



**GA. 16 15/16**

**Governance and Audit  
Committee**

**28 July 2015**

**C**

**Subject: Annual Customer Feedback report 2014/2015**

Report by:

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Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To review the number, type and results of complaints, comments and compliments made to the Council during 2014/2015, advise on any trends, areas for learning and future management of feedback

**RECOMMENDATION(S): That Members note the 2014/2015 results and where appropriate suggest corrective action**

## IMPLICATIONS

**Legal: None arising from this report**

**Financial : Fin Ref: 48/16**

**Members requested work be carried out to establish the cost of complaints to the council. This piece of work was carried out and is addressed at point 4 of this report**

**Staffing : None arising from this report**

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

*Customers have the ability to make a compliment, comment or complaint in a variety of ways such as face to face, via letter, via the telephone, via email or via the website. When requested our procedure will be provided in alternative formats such as another language or in braille*

**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:**

The Local Government Ombudsman prepare an annual letter which provides details of LGO complaints received and dealt with.

The detail in this letter is used to inform this report but does not accurately reflect the way WLDC captures LGO complaints as each organisation has different reporting methods for the opening and closing of LGO complaints.

Institute of Customer Services "Cost of handling complaints in the public sector 2014"

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

**Yes**

**No**

**x**

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

## Introduction

In March 2008 the Corporate Governance Group agreed to submit an annual report to this Committee on Complaints. Customers are at the heart of what we do and we need to ensure that our services meet the needs of the customer.

This report looks at 3 main areas within feedback. These are compliments, comments and complaints. All 3 are of equal importance in understanding what customers think of the services we provide and give customers an opportunity to formally challenge a decision made by an officer.

In addition customers can also ask that their complaint is ultimately reviewed by the Local Government Ombudsman. The remit of the Local Government Ombudsman is to investigate complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. If there has been fault she considers whether it has caused an injustice and if it has, she may suggest a remedy. (Local Government Act 1974 Sections 26 (1) & 26A (1))

### 1. Background

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

### 2. Analysis of Complaints for 2014/15

- 2.1 A total of 95 complaints were received in 2014/2015 a decrease of 4 complaints from 2013/2014. There is a general downward trend of complaints
- 2011/12 = 204
  - 2012/13 = 133
  - 2013/14 = 99
  - 2014/15 = 95
- 2.2 The continued downward trend is to be welcomed but the experience of those dealing with complaints is that many of the complaints have been more complicated to deal for a variety of reasons.
- 2.3 The Council undertakes more than 1.5million customer interactions in any given year and 95 complaints represent 0.00633% of customer contact becomes a complaint

- 2.4 Below is the detail of complaints received within departments with graphical data shown in Appendix A

**Planning Services, Building Control and Land Charges.**

A total of 22 complaints received during 2014/2015. This equated to 13 for Planning, 6 for Land Charges and 3 for Building Control

**Environmental Health** – A total of 4 complaints received for public protection and 1 for licensing in 2014/2015

**Strategic Growth** includes Housing and Renewal Services, Property and Enforcement – There were 12 complaints equating to 9 for housing, 1 for Property and 2 for Enforcement in 2014/2015.

**Operational services** – There were 21 complaints for this service for 2014/2015.

**Revenues, benefits and customer services** – There were 30 complaints for these services for 2014/2015. Made up as 17 Revenues, 8 Benefits and 5 Customer Services

**Corporate Governance** – There were 2 complaints for this service in 2014/2015.

**Joint Neighbourhoods** – there was 1 complaint for Trinity Arts Centre

**Localism** – there were 3 complaints for this service

### **3 Local Government Ombudsman**

- 3.1 There were a total of 14 enquiries to the Local Government Ombudsman, the majority of which were referred back to go through our complaints process and 5 became full LGO cases.
- 3.2 Of the 5 cases submitted for a full investigation 2 were upheld. In one case a fee was repaid back to the customer and in another an apology was given.

### **4 Cost of complaints**

- 4.1 During the presentation of the 2013/14 feedback report members asked if a piece of work could be undertaken to estimate the cost to the council of dealing with complaints.
- 4.2 A piece of work has been undertaken and over a year based on the 95 complaints we received the cost in staff time amounted a minimum of £30k a year or £314.54 per complaint.
- 4.3 This figure does not take into account any costs of paper for letters, envelopes, postage, reproduction costs, compensation or complaints

that become vexatious or where we need to seek the services of Lincs Legal.

- 4.4 It should also be noted that that this is a minimum figure and is based on the majority of complaints being dealt with relatively quickly from the point the complaint is made e.g. approximately 2 months if the customer wishes to make use of all stages of our procedure and also complain to the local government ombudsman.
- 4.5 It should be noted that more complex complaints can take over 1 year to resolve satisfactorily.
- 4.6 The Institute of Customer services (ICS) has undertaken research into complaints across local authorities and established a minimum figure for dealing with complaints a various stages. It should be noted that not all local authorities took part in the research.\*
- 4.7 By using these figures and aligning that to the number of complaints received at the various stages the minimum spend would be £27,700.00
- 4.8 This means we are spending £2300.00 above the minimum average spend according to ICS research based on the councils that took part.
- 4.9 Work is underway to refine our complaints system and testing is currently underway on the creation of an e-form for complaints which will eliminate the need to officer involvement at the logging of a complaint for the vast majority of complaints received.

## **5. Complaints system**

- 5.1 Monthly reports are now created giving an up to date picture of all compliments, comments and complaints and will feed into the performance management monitoring site within Minerva.
- 5.2 A complaint e-form is under development and this will enable the Customer services team to spend less time logging of complaints from customers as the e-form will automatically integrate to our complaints system

## **6. Compliments and Comments**

- 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.
- 6.2 During 2014/15 we received 449 comments and 438 compliments and work is underway to feed comment into service improvements during 2015/16.

## **7. You said we did**

- 7.1 During the year we have captured learning from some comments and complaints. See Appendix E

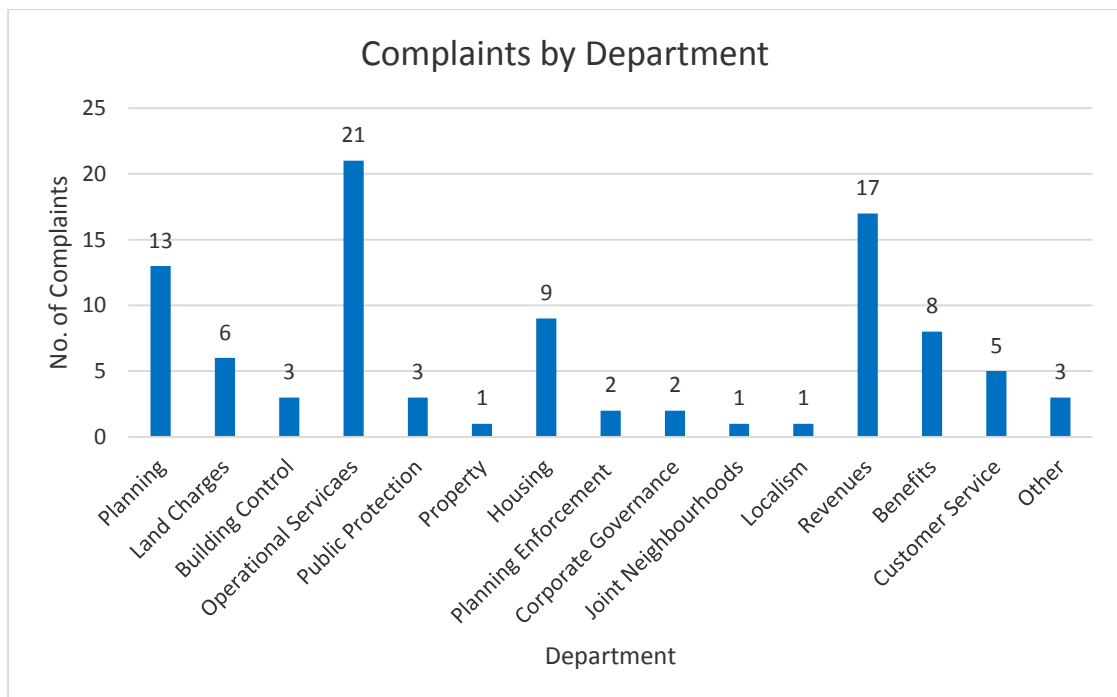
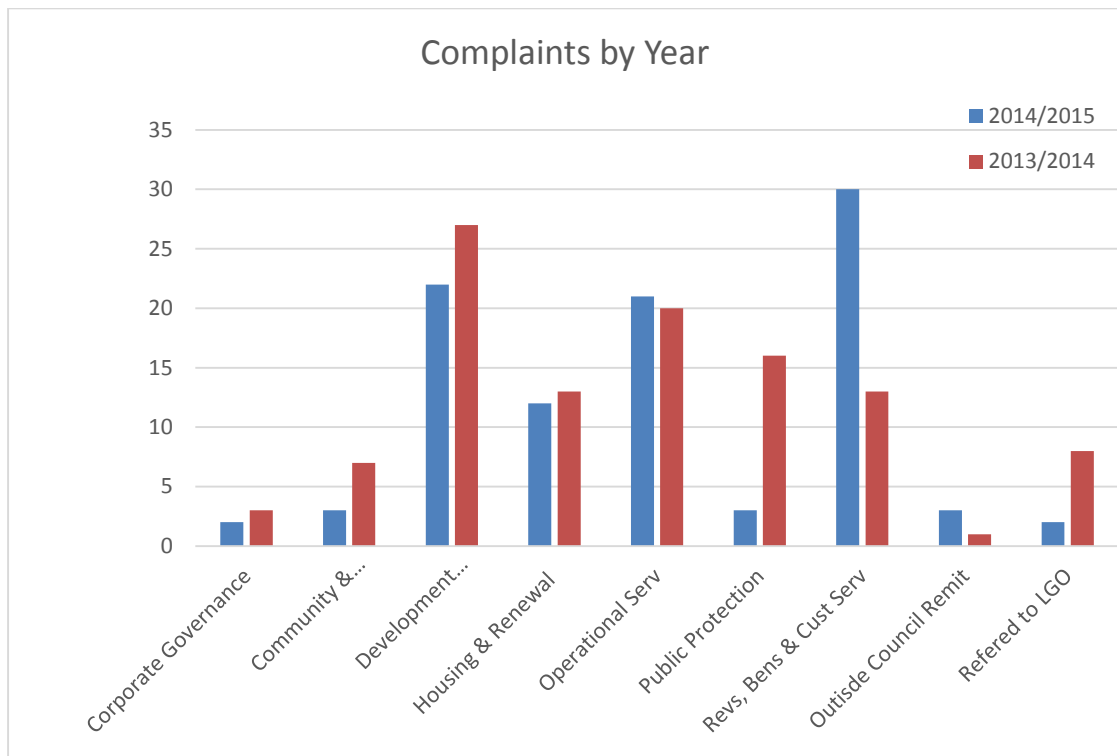
\*ICS report 2014 “Cost of handling complaint in the public sector”

## **8. Conclusion**

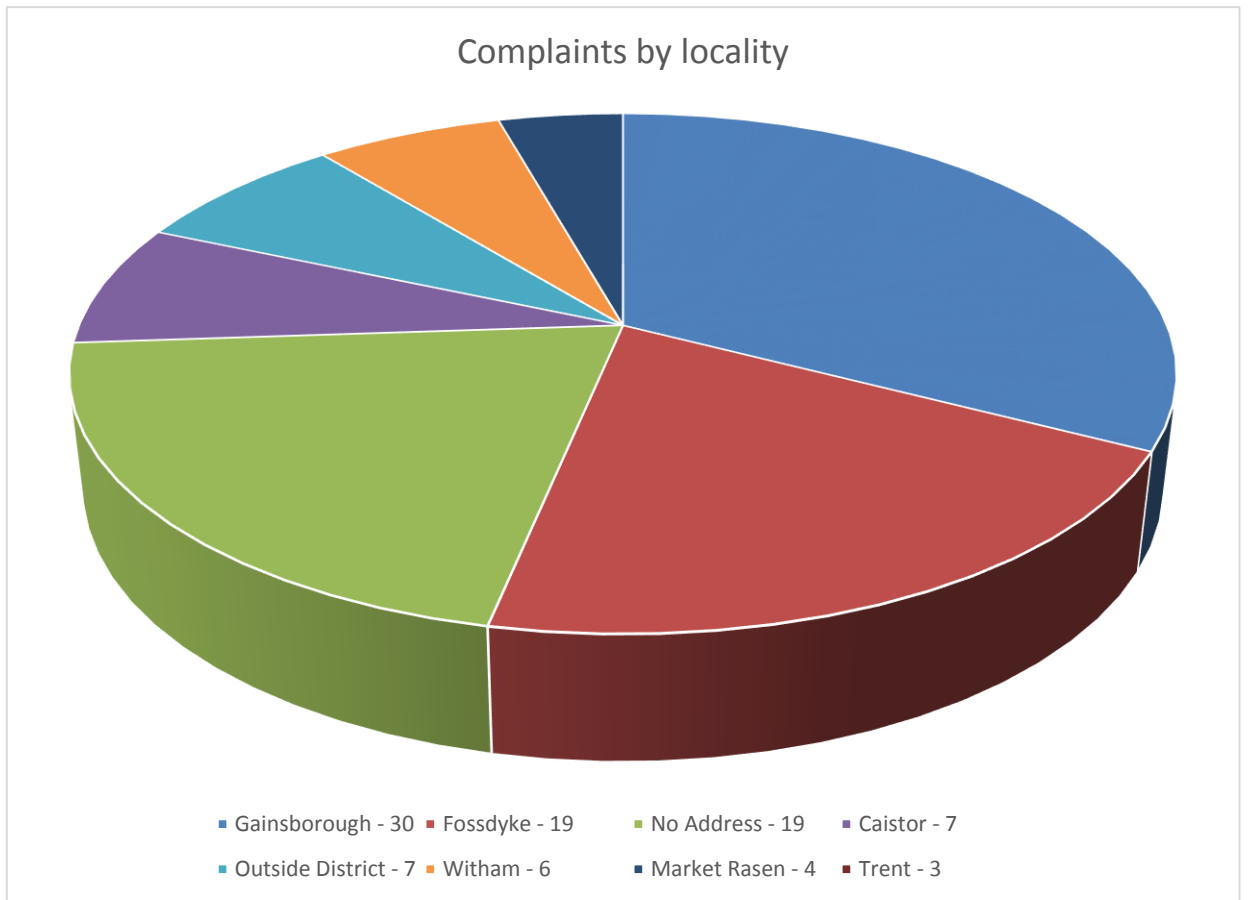
- 8.1 This report sets out comprehensive information on feedback which have and will continue to be used to improve services. Work continues on improving reporting of complaints so that improvements to services can take place.
- 8.2 Quarterly reports will be going to senior leadership team on all the feedback so we can also learn from customer comments as well as complaints
- 8.3 By making use of the council internal systems we will be able to track complaints in real time. Once the new website is installed later this year it is intended to provide customers with more information relating to all aspects of feedback.

## Appendix A

Complaints received by year and department for 2013/14 and 2014/15



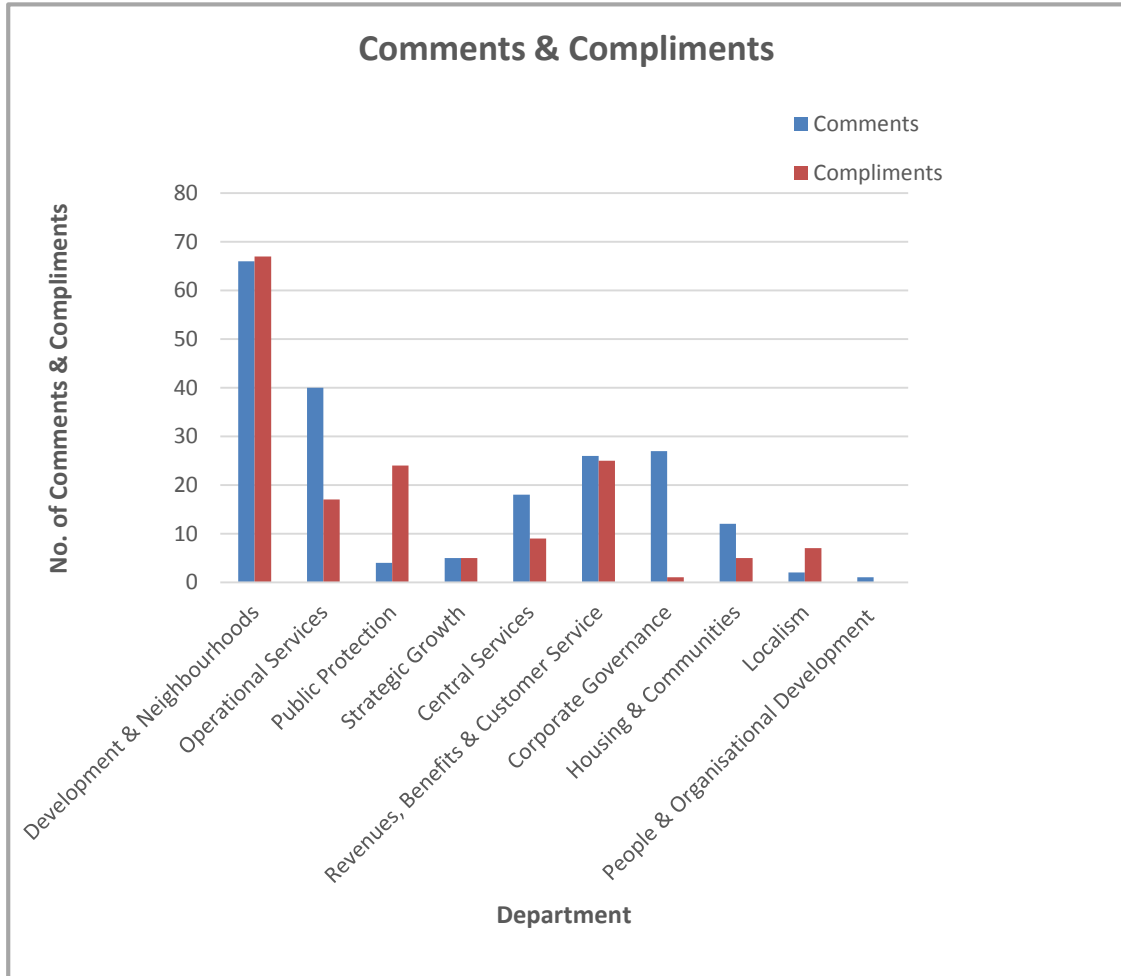
Appendix B





## Appendix C

### Compliments and Comments 2014/15



## Appendix D – Selection of Compliments and Comments

<b>Compliments</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Superb standard of customer service given from Building Control team	I was looking for a way to email council tax directly but could not
I've just had a delightful exchange with a lady in customer services and she was just lovely. She was bright, welcoming and helpful and her telephone manner was such that I went away from the call feeling 'smiley' if you see what I mean	Customer couldn't find information on renewable energy
My husband and I came to the Alfie Moore Comedy Show yesterday evening and we thoroughly enjoyed it. I have never been to the Arts Centre before and it was lovely, we'll definitely be back thank you so much for a memorable evening.	Used WLDC website to find out bonfire regulations
Thanks for hard work of all the ASB team to improve an area in the community	Customer unable to make a noise complaint on WLDC website
A thank you for the friendly, helpful advice given and prompt call back from Food Health and Safety	Consider changing the way in which empty properties are listed instead of referring to another site which may inconvenience people.
For Housing – Thank you so much for all your help, you were so kind and helpful. We really appreciate it	Customer was unable to find information on renewable energy for domestic properties, or on approved contractors
I just wanted to say a heartfelt thank you to you and anyone else who helped to bring about this wonderful wet room for me – I am grateful	Customer using website to find information for elderly father in regard to rented accommodation no longer being suitable. Overall satisfied
Thank you for our hard work and she really appreciated us getting her Pest Control problem sorted quickly.	Would find it useful if council tax banding was on the website
Thank you very much for your guidance and support from pre- app to approval. We could not have asked for a more helpful and encouraging guide through the whole process.	Wanted information on disabled facilities grants: Sent an e-mail instead. Dissatisfied with value of information, happy with everything else.

<p>I would like to say thank you for your help and guidance as part of the pre application service, I would be delighted to tell whoever would be appropriate what a flexible, responsive and professional service you offer.</p>	<p>I really do not find this a user friendly site. You get so far then you are sent round in circles. Very poor. Why do you have this so called "Human Test" Is it because the ED does not connect outside the four walls of work!</p>
<p>Thanks for your response and it does indeed sufficiently address the need for the flood defences for my Mum and Dad and their neighbour. They have said that they have been really appreciative of the help and support you have given them to get this moving along and I can only echo that! Once again, thanks for all your help with moving this along so swiftly!</p>	<p>Customer couldn't find out information on how to register a person moving into the property</p>

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

<b>Dept</b>	<b>You said</b>	<b>We did/Will</b>
Revenues & Benefits	Customer couldn't find out information on how to register a person moving into the property	E-form developed for customers to complete changes of occupancy and placed on line
Revenues & Benefits	Wanted to arrange direct debit but have to do that by post or telephone	E-form developed for customers to set up Direct Debits online
Public Protection	Customer unable to make a noise complaint on our website	ASB E-form developed and placed on line for customers to report Noisy, rude or threatening behaviour, uncontrolled dogs, joyriding or noisy car radios etc
Customer Services	Customer not able to locate the pay button when making payment on line	The wording has been changed on website to clarify to customer's where to find the pay button
Revenues & Benefits	Trying to find a way to notify or find a form to send in about moving property	Eforms developed and placed on line for customers to report Change of Household Someone has moved in/ moved out of my address and Change of Address The whole household has moved address or I want to register for Council Tax
Operational Services	Wanted to find out which bin to put polystyrene in and I can't find it. I have searched using recycling, polystyrene and blue bin as search terms but no joy	Polystyrene is was included in the A-Z of waste disposal, however the web site search facility does not find words. This word was added to our recycling page.
Operational Services	Customer was querying the point value and charge for bulky waste items and what a double mattress was worth.	This page was amended, as below and double/king sized mattresses are now the same point value. The wording was also changed to clarify charging points system

<p>Development Control - Planning</p>	<p>Too little information about planning applications</p>	<p>We are aware that the planning area of our site is not as user friendly as it should be and we are in the process of planning a large scale re-design that should bring about a number of improvements. We plan to have these in place before the end of the year.</p> <p>The 'Did you find what you were looking for?' form is on all pages so customers can easily give us feedback and we use this to bring about improvements. We have a human test facility in place as without it we get bombarded with SPAM and staff have to spend a large amount of time going through all submissions to find genuine ones. We have tried to make the test as simple as possible for customers without letting spam bots through.</p>
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Report end