

Report of Chief Executive
To: Standards Committee
Date: 11 June 2010 **Item No:** 10
Title of Report: Complaints Monitoring – 2009/2010
(1 October 2009 – 31 March 2010)

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide statistical information and analysis of customer feedback through complaints

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Oscar van Nooijen

Scrutiny Responsibility: N/A

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by: William Reed, Democratic Services Manager

Policy Framework: Corporate Governance

Recommendation(s): The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 5 September 2008, Committee resolved that it would like to continue to receive Complaints Monitoring reports every six months, notwithstanding the possibility that information comparable over time still might not be possible in six months' time.
2. It also agreed that in order to resolve difficulties of comparison (because of a management restructure) and to safeguard the position for the future, to ask the Chief Executive to consider monitoring of complaints taking place on a work area or some other basis smaller than whole Department level because this would not be likely to change if further restructures took place.

3. This report provides an analysis of the second half of the year 2009/2010, together with comparable information from previous years, where available.

Production of Statistical Information

4. Appendix 1a provides a breakdown of the number of complaints received in each of the service areas at Stages 1 and 2. Some service areas are now monitoring complaints on a work area basis, rather than at service area level, thereby according with Committee's request at its meeting on 5 September 2008.
5. A detailed breakdown of the nature of the complaint, whether it is about staff behaviour, a dispute with the Council, a service delivery issue or a policy matter has not been possible for all service areas because historically complaint information has not been recorded in a uniform way by all service areas. Appendix 1b contains this type of information, where it is available.
6. A detailed analysis of all justified Stage 1 and 2 complaints has not been possible, again because of the inconsistent recording of complaint information. However, Appendix 1c provides a breakdown for Oxford City Homes, Environmental Development, Customer Services, City Development, Law and Governance (formerly Legal and Democratic Services), Community Housing and Community Development, and City Leisure. The commentary from Service Heads below gives an indication of City Works' response to complaints it receives and the action taken, where required.
7. An analysis of Stage 3 complaints and cases investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman for determination is included in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively. Some comparative data from previous years is included, where possible.
8. From April 2010, all service areas have logged complaint information on either the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or a hybrid version (pending introduction of the full system). The details being recorded should ensure that consistent information about complaints is maintained.

General Commentary on Complaints

9. As has been reported before to the Committee on previous occasions, the highest numbers of complaints received are about the front line services most used by members of the public. The number of complaints received needs to be viewed in context and set against the number of people using (or potentially using) the particular service, and more especially the number of complaints that are considered justified.

City Works and Oxford City Homes continue to receive the vast majority of complaints received by the Council.

10. Complaints continue to be welcomed as a method of feedback. Trends that are apparent can be used to make service improvements and inform policy decisions.

Commentary on Stage 1 and 2 Complaints

11. The following comments have been received from Service Areas:

- i) Oxford City Homes

Of the 280 complaints received for the second half of the year (43 of which are claims for compensation), 88 are related to responsive repairs and 44 are related to Tenancy Services. The remainder are spread across Oxford City Homes' other services. To help put the responsive repair numbers into context, 17,033 such jobs were undertaken between 1 October 2009 and 31 March 2010. Some complaints involve several teams within Oxford City Homes and across the Council so that a resolution can be reached.

Overall, during this period, the number of complaints has decreased compared to the same period last year (400 complaints were received during the same period last year, 54 of which were claims). 946 compliments were received for the second six months of the year, compared to 710 for the period 1 April 2009 to 30 September 2009.

For the year as a whole, the total number of complaints has reduced. Complaints about service delivery and staff behaviour continued on a downward trend. The total number of complaints that are related to a dispute or disagreement (mainly because the tenant disagrees with the initial decision that has been made in respect of a tenancy issue rather than a repair) showed a market decrease in 2009/10 compared to 2008/09, although the figure is still considerably higher than in 2007/08.

Many complaints relate to service delivery, which includes missed appointments, failure to follow up on previous repairs, recalls on the quality of work undertaken, recalls because of material failure, jobs beyond target date and the failure to keep the tenant informed of progress.

Oxford City Homes investigates and responds to all complaints, and the management team monitors the complaints on a monthly basis to detect trends. No clear trends have emerged,

but continual analysis of data will highlight issues as and where they occur.

In terms of action taken, where appropriate, tenants receive an apology, compensation is paid, remedial work is undertaken or explanation given and, where necessary, employees are counselled/disciplined for poor quality of work or poor customer care.

ii) Customer Services

For the period of 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2010, most justified complaints were again because of errors in administration. Of the complaints that were justified in full or part, six were about mistakes that had been made by the assessment staff. However, the number of justified complaints has reduced, which indicates that the steps that were taken to retrain staff in areas that were identified as a cause for concern is proving effective.

iii) City Works

At least 95% of complaints against the waste and recycling service continue to be in respect of alleged missed bins. However, as Committee has been notified previously, it is not possible to establish the reason for the missed bin. All cases of missed bins are rectified as soon as possible, usually the same or the following day.

The complaints system in City Works is audited on a regular basis as part of ISO 9002 accreditation. The most recent external audit produced a positive outcome.

iv) City Leisure

The number of complaints received in respect of the service provided by Fusion (the Council's leisure service provider) has increased because the company has significantly improved its reporting and monthly performance monitoring arrangements with more data being captured, mainly by more "Please tell us what you think" forms being completed and the details logged.

The increase in complaints about the client function is largely because of concerns expressed about the proposed closure of Temple Cowley Pools.

v) City Development

Although the number of justified complaints increased in 2009/10 compared to previous years, no significant trends were noted. One of the justified complaints related to an error on a

planning drawing in which the wrong application site was identified. A complaint about the delay in registering an application was also considered justified but was an isolated case.

Commentary on Stage 3 Complaints and Ombudsman Cases

12. The trend apparent in the first half of 2009/2010, which showed a marked decrease in the number of cases referred to the Chief Executive and Directors from the figures for either of the six months' periods in 2008/2009, was maintained during the second half of the year.
13. The number of cases determined as justified between 1 October 2009 and 31 March 2010 was very low, the figure being less than in each of the three preceding six months' periods. Only seven complaints determined during the year were considered justified.
14. There were no trends were apparent from the justified cases.
15. Details of the justified complaints determined in the first six months of the year were reported to Committee on 4 December 2009.
16. The two justified complaints from the second half of the year both related to City Works' services. The first was in respect of the cleanliness of the public toilets in the Westgate Car Park. The cleaning had not been carried out in accordance with the work schedule for a short period. The problem was soon rectified. The second complaint related to the failure by City Works to reply to a complaint. The matter had been overlooked (due to an oversight) but the reason for the initial complaint was quickly resolved once the further complaint had been received.
17. The number of complaints against City Development, all in respect of the Planning service, continues to be high, relative to those received in other service areas. Most are still about the handling of planning applications and the decision that was reached. In each of these cases, the proper procedures for consultation and determining applications were followed, hence they were not considered to be justified.
18. The number of complaints received about City Works increased because of several complaints in respect of the Council's response to clearing pavements of snow and ice during the bad weather in January. These complaints were not considered justified because there had been proper adherence to the street/pavement clearing procedure with priority areas being cleared first. The areas indicated by the complainants were not of the highest priority.

19. The number of decisions by the Ombudsman where there has been a finding against the Council has once again remained extremely low. No formal reports were against the Council during the year. The only adverse decisions were the three local settlements that were agreed, two of which were in the period 1st October 2009 to 31st March 2010. These two cases resulted in a payment of £250 compensation, where a Housing Officer had given incorrect advice about benefit entitlement, and the provision of a replacement pram and payment of £50 compensation when an old pram had been removed from the communal area of a block of flats.

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Background papers: None

Service Area	2006/2007	2007/2008 (* 1/4 - 30/9 only)	2008/2009			2009/2010		
			1.4.08 – 30.9.08	1.10.08 - 31.03.09	Total	1.4.09- 30.09.09	1.10.09- 31.03.10	Total
Business Transformation	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
City Development								
Planning	32	18*	4	5	9	4	17	21
Building Control	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tourism and Arts	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
City Works								
Refuse collection / Street services	8919	4810	1884	1701	3585	1898	2083	3981
Parks (up to 30.4.09)	-	-	12	5	17	0	0	0
Car Parks	3	0	2	2	4	3	1	4
Community Housing & Community Development	21	17*	4	3	7	11	0**	11**
Customer Services								
Housing Benefit	110	51	30	23	53	41	27	68
Revenues	-	-	15	-	15	15	17	32
Front Office and Call Centre	-	-	0	0	0	2	2	4
Environmental Development	7	14	9	11	20	12	7	19
Finance	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
People & Equalities (Human Resources)	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Law and Governance (Legal & Democratic)	0	0	4	1	5	1	0	1
City Leisure (Client only from 1.4.09)	93	35*	10	19	29	19	43	62
City Leisure - Parks (From 1.5.09 onwards)	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0
City Leisure (Fusion)	-	-	-	-	-	17	54	71
Oxford City Homes	648	516	334	400	734	316	280	596
Corporate Assets (Property & Asset Management)	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0

** Information not available at the time of going to print. Total includes only first six months' figures.

Service Area	Staff Behaviour					Dispute					Service Delivery					Policy				
	Total 2007/2008	Total 2008/2009	2009/2010 (to 30/09)	2009/2010 (to 31/03)	2009/2010 TOTAL	Total 2007/2008	Total 2008/2009	2009/2010 (to 30/09)	2009/2010 (to 31/03)	2009/2010 TOTAL	Total 2007/2008	Total 2008/2009	2009/2010 (to 30/09)	2009/2010 (to 31/03)	2009/2010 TOTAL	Total 2007/2008	Total 2008/2009	2009/2010 (to 30/09)	2009/2010 (to 31/03)	2009/2010 TOTAL
Oxford City Homes	54	31	12	17	29	240	417	152	157	309	249	251	116	80	196	20	35	36	26	62
City Development (Planning)	0*	0	0	2	2	10*	4	4	7	11	7*	5	0	8	8	1*	0	0	0	0
Environmental Development	1*	11	2	1	3	1*	3	1	3	4	3*	6	7	3	10	1*	0	2	0	2
Community Housing & Community Development	7*	1	2	**	2	1*	3	5	**	5	8*	3	4	**	4	2*	0	0	**	0
Customer Services (Housing Benefit)	4	2	0	2	2	5	4	21	4	25	25	30	20	14	34	17	16	0	7	7
Customer Services (Revenues)	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	7	14	21	-	-	8	3	11	-	-	0	0	0
Customer Services (Front Office and Call Centre)	-	-	0	1	1	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	2	1	3	-	-	0	0	0
Law and Governance (Legal & Democratic)	-	1	1	0	1	-	2	0	0	0	-	2	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0
Human Resources	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	1	0	1	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0
City Leisure (Client)	-	-	1	2	3	-	-	0	1	1	-	-	16	13	29	-	-	2	8	10
City Leisure (Fusion)	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	16	45	61	-	-	0	8	8

** Information not available at time of going to print

* First six months only

Service Area	Apology					Compensation					Work Undertaken					Service Review					Policy Review				
	Total 2007/8	Total 2008/9	2009/10 (to 30/09)	2009/10 (to 31/03)	Total 2009/10	Total 2007/8	Total 2008/9	2009/10 (to 30/09)	2009/10 (to 31/03)	Total 2009/10	Total 2007/8	Total 2008/9	2009/10 (to 30/09)	2009/10 (to 31/03)	Total 2009/10	Total 2007/8	Total 2008/9	2009/10 (to 30/09)	2009/10 (to 31/03)	Total 2009/10	Total 2007/8	Total 2008/9	2009/10 (to 30/09)	2009/10 (to 31/03)	Total 2009/10
City Development (Planning)	3*	1	0	2	2	0*	0	0	0	0	1*	0	0	2	2	0*	0	0	0	0	0*	0	0	0	0
Community Housing & Community Development	11*	2	1	**	1	0*	0	0	**	0	5*	1	4	**	4	0*	0	1	**	1	0*	0	0	**	0
Customer Services (Housing)	6	8	9	2	11	1	1	1	0	1	14	11	12	8	20	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Customer Services (Revenues)	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	8	0	8	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0
Customer Services (Front Office and Call Centre)	-	-	0	1	1	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0
Environmental Development	1*	3	1	1	2	0*	0	0	0	0	4*	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oxford City Homes	37	35	21	30	51	27	50	27	18	45	232	620	272	206	478	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Law and Governance (Legal & Democratic)	-	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0
City Leisure (Client)	-	-	8	15	23	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	2	2	-	-	0	0	0
City Leisure (Fusion)	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a

* First six months only

** Information not available when going to print

Appendix 2a

Complaints referred to Chief Executive and Directors (Stage 3) - Analysis by Service Areas

Service Area	Received				Determined				Complaints Determined -Justified			
	2008/09		2009/10		2008/09		2009/10		2008/09		2009/10	
	1.4.08-30.9.08	1.10.08 - 31.03.09	1.4.09-30.9.09	1.10.09-31.03.10	1.4.08-30.9.08	1.10.08 - 31.03.09	1.4.09-30.9.09	1.10.09-31.03.10	1.4.08-30.9.08	1.10.08 - 31.03.09	1.4.09-30.9.09	1.10.09-31.03.10
City Development	6	9	10	5	5	7	12	4	0	0	0	0
Oxford City Homes	5	8	4	6	4	6	4	7	0	2	0	0
Environmental Development	3	1	1	0	2	3	1	0	1	1	0	0
Customer Services	3	6	0	3	2	6	1	2	0	2	0	0
City Works - General	3	3	1	8	3	3	1	8	2	3	1	2
City Works - Car Parks	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Parks	3	1	2	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	2	0
Corporate Assets (Property and Facilities Management)	3	2	2	1	3	1	2	1	0	0	2	0
City Leisure	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Housing and Development	2	5	2	0	2	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
Chief Executive	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Business Transformation	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Law and Governance (Legal and Democratic)	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finance	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	37	37	22	23	32	34	24	23	5	8	5	2

Appendix 2b

Nature of Complaint - Received

	Complaints Received									
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09			2009/10		
	Total	Total	Total	Total	1.4.08-30.09.08	1.10.08 - 31.03.09	Total	1.4.09-30.09.09	1.10.09-31.03.10	Total
Staff Behaviour/Attitude	13	10	12	6	1	3	4	5	1	6
Disputed Decision / Disagreement	24	53	24	37	17	21	38	11	8	19
Dissatisfaction with Service Delivery	38	48	52	23	18	11	29	9	13	22
Related to Policy Decision	0	0	4	4	2	2	4	0	0	0
Total	75	111	92	70	38	37	75	25	22	47

Nature of Complaint - Determined

	Complaints Determined Justified									
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09			2009/10		
	Total	Total	Total	Total	1.4.08-30.09.08	1.10.08 - 31.03.09	Total	1.4.09-30.09.09	1.10.09-31.03.10	Total
Staff Behaviour/Attitude	6	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	2
Disputed Decision / Disagreement	1	4	1	7	1	1	2	1	0	1
Dissatisfaction with Service Delivery	18	19	26	10	4	7	11	3	2	5
Related to Policy Decision	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	25	24	28	18	5	8	13	6	2	8

Appendix 2c

Action Taken when Complaint Justified

	Complaints Determined									
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/7	2007/8	2008/09			2009/10		
	Total	Total	Total	Total	1.4.08-30.9.08	1.10.08 - 31.03.09	Total	1.4.09-30.09.09	1.10.09-31.3.10	Total
Apology/Explanation	13	8	6	7	2	2	4	2	0	2
Compensation Paid	0	1	3	3	0	1	1	1	0	1
Service Change	3	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Service Review	0	1	4	2	1	2	3	0	0	0
Policy Review	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Work Undertaken	6	12	15	5	2	2	4	3	2	5
Total	22	24	28	17	5	8	13	6	2	8

Responses from Complainant

	Complaints Determined									
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/7	2007/8	2008/09			2009/10		
	Total	Total	Total	Total	1.4.08-30.09.08	1.10.08 - 31.03.09	Total	1.4.09-30.09.09	1.10.09-31.3.10	Total
No Further Response Received	39	77	60	30	17	16	33	10	13	23
Referred to Ombudsman	3	12	6	6	3	5	8	5	4	9
Ongoing	13	11	3	8	3	3	6	3	1	4
Outcome Accepted	3	4	6	18	3	4	7	4	1	5
Complainant Disputed Findings	10	15	28	15	6	6	12	2	2	4
Total	68	119	103	77	32	34	66	24	21	45

Appendix 3

Ombudsman Cases 2008/2009 – Decisions Issued

Analysis by Service Area (excl. premature complaints)

Service Area	<u>2008/09</u>	<u>2008/9</u>	<u>2008/9</u>	<u>2009/10</u>		
	<u>1.4.08-30.9.08</u>	<u>1.10.08-31.03.09</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>1.4.09-30.09.09</u>	<u>1.10.09-31.3.10</u>	<u>Total</u>
Oxford City Homes	6	0	6	4	3	7
City Development	4	1	5	5	1	6
Customer Services	1	3	4	0	3	3
Parks	1	0	1	1	0	1
Community Housing & Community Development	1	0	1	1	0	1
Environmental Development	0	1	1	1	2	3
City Works	0	0	0	1	0	1
Finance	0	0	0	1	0	1
Legal and Democratic Services	0	0	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	13	4	18	15	9	24

Decisions Issued - Analysis by Service Area

Category	Number	Breakdown by Service Area
No or Insufficient Evidence of Maladministration	15	6 City Development
		5 Oxford City Homes
		1 Parks
		1 Environmental Development
		1 Customer Services
		1 Community Housing and Development
Local Settlement	3	2 Oxford City Homes
		1 Customer Services
Ombudsman Discretion	2	1 Finance
		1 Environmental Development
Outside Ombudsman's Jurisdiction	4	1 City Works
		1 Customer Services
		1 Environmental Development
		1 Legal and Democratic Services
Reports (Formal report issued)	0	
Sub Total	24	
Premature	10	
Total	34	