

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET

1.	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
2.	<b>Date:</b>	<b>20 October 2010</b>
3.	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Annual Customer Feedback Report 2009/10</b>
4.	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Financial Services Directorate</b>

### 5. Summary

This report outlines the results of the 'Tell Us Your Views' process for the financial year 2009/10. The 'Tell Us Your Views' process is the Council's corporate feedback process and incorporates compliments, comments, suggestions and complaints from customers.

The report also provides information on the key tasks to be addressed in 2010/2011.

### 6. Recommendations

**Cabinet are asked to:**

- **Note the contents of the report.**
- **Refer the report to Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee for their consideration.**

## 7. Proposals and Details

### 7.1 Background

'Tell Us Your Views' is the collective name for the corporate processes the Council has in place to deal with customer feedback. This includes compliments, comments, suggestions and complaints from our customers, excluding those related to Rotherham 2010 Ltd.

Customer feedback is monitored on a monthly basis across all Directorates and reported quarterly to the Corporate Complaints Group, which is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Resources and Commissioning. In addition, the Corporate Complaints Group constantly challenges performance relating to customer feedback through discussion and peer challenge.

### 7.2 Overview of Performance

#### COMPLAINTS

- 633 customers complained to the Council in 2009/2010 raising 911 individual complaints. This is an 8% increase from 2008/09 in the number of customers complaining to the Council and a 19% increase on the number of individual complaints. Significant increases in complaint volumes have been seen within RBT and CYPS.
- RBT have seen a large increase in the number of complaints relating to the Revenues and Benefits Service and plans are underway to re-engineer the service and subsequently improve service levels through enhanced performance management and monitoring.
- CYPS has seen an increase in social care complaints, with the greatest increase seen in the final quarter of the year. The service has experienced high staff turnover and this has led to some long term staff vacancies. This has increased work pressures on those staff remaining and this has meant speed of resolution has been impaired. Many of the complaints are about historic practice and all of these factors have contributed to this increase in complaints. Intensive work is ongoing which is addressing the speed of dealing with complaints, the quality of the stage one investigation and in tackling the behavioural shift which has impaired the quality of service delivery.

Tables 1a and 1b show the change in the number of individual complaints received and the number of people making complaints on last year across all Directorates.

**Table 1a: Individual Complaints**

**Table 1b: Number of Customers Complaining**

	2008/09	2009/10	% difference		2008/09	2009/10	% difference
CEX	5	3	-40	CEX	5	3	-40
CYPS	230	384	67	CYPS	117	139	19
EDS	128	137	7	EDS	128	137	7
Finance	3	2	-33	Finance	3	2	-33
NAS	323	267	-17	NAS	267	250	-6
RBT	74	118	59	RBT	70	102	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>763</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>8</b>

## COMMENTS

The Council has improved the way that we report customer comments during 2009/10, ensuring that we are able to monitor all aspects of customer feedback. Logging customer comments as part of our customer feedback process allows the Council to identify those processes which are not deemed complaints, but which may give customers cause for concern and which as a Council we would want to address.

During 2009/10, 1054 comments were received in total across the Council; 25% of them related to schools, 7% related to waste collection and recycling and 7% related to the housing waiting list. The remainder related to a range of other varied services delivered across the Council. Just over 100 of these comments were received from MPs.

The Council has continued to make improvements to the 'Tell Us Your Views' process. Examples are:

- Conducting a follow up interview with all children and young people who make a complaint.
- Implementing a Joint Agency complaints procedure across some partner agencies (NHS Rotherham, RDASH) and across internal Directorates which results in a co-ordinated response to complaints where more than one area is involved.
- Actively encouraging customers to suggest changes that we can make to improve our processes. We ask customers if they could change one thing about the service they received what it would be.
- Introducing a 'Learning from Complaints' template which has led to greater focus and clarity on lessons learnt. This is completed by team managers and is reviewed by each of the Directorate Complaints Officers, to ensure that learning is shared across teams and shared corporately.
- We have reviewed our complaint customer satisfaction process and are trialling a new process which will provide us with more meaningful information to improve the complaint handling process.
- We have begun to implement a process to monitor and track the cost of complaints. Once fully rolled out, this will provide an oversight of the cost of handling a complaint, particularly as this escalates through the complaints process.
- We have improved the way customers can provide feedback online, resulting in a significant increase in the number of customers contacting us by the online channel. Over the final quarter of the year 8234 electronic forms have been submitted. Customers have used the forms to give the Council feedback, to apply for Council services and to report information to the Council.

### **7.2.1 Complaints Volumes**

In 2009/10, 911 individual complaints were received. A quarterly breakdown is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Quarterly Breakdown of Complaints Volumes in 2009/10**

	<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>Qtr 2</b>	<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>Qtr4</b>	<b>Total</b>
CEX	1	1	0	1	3
CYPS	75	80	88	141	384

EDS	25	29	27	56	137
Finance	1	1	0	0	2
NAS	67	83	73	44	267
RBT	28	23	26	41	118
<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>911</b>

Table 3 shows the percentage of complaints which were dealt with at each complaint stage including those referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). This showed that:

- 77% of complaints were dealt with at stage 1;
- 17% of complaints were referred to Stage 2;
- 4% of complaints were referred to Stage 3; and
- 2% of complaints were dealt with by the LGO.

Definitions of complaint stages are as follows:

Stage 1 – The complaint is dealt with by the manager of the service area relating to the complaint.

Stage 2 – The complaint is reviewed with by an Independent Officer, as the customer is unhappy with the outcome of the complaint at Stage 1.

Stage 3 – The complaint is reviewed by a panel of elected members, known as the complaints review panel, as we have been unable to resolve the complaint at Stage 1 or Stage 2.

**Table 3: Breakdown of Complaint by Stage**

	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>LGO</b>
CEX	2	0	1	0
CYPS	262	96	21	5
EDS	121	14	2	0
Finance	2	0	0	0
NAS	205	40	8	14
RBT	107	8	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>19</b>

A large number of stage 2 complaints were received by CYPS and NAS. Whilst both services are working to resolve complaints at Stage 1, a number of social care complaints have escalated to Stage 2 or to the LGO. The Complaints Officers in each of these directorates are currently identifying how performance can be improved.

### **7.2.2 Complaint Categories**

Each complaint received is classified by one of the following categories:

- Actions of staff

- Cost of service
- Delay in service
- Lack of information
- Lack of service
- Quality of service
- Other

Table 4 gives a breakdown of complaint categories that we have received throughout the year.

**Table 4: Breakdown of Complaint by Category**

	Actions of staff	Cost of service	Delay in service	Lack of information	Lack of service	Quality of service	Other
% of overall complaints 2009/2010	28%	2%	7%	11%	7%	43%	2%
% of overall complaints 2008/2009	27%	2%	7%	8%	12%	41%	3%
<b>Change from 2008/2009</b>	<b>+1%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+3%</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>+ 2%</b>	<b>- 1%</b>

Complaints around quality of service continue to remain high at 43% and this level is typical across most Directorates; however, there are notable exceptions to the corporate average and those Directorates are either taking appropriate action to address the issues raised or sharing good practice with others. Table 5 sets out the notable exceptions.

**Table 5: Analysis of Complaint Categories**

Category	Corporate Average	Notable Directorate results
Actions of staff	28%	19% NAS: <i>The Directorate places great store in completing ongoing customer care training for all staff members, and it is likely that this is contributing to the positive results achieved.</i>
Delay in service	7%	16% NAS: <i>These are predominantly complaints about delays in completing financial assessments and customers building up arrears. The charging date has been amended to ensure that the customer is not penalised by any delay.</i>
Lack of service	7%	20% EDS: <i>These are predominantly relating to potholes and lack of grit. Work is ongoing to complete highway repairs.</i>

Quality of service	43%	52% RBT: <i>These are predominantly in the Revenues and Benefits Service. Whilst the service saw an increase in complaints, only 27% of these complaints were upheld.</i>
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### 7.2.3 Turnaround times for complaints

In 2009/10, 93% of complaints were processed within target service levels. This is an improvement of 2% on 2008/2009. A quarterly breakdown of results is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Percentage of Complaints Processed within Service Standards**

	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	2009/10	2008/09
CEX	100%	100%	-	100%	100%	60%
CYPS	85%	84%	95%	67%	82%	80%
EDS	95%	91%	100%	100%	97%	96%
Finance	100%	100%	-	-	100%	67%
NAS	99%	100%	100%	100%	99.6%	95%
RBT	97	100	100	100	99.2%	94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>91%</b>

CYPS performance dipped in Quarter 4. The Directorate has had a number of delays in responding to Stage 1 complaints and often complaints have been passed from one manager to another in a short space of time due to high staff turnover. A robust system has been implemented by Complaints Officers within the Directorate to issue reminders, monitor responses and provide feedback to help strengthen performance levels, and increased monitoring of performance is being implemented to ensure that performance levels are improved. Recommendations for improvements will be made via the Complaints Officer Group. A robust system is also in place to share lessons learned from complaints and these are fed into learning and development activity and quality assurance reports which track improved practice.

### 7.2.4 Complaints closed by outcome

There has not been a consistent approach to classifying complaint outcomes across the Council and it is therefore difficult to draw performance comparisons. Details of the complaint outcomes for complaints 'closed' are listed in Table 7 below:

**Table 7: Complaint Outcomes**

Directorate	% of complaints upheld	% of complaints partially upheld	% of complaints not upheld	% of complaints which were deemed 'inconclusive'	% of complaints which were withdrawn	% of complaints which were 'dealt with'
CEX	0	0	100%	0	0	NA
CYPS	3%	4%	7%	2%	5%	79%
EDS	22%	23%	47%	2%	6%	NA

Finance	100%	0	0	0	0	NA
NAS	19%	23%	54%	2%	2%	NA
RBT	36%	4%	51%	5%	4%	NA

As part of their complaints process, CYPS did not indicate whether a complaint has been upheld but instead stated that it had been “dealt with” for most of 2009/10. The Complaint Forum has recommended that CYPS close complaints in a consistent way and this has been implemented for 2010/11. We will therefore be able to provide more meaningful comparisons against Directorate performance during 2010/11

### 7.2.5 Lessons Learnt

All complaints are reviewed within Directorates and learning points are implemented where relevant. These learning points have resulted in the following general improvements:

- Changes to processes to provide improved services to customer;
- Additional training and support being provided for identified staff members;
- Sharing information across teams within Directorates. This has helped to reinforce what we have done well and what we can do better;
- Literature within some Directorates being updated to ensure it is easier to understand and is written with the customer in mind; and
- Technology improvements being implemented.

We have improved our performance in identifying lessons learnt from complaints by reviewing Directorate lessons learnt as a standing agenda item at the Complaints Forum. This is helping to ensure that Complaints Officers continue to challenge each other, benchmark their performance against other Directorates and share best practice. ‘You Said – We Did’ material will be uploaded onto the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council website on a quarterly basis to ensure customers are kept abreast of the actions we are taking. Greater focus will also be placed on telling customers about the areas we are unable to take action on and providing reasons why. Specific examples of improvements from ‘lessons learnt’ are provided in **Appendix A**.

### 7.2.6 LGO summary of performance

The authority has continued to improve its performance in handling complaint referrals from the LGO. The LGO received 66 RMBC customer contacts throughout the year, although only 19 of these resulted in ‘formal’ complaints for the Ombudsman to resolve. Our average response time for LGO cases was 23.8 days against a target of 28 days. Performance for the last 3 years is shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: Local Government Ombudsman Complaint Performance**

	No. of complaints	Average no. of days to respond
<b>2009/10</b>	17*	23.8
<b>2008/09</b>	12	28.0
<b>2007/08</b>	29	28.5

\* Note that 19 complaints were received by the LGO, but 2 complaints were still open when year end results were published.

### 7.2.8 Key tasks to be progressed during 2010 / 2011

Table 8 sets out the key tasks that will be completed during 2010/11 to further strengthen the Council's approach to customer feedback.

**Table 8: Key Improvement Tasks for 2010/11**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>
Review the Corporate Complaints Customer Satisfaction Survey and address any issues that emerge.	Corporate Complaints Group	August 2010
Complete quality audits and address any issues that emerge.	Corporate Complaints Officer, RBT	Quarterly
Eradicate duplication of ICT systems used and the need for manual manipulation of data	Corporate Complaints Officer, supported by the Corporate Complaints Group	August 2010
Understand the cost of the complaint handling process and make recommendations to reduce costs year on year.	Customer Access Client Manager	September 2010
Review Corporate Complaints processes as part of the ongoing Customer Service Excellence accreditation and ensure it continues to be compliant.	Customer Access Client Manager	September 2010

## 8. Finance

There are no financial implications contained in this report.

## 9. Risks and Uncertainties

Failure to respond appropriately to complaints may impact on the Council's reputation and could ultimately increase transactional volumes and costs. It may also have the potential of increasing the number of cases referred to the Local Government Ombudsman and will significantly impact our ability to retain the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

## 10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications



Having an effective corporate feedback procedure will strengthen the Council's evidence in demonstrating that it is delivering outcomes in line with customer expectations and requirements and should therefore support all performance and policy agendas.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

- Corporate Complaints Group
- LGO annual statistics

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