable.