

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2018/19

Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee - 27 June 2019

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 2018/19, as compared to 2017/18.

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 x7280 Julie Heather x7125.

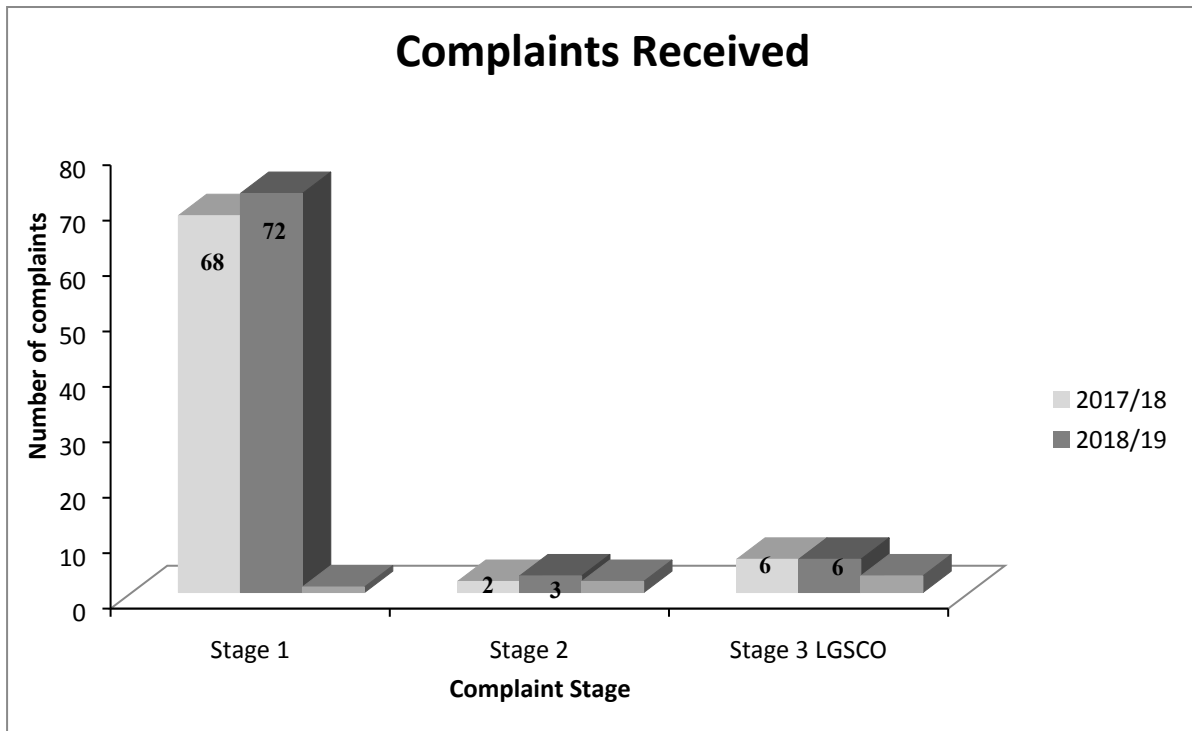
Recommendation to Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee: That the report be noted.

Introduction and Background

1. This report provides details of formal complaints received by Sevenoaks District Council during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. 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 and Social Care Ombudsman investigate at Stage 3.

2018/19 Complaints figures

4. The Council received a total of 81 complaints in 2018, an increase of 5 since 2017. 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

	2017/18	2018/19
Total	68	72

6. 2018/19 saw a slight increase in Stage 1 complaints received. Development Services, Housing Advice, Parking and Revenues attracted the most complaints. Benefits, Communities & Business and Direct Services have all seen a reduction in complaints compared to last year. For a breakdown of Stage 1 complaints received by service area see appendix A.
7. Of the 72 Stage 1 complaints received in 2018/19 72% were found to be invalid. This was because customers had made incorrect claims, unrealistic claims or had contacted the wrong organisation.

8. Outcome of complaints at Stage 1

	Total 2017/18	Total 2018/19
Complaint invalid	39	52
Complaint upheld	29	20
Total	68	72

No financial payments were made at Stage 1.

Lessons Learned

9. An integral part of the Council's corporate complaints process is ensuring that the outcomes are evaluated and any areas where lessons can be learnt to improve the way we do things and prevent similar errors occurring in the future are documented and action is taken.
10. Over many years the Council has continually applied the learning from previous complaints to improve our services. This is reflected by the ongoing fall in the number of Stage 1 complaints to the Council to just 72 in 2018/19. As we work harder to ensure customers receive the service that they want from the Council we are also finding that more complaints are upheld as we seek to drive up standards.
11. Since April this year there have been 15 occasions where learning has been taken from complaints made to the organisation at Stage 1 or Stage 2 in order to improve our service to the customer.
12. In the majority of these cases the lessons learnt are about the way information is communicated to customers. That can be the timeliness or clarity of writing to a resident or about a lack of available information that has caused a customer a difficulty.
13. The Corporate Customer Services and Delivery Manager continues to work closely with Service Managers to ensure that improvements to services continue to address the learning coming from complaints. This is evidenced in part by the low number of complaints received by the Council and the fact that the LGSCO has not been required to uphold complaints about us.

Stage 2 Complaints

14. Stage 2 complaints received

	2017/18	2018/19
Total	2	3

This year saw a slight increase in Stage 2 complaints. For a breakdown of Stage 2 complaints received by service area see appendix B.

Out of the 3 Stage 2 complaints investigated during 2018/19, 1 was upheld with some recommendations for improvement. This complainant requested their concerns be reviewed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. It relates to Housing Advice and is still under investigation.

15. Outcome of complaints at Stage 2

	Total 2017/18	Total 2018/19
Complaint invalid	1	2
Complaint upheld	1	1
Total	2	3

No financial payments were made at Stage 2.

Stage 3 complaints - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

16. In 2018/19 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman received 6 complaints about this authority. Of the 6 complaints 4 were closed after initial enquiries with no further action and 2 are still under investigation. The following table shows the decisions made by the LGSCO by service area. For LGSCO complaints received by service area see Appendix C.

LGSCO Decision	Service area	Number of decisions
Closed after initial enquiries - no further action	Legal	1
	Planning	1
	Revenues	2
Total		4

17. The Ombudsman has yet to provide the annual letter. Therefore, no comparison can be made to other Local Authorities.

18. No financial payments were made at this stage.

Key Implications

Financial

The Council made no financial payments as compensation in 2018/19 to resolve complaints.

	Compensation Paid (£)	
	2017/18	2018/19
Stage 1	990.50	0
Stage 2	0	0
LGO	0	0
Total	990.50	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 LGSCO 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			
	2017/18	% of total	2018/19	% of total
Audit	0	0	0	0
Benefits	11	16	8	11.1
Building Control	0	0	0	0
Communications	0	0	0	0
Communities & Business	3	4.5	0	0
Customer Services	0	0	0	0
Democratic Services	0	0	0	0
Development Services	18	26.5	17	23.7
Direct Services	10	14.7	6	8.3
Electoral Services	0	0	0	0
Environmental Health	3	4.5	6	8.3
Facilities Management	0	0	1	1.4
Housing Advice	4	5.8	10	13.9
IT Services	1	1.5	0	0
Land Charges	0	0	1	1.4
Legal	0	0	0	0
Licensing	1	1.5	0	0
Local Tax	9	13.2	11	15.2
Parking Services	7	10.3	12	16.7
Planning Policy	0	0	0	0
Print	0	0	0	0
Private Sector Housing	1	1.5	0	0
Property	0	0	0	0
Total	68	100	72	100

Appendix B - Stage 2 complaints received by service area

	Stage 2 Complaints received			
	2017/18	% of total	2018/19	% of total
Audit	0	0	0	0
Benefits	0	0	1	33.3
Building Control	0	0	0	0
Communications	0	0	0	0
Communities & Business	0	0	1	33.3
Customer Services	0	0	0	0
Democratic Services	0	0	0	0
Development Services	0	0	0	0
Direct Services	0	0	0	0
Electoral Services	0	0	0	0
Environmental Health	1	50	0	0
Facilities Management	0	0	0	0
Housing Advice	0	0	1	33.3
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	1	50	0	0
Planning Policy	0	0	0	0
Print	0	0	0	0
Private Sector Housing	0	0	0	0
Property	0	0	0	0
Total	2	100	3	100

Appendix C - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints received by service area

LGSCO Complaints received 2018/19	
Development Services	1
Housing Advice	1
Environmental Health	1
Legal	1
Revenues	2
TOTAL	6