

# Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

## 1 December 2020

### Annual Complaints Report – 2019/20

#### For Decision

<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council
<b>Local Councillor(s):</b>	Cllr
<b>Executive Director:</b>	J Mair, Corporate Director, Legal & Democratic
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**Report Status:** Public

**Recommendation:** The Committee are asked to:

- 1) Support the focus on working with services to ensure greater organisational learning from complaints;
- 2) Recognise the savings associated with informal resolution, mediation and relationship building
- 3) Note the sharp increase in complaints in the 2020-21 report for Q2 and understand the likely reasons for this increase
- 4) Celebrate the increase in compliments in the 2020-21 report for Q1;
- 5) Note the complaints performance for the financial year 2019/20 as set out in the Annual Report

**Reason for Recommendation:**

To have an awareness of the numbers and types of complaints and embed a culture of organisational learning.

#### 1. Executive Summary

The Annual Complaints report provides an update on the numbers, types and outcomes of complaints made against services at Dorset Council across the

Directorates. This meets statutory reporting requirements of Children's Services and was presented to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 2 November. However it is included with this report also as it does cover the full range of Council services.

Appendix A of this report provides an up to date complaint position as at the end of quarter two, focussed on the Place Directorate.

Key messages:

- There were 722 complaints across the Directorates in 2019-20;
- Of these only 358 were considered through formal processes;
- 364 have been resolved informally with the Complaints Team working with Operational managers towards more agreeable outcomes with less undue Process;
- Of the 34 Ombudsman investigations only 4 cases revealed maladministration. 3 in Adult services and 1 in Place, at a cost to the Council of £1800 (considerably less than the £14,416.00 in 2018-19);
- 16% of responses exceeded the 20 working day timescale;
- Only 5% of complaints were considered fully justified with 24% part justified;
- There is a large increase in learning and actions arising from complaints;
- There has been an increase in compliments across the directorates.

The Complaints Team as an Assurance function are really starting to make a difference in promoting a culture of learning from complaints. We are also pleased to report that we are able to support managers across the directorates in resolving complaints without undue process, where possible.

Covid19 is thought to have had an impact on case numbers, with both an increase in compliments and complaints during 2020/21. As can be seen from Appendix A, in Q1 there was a demonstrable increase in compliments recognising the positive work of frontline staff in the early weeks of the emergency. There is however a sudden increase in complaints Q2, which is consistent across all Council directorates and likely to be as a result of services coming under more scrutiny with members of the public have more time to voice their opinions during the period of lockdown. We have also seen a rise in behaviours that could be considered unreasonable, some of which require a single point of contact and can be very time consuming to manage.

## **1. Financial Implications**

The new approach taken to complaint management provides a financial benefit with a reduction in Stage 2 complaints and independent investigators fees.

As a result there were £1,800 in LGSCO maladministration charges in 2019-20 compared to £14,416.00 2018-19. In 2018-19 **£15,961.75** was spent on independent investigators for the more complex complaints case. Our positive work towards informal resolutions has reduced this figure to just **£30** in 2019-20

## **2. Well-being and Health Implications**

The Complaints Team are very mindful of wellbeing and 4 members of the team have pursued support via Steps to Wellbeing

## **3. Climate implications**

None

## **4. Other Implications**

None

## **5. Risk Assessment**

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

## **6. Equalities Impact Assessment**

The Corporate Complaints policy has been subject to EQIA

## **7. Appendices**

Appendix A – Q2 Place Complaints Summary

Appendix B - Annual Complaints Report

## **8. Background Papers**

None

**Footnote:**

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.