



<b>GA.16 12/13</b>
<b>Committee Governance and Audit</b>
<b>Date 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012</b>

**E**

**Subject: Summary of Feedback (Compliments, Comments and Complaints) 2011/12**

Report by:	Alan Robinson Head of Revenues, Benefits and Central Services
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Purpose / Summary:	To review the number, type and results of complaints, comments and compliments made to the Council during 2011/12 and advise members about the work being undertaken to deliver the Customer Experience Strategy

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**That Members note the 2011/12 results and where appropriate suggest corrective action**

**IMPLICATIONS**

**Legal:**  
None arising from this report.

**Financial :**  
None arising from this report.

**Staffing :**  
None arising from this report.

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**  
*NB: A full impact assessment **HAS TO BE** attached if the report relates to any new or revised policy or revision to service delivery/introduction of new services.*

**Risk Assessment :**  
None arising from this report.

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :**  
None arising from this report.

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**  
None

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

**Yes**

**No**

**Key Decision:**

**Yes**

**No**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 In March 2008 the Corporate Governance Group agreed to submit an annual report to this Committee on Complaints.

1.2 Customers are at the heart of what we do and we need to ensure that our services meet the needs of the customer in terms of:

- Ensuring our services is customer led and designed in collaboration with customers
- That they are accessible to all who want to use them and that we offer a variety of channels through which customers can access our services
- That the outcomes of the services we provide deliver the outcomes customers need

1.3 The customer first program, approved November 2010, aims to deliver Customer Led Services, Effective Appropriate Access for all delivering better outcomes.

1.4 To make this program a reality a Customer Experience Strategy has been developed which will:

- Improved access to public sector services for all by providing fully transactional services via the website and other electronic means.
- Improve services to customers by learning from all types of customer feedback.
- Will provide customer led services, co-designed by empowering customers and sharing all relevant information.
- Will identify service failure
- Information about our customers will be used to inform our decisions about service offerings, current and future delivery and investments.
- We will use information about demand to understand customer requirements
- Challenge and monitor the in-depth reviews to ensure customer focus adequate
- Poor customer behaviour by staff will be challenged and we will reward and recognise good customer behaviour by staff

The strategy will be monitored via the Entrepreneurial Board receiving regular updates

A programme has been put together for five key areas

- Channel Shift – we are to commence a programme of guiding customers through the website so that they can request services via the website

- Website Content – a review of all website content has commenced with a view to making the website more customer focused with the ability to access at least 80% of our services via the web on a 24/7 basis.
  - Customer Focused service – a pilot is underway within the planning section to ensure that this team becomes more customer focused in providing its services. This means implementing a range of options to improve initial customer satisfaction through to longer term initiatives. This pilot will then be rolled out across the Council.
  - Customer care training – all staff to undertake this training commencing in November onwards. Once trained, staff will be expected to deliver good customer service and failure to do so may result in disciplinary proceedings.
  - Customer Insight – work will commence on understanding why our customers access our services the way they do, what are our top 10 demands, what are our top 10 failures, what are the current needs of our customers and what will be future needs.
- 1.5 A Customer focus group has been set up consisting of Councillors Howitt-Cowan and Welburn, Mark Sturgess, Emma Redwood, Alan Robinson and Lyn Marlow with our first meeting set for 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Complaints are recorded by the Customer Services team and are dealt with in accordance with the Council's Complaints Comments and Compliments procedure.

## **3. Analysis of Complaints for 2011/12**

- 3.1 A total of 204 complaints were received in 2011/2012 but 17 of these are from the same customers who requested that their complaint be investigated at stages 2 and 3 of our process.
- 3.2 This is an increase of 12 complaints and does not represent significant change especially when you consider that council has experienced a busy year with a number of changes to services such as closure of green garden waste over the winter period and the introduction of a chargeable pre-application service for planning applications.
- 3.3 The council is also still receiving regular complaints in relation to noise from armaments testing at Faldingworth Defence Ltd (formerly (Skydock) from specific members of the community who object to the legitimate use of the site for this purpose.
- 3.4 The 6 main areas for complaints are Development Management including enforcement (59), Operational Services (52), Housing Services including Community Safety (31), Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services (18), Public Protection (18) and Technical and Contracts which includes Building control (14) (see appendix A)

- 3.5 **Development Management** – There were a total of 59 complaints received for this service during 2011/2012. The majority of issues related to matters around planning consent, general planning complaints in relation to lack of enforcement and how customers were dealt with by staff. This needs to be put into context that we successfully granted 747 planning applications in 2011/2012.
- 3.6 **Operational Services** – There were 52 complaints received for this service in 2011/2012 – a reduction of 20 complaints since 2010/2011 and this was despite changes to rounds, the reduction of green bin collections during the winter months. 10 of the complaints received were in relation to this suspension. 16 complaints related to repeated missed collections of which 5 were missed bins of those customers who receive an assisted collection, with 13 complaints about bins not being returned to the correct location. This has to be set in context that operational services visit 41,101 properties on a weekly basis to collect some form of waste from these properties and this does not include additional service such as bulky waste or sharps collections.
- 3.7 **Housing Services and community Safety** – There were 31 complaints for these services in 2011/2012. The majority were in relation to lack of funding for Disability Facilities Grant's (DFG), the behaviour of staff and enforcement issues. There has been an increase in complaints in this area but when dealing with Anti Social Behaviour and enforcement issues that is to be expected.
- 3.8 **Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services** – There were 18 complaints for these services for 2011/2012, an increase of two from the previous year. This small increase is to be expected as more customers are struggling financially so therefore apply for Housing Benefit, are late in making Council Tax payments or subject to bailiff action.
- 3.9 **Public Protection** – There were 18 complaints for these services for 2011/2012. This represents an increase of 7 from the previous year but of the 18 complaints 9 were in relation to noise from armaments testing at Faldingworth Defence Ltd, with 4 complaints being made by the same person. It is anticipated that complaints in relation to Faldingworth Defence Ltd will not cease whilst armaments testing operations continue.
- 3.10 **Technical and Contract Services** – There were 14 complaints for this service in 2011/2012. In 2010/2011 this service attracted only 4 complaints. The increase is down to a number of factors, the building control team did form part of this service and that attracted 3 complaints during 2011/2012 and we had 4 complaints in relation to the issuing of parking fines, this can be attributed to the economic climate.
4. **Local Government Ombudsman**
- 4.1 There were a total of 9 enquiries to the Local Government Ombudsman, which is a reduction of 8 from 2010/2011.
- 4.2 Of the 9 enquiries 6 were classed as premature complaints, 1 of the premature complaints was forwarded to the investigation team for a full investigation and 2 enquiries were submitted direct to the investigation team following representations from customers.

- 4.3 This means that only 4 cases were submitted for full LGO investigations, in 2010/2011 7 cases were submitted for full LGO investigations.
- 4.4 Of these 4, 1 was closed by LGO due to lack of evidence, 2 found no injustice and 1 case was found to have caused injustice.
- 4.5 The case of injustice was that we failed to allow the customer the opportunity to purchase some land from the Council, this has resulted in the Council having to pay for a fence to put installed at the boundary, relocation of a shed and plants and £400 compensation. Internally the work around this case is still ongoing.
- 4.6 In last years report we highlight a concern in that our average days to response to LGO enquiries was 38.8 compared with 20.5 the previous and it was identified that the Customer Services Team Leader would take a more active role in monitoring and progress chasing. This year we are pleased to report that our average days to respond are back down to 20 days and it is hoped to reduce this further during this 2012/2013.

## 5. **Complaints system**

- 5.1 Complaints are currently logged using share point and work is underway with the Business Transformation team to migrate to Minerva over the coming months and at the same time put in place improvements to the recording and monitoring of complaints. You will see in Appendix B that we are now capturing complaints by locality and this has been a recent improvement.
- 5.2 With the migration to Minerva we will capture complaint as work strands rather than actual services e.g. Public protection will be captured as food, health and safety, licensing and environmental health.
- 5.3 The migration to Minerva will also allow for more timely, accessible and relevant reports to be produced without too much officer intervention and on a regular basis so that problems can be identified and rectified quickly in order to reduce further complaints and therefore protect the reputation of the council.

## 6. **Compliments**

- 6.1 In addition to complaints we capture compliments and comments. These are show in Appendix C with a flavour of the types of compliments and comments we receive in Appendix D

## 7 **You said we did**

- 7.1 During the year we have captured learning from some complaints and it is intended that this will become a permanent feature of our ¼ reports and this annual report from now on. See Appendix E for details for

## 8. **Conclusion**

- 8.1 This report sets out comprehensive information on complaints which have and will continue to be used to improve services. Throughout the year all staff will receive training in relation to customer care with Team Managers receiving specific training in relation to complaint management with a view to improving our services and reducing the number of complaints received.

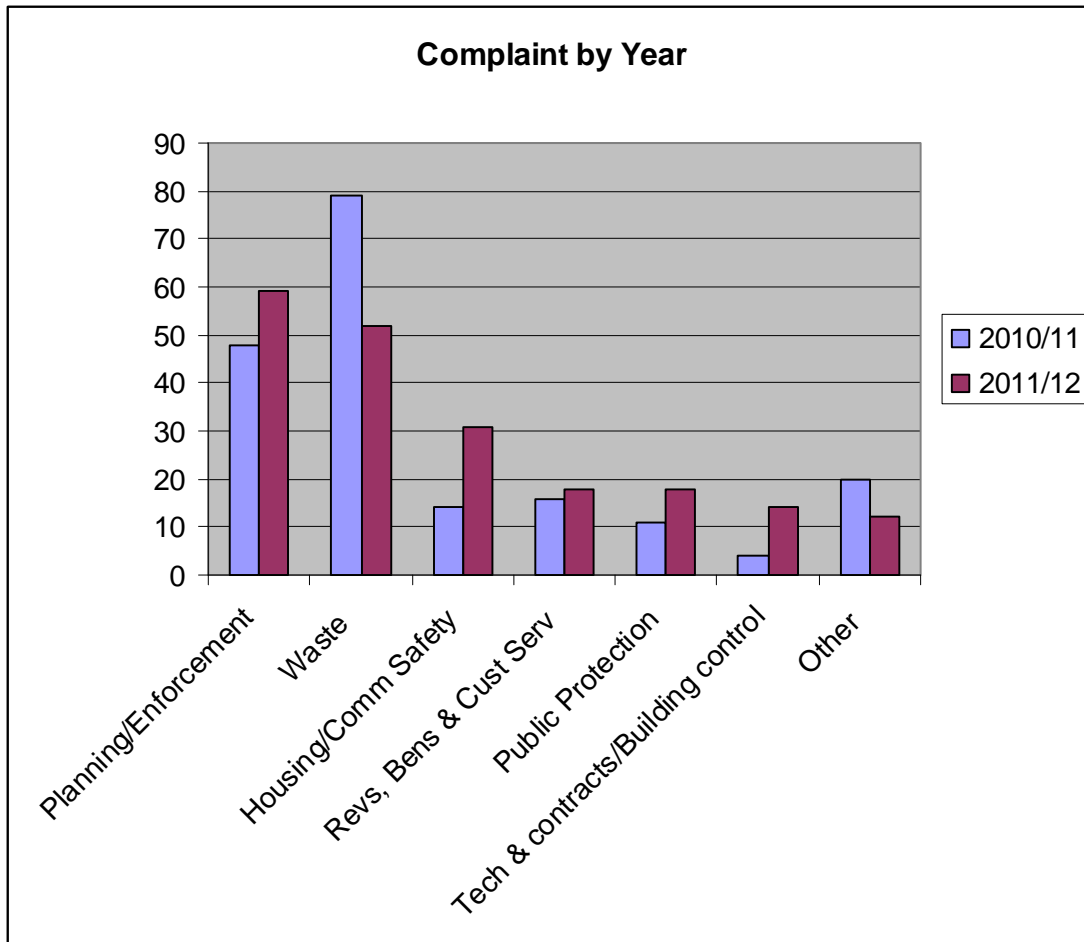
- 8.2 Complaints are not negative and should be seen as a way to positively make improvements but complaints can use a lot of resources in terms of officer time so it make sense to spend time drawing down any learning from complaints.
- 8.3 During 2012/2013 of all our difficult or time consuming complaints from 2011/2012 will be analysed in order to draw learning from them.

**9. Footnote**

- 9.1 During this year we have had a particular difficult complaint to deal with. The complaint was in relation to the issuing of a Building Control Certificate. The complaint has only recently been closed.
- 9.2 Work will commence in September, in conjunction with the customer and the new team manager of the Building Control Section, to understand why we ended up in this situation and to ensure we learn from this difficult complaint.

## Appendix A

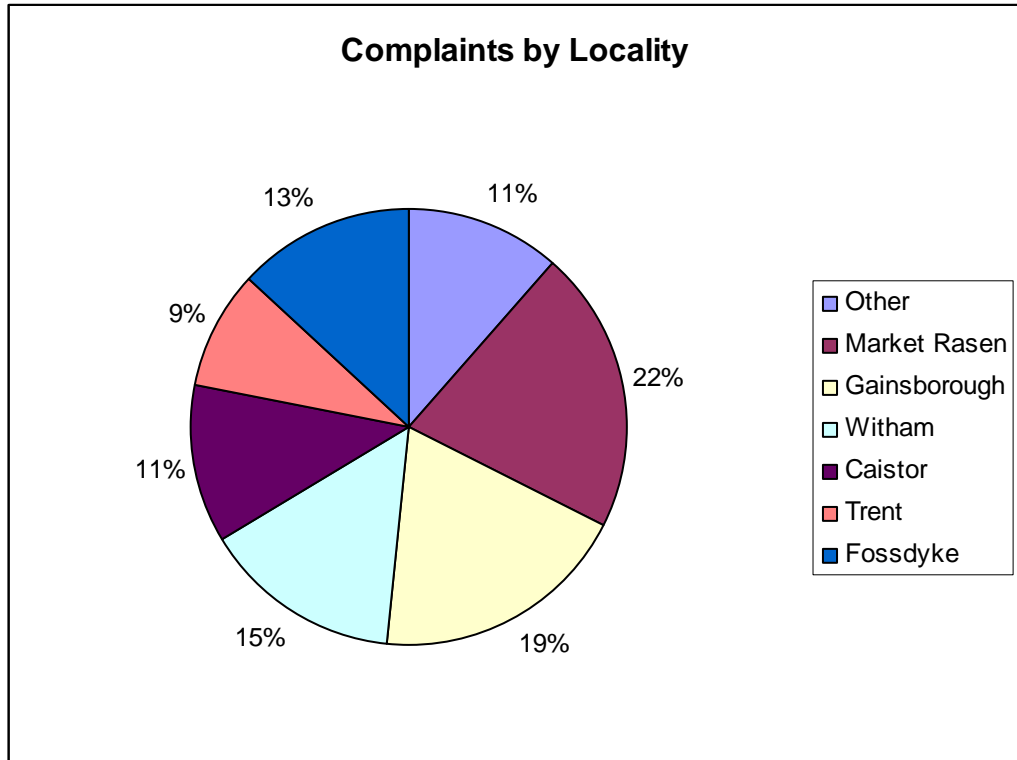
### Complaints by year





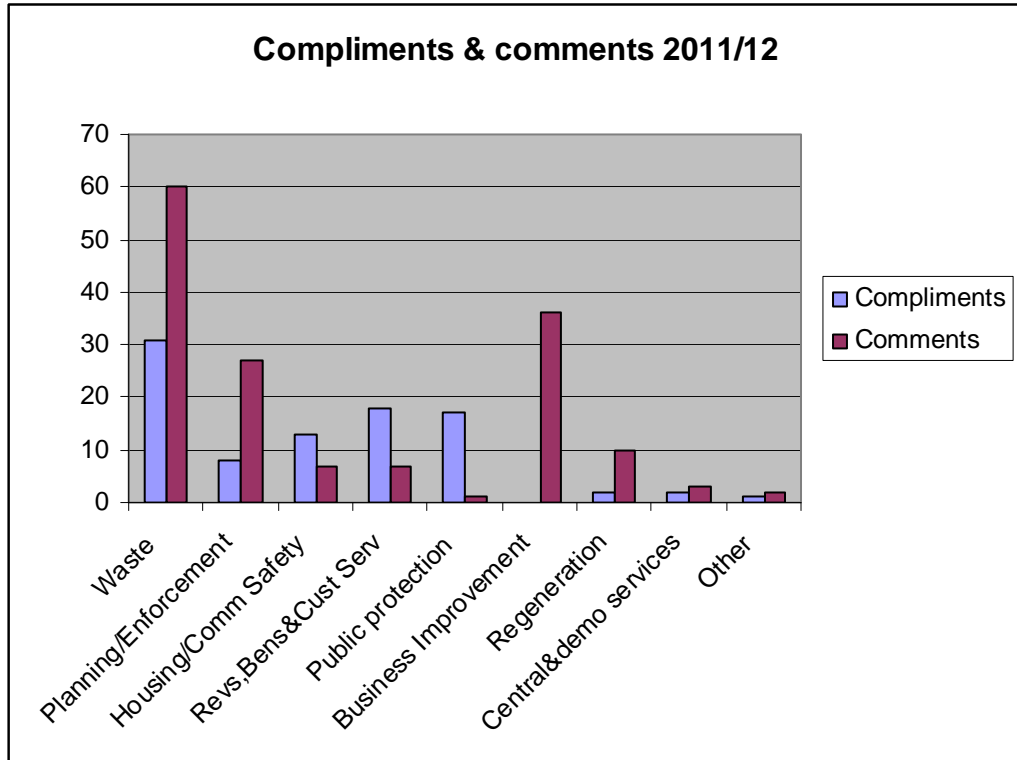
## Appendix B

### Complaints by Locality



## Appendix C

### Compliments and Comments



## Appendix D – Selection of Compliments and Comments

Compliments	Comments
Praise for quality of information supplied to Licensing committee	Looking for horse riding routes close to Grimsby
Thanks to Anthony Adams, from Fiskerton Parish Council, for his effort and hard work in implementing the flood mitigation scheme.	to look at your electoral area could only find reference to Gainsborough wanted to see the councils whole electoral area with villages etc good website i just couldn't find what i was looking for.
Happy with how quickly Disabled Relief applied by Field Officer	Could not find times of churches open this weekend. Would not open when clicked for further information
I would just like to say a big thank you to the team at the West Lindsey Stand at the Lincolnshire Show for all of their hard work, cheerfulness and the friendly way they interacted with visitors to the stand. They did the council proud	Customer wants to know why the bin men collect the bins on North Marsh Road when the school kids are entering the school, approx 8.45am. she is concerned for the safety of the kids. i explained that the crews have a lot of bins to empty and another route might not be appropriate and that the safety of the kids is important and considered by the crews
Thanks from client to Health Trainers for help in 'improving overall fitness and health state.'	A very useful source of local information. Have used it for refuse and recycling information, for looking at proposed planning applications and watching Council meetings online.
Kindness of a crew member	Could not find information on a recommendation to committee
Customer wished to thank West Lindsey for its excellent service. She also said the waste collection was amazing and the 'dustbin men' absolutely fantastic. She also added that the people moving into her property (from outside WL area) will be very lucky.	I have Just read your announcement that green bins will not be collected from November to March. It is by far the silliest thing I have seen. Leaves will be on trees until at least December and weeds continue to grow well into December. All that is going to happen is that I shall have to put garden waste into the black bin. Please be sensible and continue collections into December.
Thank you very much for the time and effort you have taken by looking into the matters raised and by producing such a clear, jargon free, easily understandable report. Corringham P.C. can now respond to the residents who complained to us with positive facts.	information on grants available for installing renewable energy it would be useful if there were more links to external sources of information if the council does not provide a service themselves this does not necessarily mean that the council endorses or recommends

	those services and could include a disclaimer to this effect
Customer would like to express his appreciation to the Community Safety Team for their efforts in how they dealt with his complaint regarding dog fouling. He said the occupant at that address is now clearing up the dog fouling regularly and has not had any problems since the complaint was made.	I could not find the bin dates relating to days after the 14th November. When i clicked the link it opened a page to install Microsoft Silverlight. The installation error due to my processor not powerful enough. I will have to just leave my rubbish on the street in future until you fix your website for everybody's requirements." Make the site accessible to all computer ages, even slow old ones. re:rubbish and recycling
Compliments to Sarah Gamble from Operations Manager of Paragon Printing & Packaging for 'all your help and guidance over the past 18 months which has proven invaluable and allowed us to progress and improve with regard to our permit'	Took several attempts to find what I was looking for. No clear path through the options to find what I needed Simplify the search method, and make items easier to find with fewer steps in the process
I contacted Customer Services earlier today to report a problem with the information re Refuse Collection Calendars for Spridlington. Customer Services staff dealt with my telephone call and who liaised with me to keep me informed of the action being taken by the Refuse Collection Team. The service I received from Customer services was efficient, professional and very impressive. They telephoned me to give me updates and ensured that quick action was taken by the appropriate personnel to resolve the problem which, apparently, affected many other parishes. Please pass on my thanks to the Refuse Collection department for their response and especially to Customer Services staff in your department for handling the contact with me so well.	Data on co2 reduction and planning policy to incorporate carbon reduction measures in new developments. policy on measures to reduce water runoff, sustainable street lighting, and measures to reduce urban heat island effect in urban areas
Customer called he is very chuffed as he has been offered and accepted a flat at Oaklands in Saxilby. He asked me to pass on that he is very happy that it was so quick!	More details about an upcoming event at Gainsborough Old Hall. Phone event directly

**Appendix E** You said – we did examples...

<b>Dept</b>	<b>You said</b>	<b>We did/Will</b>
All	Staff attitude/conduct/lack of response	Customer Care training to be implemented for ALL staff during 2012/2013. Attendance is compulsory
Planning including enforcement	Unhappy that not able to access plans on the website	Work has commenced to ensure that all relevant plans are available on the website as soon as possible
Housing including Community Safety	Unhappy about staff not being available	Duty system now in place but regular meetings take place to ensure that future gaps do not occur
Operational Services	Green bin collection suspension over wrong months  Repeated collection problems for assisted collection	Comments collated & online survey to capture feedback to review for next year  Assisted collections list updated
Public Protection	Information difficult to find on website  Want alert system for noise nuisance issues at Faldingworth	Website amended  Email alert system set up for customers to sign up to which is then updated as soon as the Council is advised of potential testing at the Faldingworth site.
Revs, Bens & Customer Services	Strong wording of standard Single person review discount letter  The website refers to account reference, Council Tax number and payment reference – all of which are the same reference number	Wording changed  Website amended so that throughout it reads Council Tax Reference number