
REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT	AGENDA ITEM: 15
DATE OF MEETING:	19 October 2006	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	PAM CARROLL (595784) NIGEL GLOSSOP (595703)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	COMPLAINTS & FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS 01 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2006	REF: NG/JHM
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: CE6

1.0 Recommendations

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

2.0 Purpose of Report

This report provides:

- 2.1 A summary of official comments, compliments and complaints received by the Council for the period 1 April 06 to 30 September 06.
- 2.2 A summary of the freedom of information requests received by the Council for the period 1 January 06 to 30 September 06.

3.0 Executive Summary

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

- 3.1 The new comments, compliments and complaints procedure has now been adopted, with people being encouraged to give informal feedback on our services.
- 3.2 4 comments, 4 compliments and 23 complaints have been received between 01 April 06 to 30 September 06.
- 3.3 There has been a further increase in the number of issues recorded. This is due to increased internal awareness of the procedure, the additional recording of comments and compliments and easier access for the public e.g. through the website.
- 3.4 It still remains a target within the Council's new Corporate Plan to actively promote our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.
- 3.5 Members are now informed when a complaint is received relating to their ward. This is for information only.

Freedom of Information

- 3.6 The aim of The Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into force on 1st January 2005, is to extend the right to allow public access to information that the Council holds.
- 3.7 South Derbyshire District Council is committed to making itself more open. A large amount of information is already available to the public, through our website or through our offices and at local libraries.
- 3.8 A total of 61 Freedom of Information requests were received between period 1 January 06 to 30 September 06.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 It is a target within the Council's new Corporate Plan to actively promote our Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure, which includes:
- Publicity campaign
 - Twice yearly reporting along with planned improvements and
 - Feedback provided to local people
- 4.2 The customer leaflet and procedure is available for download from the Website, or can be completed using an electronic form.

5.0 Detail

Comments

- 5.1 The 4 comments received asked for information and they were forwarded to the relevant divisions for action.

Division	01 April 2005 to 31 March 2006	01 April 2006 to 30 September 2006
Planning	Not collected	1
Legal and Democratic	Not collected	1
Environmental Services	Not collected	1
Various Depts highlighted through 'The News'	Not collected	1

Compliments

- 5.2 The 4 compliments received were forwarded to the relevant divisions to enable the positive feedback to be circulated.

Division	01 April 2005 to 31 March 2006	01 April 2006 to 30 September 2006
Customer Services	Not collected	1
Environmental Services	Not collected	3

Complaints

- 5.3 The table below compares the official complaints received for the current financial year to date against the previous financial year.

	01 April 2005 to 31 March 2006	01 April 2006 to 30 September 2006
Number received	33	23
Resolved at Stage 1	23	13
Stage 1 still ongoing	0	1
Resolved at Stage 2	6	5
Stage 2 still ongoing	0	4
Resolved by Ombudsman	2	0
Ombudsman – ongoing	2	0

- 5.4 The 23 complaints received can be broken down as follows

Division	01 April 2005 to 31 March 2006	01 April 2006 to 30 September 2006
Planning Services	10*	9
Housing	12	8
Revenue Services	4	3
Environmental Services	1	2
Finance and Property Services	0	1
Legal and Democratic	4*	0
Leisure and Community	3	0
General	0	0

*This indicates where one complaint has been referred to two separate departments

- 5.5 Although no complaints have been referred to the Ombudsman for this period, updated information regarding those reported in June, are detailed in the table below:

Financial year	Date	Department	Ombudsman's Decision
2005/06	05.08.05	Housing	Closed by Ombudsman as local settlement reached
2005/06	10.10.05	Housing	Ongoing

- 5.6 The schedule, giving details of the comments, compliments and complaints received, actions taken and improvements made is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 5.7 A questionnaire will in future be sent to each Head of Service following a complaint. This will give details of actions taken and improvements made as a consequence of a complaint.
- 5.8 An improvement report will be produced on a quarterly basis and presented at the Corporate Improvement Group for discussion with Heads of Service and CMT.
- 5.9 We are currently investigating the options for training key members of staff in investigating complaints.

Freedom of Information Requests

- 5.10 Although the Freedom of Information Act 2000 creates a general right of access to information, it also sets out information that we do not have to make available for specific reasons. This is information, which, if published, might prejudice the health, safety or security of the Council, our staff, systems, services or property.
- 5.11 We make as much information available as possible without charging for it. We do however reserve the right to levy a reasonable charge where the information request is extensive and would require more than 2 days staff time to satisfy the request.
- 5.12 The Council deals with hundreds of routine requests for information every day by phone and by letter. These are referred to as "business as usual requests". We will deal with these in the normal way. However, information that is not readily available and that has to be prepared or extracted is handled differently. We are entitled to make a charge for this kind of information.
- 5.13 Requests for information under FOI have to be processed within 20 working days. If we turn down a request for information we must have an acceptable reason under FOI.
- 5.14 The table below compares the freedom of information requests received from January -September 2006 against the previous year.

	01 January 2005 to 31 December 2005	01 January 2006 to 30 September 2006
Number received	81	61
Number replied to within 20 statutory days	78	56
Number of Exemptions or partial exemptions	7	1
Number withdrawn	2	2

- 5.19 The requests for information received can be broken down as follows

Division	01 January 2005 to 31 December 2006	01 January 2006 to 30 September 2006
Environmental Services	25*	19*
Planning Services	17*	2
Legal and Democratic	13	12
FOI/Data Protection Officer	8	0
Finance and Property	8*	9
IT and Customer Services	5	7
Housing	4*	5*
Human Resources	4*	3
Leisure and Community	2	6
Revenue Services	1*	2
Policy and Economic Regeneration	1	0
Chief Executive	0	1
All Directorates	0	1

*Same request has involved several divisions

5.20 The details of the Freedom of Information requests received in 2006 are attached at **Appendix B.**

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 None directly stemming from this report.

7.0 Background Papers

None

