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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b> 11
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2004</b>	<b>CATEGORY:</b> <b>DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>TERRY NEAVES (595800)</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>COMPLAINTS</b>	<b>REF: PC/JHM</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: CE6</b>

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### 1.0 Recommendations

1.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

### 2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 This report provides a summary of the official complaints received by the Council 12 months to 31 March 2003 and 6 months to 30 September 2003.

2.2 The report also includes information on two other key service areas who deal with the public on a regular basis; the DSO and Environmental Health.

### 3.0 Detail

3.1 The table below compares the official complaints received for the last full financial year and the first six months of the current financial year.

	<b>12 Months to 31 March 2003</b>	<b>6 Months to 30 September 2003</b>
Number received	17	9
Resolved at Stage 1	13	7
Stage 1 still ongoing	0	0
Resolved at Stage 2	1	0
Stage 2 still ongoing	0	2
Complaints received via the Ombudsman	3	0

3.2 Complaints received via the Ombudsman are detailed in the table below:

<b>Financial year</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Ombudsman's Decision</b>
2002/03	28.06.02	Planning Department	Insufficient evidence of maladministration
	03.07.03	Planning Department	No sufficient evidence of maladministration
	29.10.02	Housing Department	Insufficient grounds to pursue response

3.3 The table below compares the complaints received by the DSO for the last full financial year and the first six months of the current financial year.

Most of the complaints relate to missed wheeled bin collections.

<b>DSO</b>	<b>12 months to 31 March 2002</b>	<b>6 months to 30 September 2003</b>
Refuse – Domestic	226	106
Refuse – Other	119	56
Cleansing	7	3

3.4 In the case of Environmental Health the table below shows 'complaints' of a different nature. They are not about the service provided by the Environmental Health Department, but reflect requests for service/help.

<b>Environmental Health</b>	<b>12 months to 31 March 2003</b>	<b>6 months to 30 September 2003</b>
Service Requests	1,257	658
Pest Control Requests	1,564	843

3.5 The Citizens' Panel survey indicates that customer satisfaction with the way we handle complaints has declined from 54% to 45%. This still compares well with top performing Councils where the level of satisfaction for the top 25% starts at 45%, but gives cause for concern and further investigation.

3.6 The current complaints procedure is effective at the initial point of contact. However, once the complaint has been passed to the responsible officer within that Division, we are losing track. The complaints procedure is therefore currently under review and will ensure that we are capturing all complaints and recording them in a central location. A system is in place that enables us to monitor responses to complaints and we are now looking to get customer feedback to find how they consider their complaint was handled.

- 3.7 One of our key race equality targets is the monitoring of racial incidents recorded by the Authority. The mechanism for this will also be considered as part of the complaints procedure review.
- 3.7 Quarterly meetings will be held with Heads of Service to investigate any trends and to identify areas for improvements and action plans to achieve this.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 None directly stemming from this report.

#### **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Overall the Council has few formal complaints which are dealt with in a professional manner. The current complaints procedure however allows complaints to be directed to each service and these complaints are not systematically recorded within the formal complaints procedure. This may therefore distort the formal complaints report. As previously stated, a review of the procedure is in progress to collate the formal complaints at one central location to ensure reporting accuracy in the future.
- 5.2 Whilst we formally record all complaints about our services, we do not have a procedure to collect comments and compliments. The review of the procedure will take this into account.
- 5.3 Our current complaints procedures does not include any mechanism for measuring racial incidents. This area should therefore be included in the review.

#### **9.0 Background Papers**

- 9.1 Complaints schedule

