

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2016/17

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee - 25 May 2017

Report of Chief Officer Corporate Services

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report updates Members regarding customer complaints and feedback monitoring for the year 2016/17, as compared to 2015/16.

This report supports the Key Aim of improving the key services we deliver to the public

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer(s) Amy Wilton, Ext. 7280 and Julie Heather, Ext. 7125.

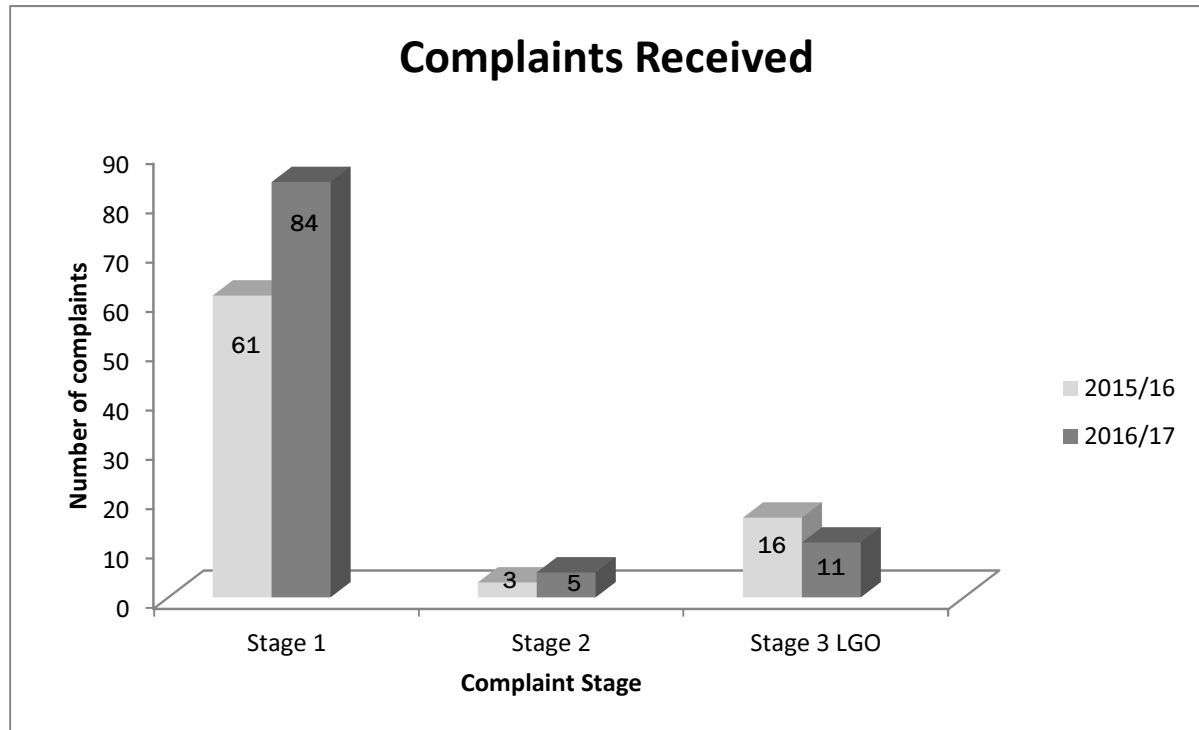
Recommendation to Policy & Performance Advisory Committee: That the report be noted.

Introduction and Background

- 1 This report provides details of formal complaints received by Sevenoaks District Council during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. Complaints data provides the Council with a useful tool to highlight specific concerns, assist in the identification of trends and common areas of concern and act as a guide to which remedial action may be required to deliver service improvement.
- 2 The Council's formal complaints procedure defines a complaint as '*any expression of dissatisfaction with our services whether justified or not*'. If a customer is contacting the Council for the first time regarding assistance for a Council service then this will be dealt with as a service request. The complaints process will be used if a customer specifically states they would like us to follow the "complaints process" and/or they make reference to items from within the formal process (e.g. Stage 1) or the customer is contacting us for a second time regarding the same matter and wishes to make a complaint.
- 3 The procedure is based on a two-stage internal process. If complainants are still dissatisfied with the outcome after both Stage 1 and Stage 2, they can then request the Local Government Ombudsman investigate at Stage 3.

2016/17 Complaints figures

- 4 The Council received a total of 100 complaints in 2016/17, an increase of 20 since 2015/16. The following graph shows at which stage of the complaints process each of the complaints were received.



Stage 1 Complaints

- 5 Stage 1 complaints received

	2015/16	2016/17
Total	61	84

- 6 2016/17 saw an increase in Stage 1 complaints received. Revenues, Parking Services and Development Services attracted the most complaints. There was also a rise in complaints for Electoral Services, likely attributable to the significant increase in activity due to PCC elections and EU referendum during this period. For a break down of Stage 1 complaints received by service area see appendix A.
- 7 Of the 84 Stage 1 complaints received in 2016/17 81% were found to be invalid. This was because customers had made incorrect claims or unrealistic claims.
- 8 Outcome of complaints at Stage 1

	Total 2015/16	Total 2016/17
Complaint invalid	47	68
Complaint upheld	14	16
Total	61	84

No financial payments were made at Stage 1.

Stage 2 Complaints

9 Stage 2 complaints received

	2015/16	2016/17
Total	3	5

This year saw an increase in Stage 2 complaints by 44%, however in terms of the number of services the Council provides and in comparison to the number of Stage 1 complaints, this number is very low. For a breakdown of Stage 2 complaints received by service area see appendix B.

Out of the 5 Stage 2 complaints investigated during 2016/17, 100% were found to be invalid. This was because customers had made incorrect or unrealistic claims. 2 of the complainants requested their concerns be reviewed by the Local Government Ombudsman. These related to Development Services and Parking Services.

10 Outcome of complaints at Stage 2

	Total 2015/16	Total 2016/17
Complaint invalid	3	5
Complaint upheld	0	0
Total	3	5

No financial payments were made at Stage 2.

Stage 3 complaints - Local Government Ombudsman

- 11 In 2016/17 the Local Government Ombudsman received 11 complaints about this authority. Of the 11 complaints 4 were premature, 4 were closed after initial enquiries and 3 decisions were made during the year. The following table shows the decisions made by the LGO. For Local Government Ombudsman complaints received by service area see Appendix C.

LGO Decision	Service area	Number of decisions
Not upheld - no maladministration	Development Services	2
	Parking Services	1
Total		3

- 12 The Ombudsman has yet to provide the annual letter. Therefore, no comparison can be made to other Local Authorities as in previous years. In 2016 the government announced the intention to produce draft legislation for the creation of a single ombudsman for public services in England. This is something the LGO support as they feel it will provide the public with a clearer route to redress in an increasingly complex environment of public service delivery.
- 13 No financial payments were made at this stage.

Key Implications

Financial

The Council made no financial payments as compensation in 2016/17 to resolve complaints.

	Compensation Paid (£)	
	2015/16	2016/17
Stage 1	0	0
Stage 2	0	0
LGO	0	0
Total	0	0

Equality Impacts

There are no decisions recommended through this paper. There is therefore a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Appendices

Appendix A - Table to show Stage 1 complaints received by service area.

Appendix B - Table to show Stage 2 complaints received by service area

Appendix C - Table to show LGO complaints received by service area

Background Papers

None

Jim Carrington-West

Chief Officer Corporate Services

Appendix A - Stage 1 complaints received by service area

	Stage 1 Complaints received			
	2015/16	% of total	2016/17	% of total
Audit	0	0	0	0
Benefits	2	3.3	2	2.4
Building Control	1	1.6	0	0
Communications	0	0	0	0
Communities & Business	2	3.3	2	2.4
Customer Services	3	4.9	2	2.4
Democratic Services	0	0	0	0
Development Services	13	21.3	24	28.6
Direct Services	7	11.5	1	1.2
Electoral Services	2	3.3	7	8.3
Environmental Health	2	3.3	2	2.4
Facilities Management	0	0	0	0
Housing Advice	3	4.9	4	4.8
Housing Standards	0	0	1	1.2
IT Services	0	0	0	0
Land Charges	0	0	0	0
Legal	1	1.6	0	0
Licensing	0	0	0	0
Local Tax	11	18	19	22.6
Parking Services	14	23	20	23.7
Planning Policy	0	0	0	0
Print	0	0	0	0
Property	0	0	0	0
Total	61	100	84	100

Appendix B - Stage 2 complaints received by service area

	Stage 2 Complaints received			
	2015/16	% of total	2016/17	% of total
Audit	0	0	0	0
Benefits	1	33.33	0	0
Building Control	0	0	0	0
Communications	0	0	0	0
Communities & Business	1	33.33	0	0
Customer Services	0	0	0	0
Democratic Services	0	0	0	0
Development Services	1	33.33	2	40
Direct Services	0	0	0	0
Electoral Services	0	0	0	0
Environmental Health	0	0	0	0
Facilities Management	0	0	0	0
Housing	0	0	0	0
Housing Standards	0	0	0	0
IT Services	0	0	0	0
Land Charges	0	0	0	0
Legal	0	0	0	0
Licensing	0	0	0	0
Local Tax	0	0	0	0
Parking Services	0	0	3	60
Planning Policy	0	0	0	0
Print	0	0	0	0
Property	0	0	0	0
Total	3	100	5	100

Appendix C - Local Government Ombudsman complaints received by service area

LGO Complaints received 2015/16	
Democratic Services	1
Development Services	5
Electoral	1
Parking Services	1
Revenues	3
TOTAL	11