

Quarter 4 Report on Complaints and Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Enquiries

Complaints

Summary of Complaints in YTD	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	2018/19 Target
Number of Complaints Received in Quarter:	4	4	2	3	13	<20
Percentage of complaints dealt with in accordance with agreed deadline of 15 working days	83%	75%	100%	100%	89.5%	
Number of Complaints in Quarter regarding an Authority Member:	1	0	0	0	1	-

Complaint Ref, Date Made and Stage	Service and Reason for Complaint	Date Response Sent	Outcome	Any Change in Processes/Practices as a Result of Complaint Investigation
C455 27/02/19 Stage One	Information Management Complaint regarding booking policy for guided walks and attitude of Customer Services staff in handling queries.	14/03/19 Within 15 working day deadline	Confirmed that the existing policies and procedures had been followed, therefore was unable to issue a refund for cancelled booking. The terms and conditions are made clear and require explicit acknowledgement and acceptance prior to any bookings being made. Explained the reasoning for the terms and conditions. Apologised with regard to complaint regarding attitudes of staff handling queries. If Complainant felt feelings of irritation were being conveyed then staff fell short of normal high professional standards in this case.	None required
19/03/19 Stage Two	Complaint escalated to Stage 2.	Response due by 15/04/19		
C456 07/03/19 Stage One	Development Management Complaint regarding delay in issuing a planning application decision and	27/03/19	Had conversation with Complainant before responding in writing. Accepted criticism about delay in determining the application. Unfortunately the Complainant reusing plans previously submitted led to delay and confusion about what	Manager has spoken with caseworker with regard to issues raised and caseworker agreed

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	way in which officers dealt with queries.	Within 15 working day deadline.	<p>was being sought. Emphasised that good plan drawings of the current situation and the proposed situation with all the detailing on are needed. Agreed to check if proposal for a window could be achieved with a Non Material Amendment given that the principle of this had been previously considered in a Listed Building Consent Application.</p> <p>Agreed that communication regarding delays was not made and that the caseworker should have worked through the plans earlier and asked for additional elevation plans; which would have led to an earlier determination. Apologised for this and the caseworker's telephone manner, which fell well below the standard of customer service expected. Gave assurance that for any future applications by Complainant the Manager would directly support the caseworker dealing with the application.</p>	that communication with Complainant fell below the standard expected. Manager will directly support the caseworker dealing with future applications made by Complainant.
C.457 29/03/19 Stage One	<p>Development Management</p> <p>Complaint regarding handling of a planning application including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning process not correctly implemented • insufficient consideration of the negative impact upon Complainant's residential amenity • was not informed of second planning application • effect upon Complainant's home was not properly presented to the planning Committee. 	Response due by 18/04/19 and will be reported in next quarter.		

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Update on Complaints Reported in Previous Quarters

Complaint Ref, Date Made and Stage	Service and Reason for Complaint	Date Response Sent	Outcome	Any Change in Processes/Practices as a Result of Complaint Investigation
C.447 06/03/19 Ombudsman Stage One previously reported in Quarter 1 & Quarter 2	<p>Development Management</p> <p>Stage One Complaint was regarding lack of response from Planning officers to requests for meetings regarding planning issues and monitoring of a site.</p> <p>Complainants referred complaint to Ombudsman alleging lack of complete answer from the Authority regarding how the Authority intends to properly monitor events during the trial period and how many events (monitored and unmonitored) are required over the 7 year trial period to provide a sufficient bank of monitoring evidence.</p>	Initial response sent to Ombudsman on 06/03/19.	Awaiting further request for information or decision.	
C.454 17/12/18 Stage One	<p>Development Management Service</p> <p>Complaint regarding handling of a planning application under delegated powers and alleging</p>	<p>16/01/19</p> <p>6 days over 15 working day deadline</p>	Stage One - Explained scheme of delegated powers and that application met the terms so was dealt with via this process. Caseworker made a recommendation in the delegated report, but in accordance with the standing orders, the decision on this application was made by the Area Team Manager who signed the delegated report and	None required.

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Receipt of complaint previously reported in Quarter 3	that the officer considering the application had expressed extremely strong views against development on the site in the past. Requested that the Authority reviewed the application decision.		the decision notice. Emphasised that no single officer in the Authority can be the case officer for an application and make the final decision. Satisfied the application dealt with in accordance with procedures and decision correct. With regard to the delegated report was satisfied that the details of the application were given the correct weight and appropriately considered and the correct outcome given. Stated that Complainant has right of appeal regarding the decision. Manager spoke with caseworker and reviewed files and records. Satisfied that application was considered a fair and balanced manner based on the facts of the matter. It was clear caseworker tried to work positively with Complainant in suggesting alternative options.	
30/01/19 Stage Two	Complaint escalated to Stage Two.	Meeting on 14/02/19 Written response sent on 08/03/19	<p>Stage Two – Director met with Complainant then sent a written response. Supported Stage One response and responded to additional queries including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuted allegations that Highway Authority had refused all applications for commercial development in the area so they would resist any commercial development on the site • Did not agree that the report ignored the advice of the Historic Buildings Officer, it is summarised in the reports and refers to pre-application advice. • Did not agree heritage statement was ignored and confirmed that statement had been uploaded to the website • Explained that applicants revoking old planning permission in exchange for another permission was lawful and a form of ‘planning gain’. • Fully supported reasons for refusal • Suggested a way forward for Complainant to address the reasons for refusal of the application for the conversion of the existing building. 	

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Complaints Review

Since 2015, at Members' request, we have included a review and update on trends in complaints over the past 3 years in the Quarter 4 report.

Numbers of Complaints Received Over Last 3 Years												
Year	No of Total Complaints					No of Stage 1 Complaints		No of Stage 2 Complaints		No of Ombudsman Complaints		
Period 1 April to 31 March	Received	Withdrawn	Against Development Management (Previously Planning Service)	Against Other Services	Against Members	Development Management (Previously Planning Service)	Other Services	Development Management (Previously Planning Service)	Other Services	Development Management (Previously Planning Service)	Other Services	Members
2016/17	13	0	8	4	1	6	4	1	1	3	0	0
2017/18	14	0	9	5	0	9	5	4	0	2	0	0
2018/19	13	0	9	4	1	9	4	2	2	3	0	0

The following trends in complaints have been identified:

2016/17 – Planning Service: actions of officers, enforcement issues and handling of planning applications.

Other Services: No particular trends identified.

2017/18 – Development Management Service: handling of planning applications and actions of officers.

Other Services: Actions of officers.

2018/19 – Development Management Service: handling of planning applications lack of responses and actions of officers.

Other Services: Actions of officers.

With regard to the number of complaints received, the reduction over the previous 4 years has been sustained this year and is shown in the table above. Of those complaints which were pursued to the Local Government Ombudsman, there has been only one upheld complaint. As with previous year's

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reports within the Planning Service it is considered that part of the reason for the reduction in complaints is the greater focus on dealing with issues as soon as they arise, rather than allowing them to escalate into a formal complaint.

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Quarter 4 Report on Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environment Information Regulation Enquiries (EIR)

Quarter	No. of FOI Enquiries dealt with	No. of EIR Enquiries dealt with	No. of Enquiries dealt within time (20 days)	No. of late Enquiry responses	No. of Enquiries still being processed	No. of referrals to the Information Commissioner
Q1	1	4	5	0	4	0
Q2	10	5	15	0	1	0
Q3	3	6	9	0	2	0
Q4	4	8	12	0	0	0
Cumulative	18	23	41	0	7	0