



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

27 February 2014

Title: Complaints and Compliments Update

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. To provide committee with an update on the work of the organisation on complaints and compliments.

Background

2. As one of the company values is to be a 'listening and learning organisation', complaints and compliments are key to us understanding and learning from the experiences of customers receiving our services.
3. The company currently has a three stage process for dealing with complaints:
 - *Step 1: Problem solving* – where we are able to resolve the complaint at the point that it is brought to our attention
 - *Step 2: Investigation* – a complaint that cannot be immediately resolved and an investigation is required. The timescale for resolution is 10 days (which includes a holding letter).
 - *Step 3: Review* – where a complainant is unhappy with the response following an investigation they can request a review of their complaint by the Managing Director. This will be completed within 20 days.
4. Previously an annual activity report has been presented to this committee outlining performance for the year against key performance indicators and service standards in complaints. Information is also reported to Gateshead Council as part of their annual update to Cabinet on complaints.
5. In 2012/13 the company recorded 761 complaints and 410 compliments. There were also 21 reviews carried out by the Managing Director. An activity report will be provided to the committee in May on performance for 2013/14.
6. This report summarises some of the recent work underway regarding our approach to complaints and compliments.

Complaints and Compliments Review

7. At the end of 2013/14 the overall responsibility for complaints and compliments moved to Corporate Services. At this time, a project officer was seconded into the Involvement Team on a temporary basis to undertake a review of how the company approaches this area. The review is now underway and the findings of which will be reported to Board in May.
8. This review will focus on a number of key areas to ensure that we continue to respond to complaints effectively and learn from these to improve services in the future.
9. The scope of the review includes: -
 - Ensuring that the current policy is still fit for purpose and consider supporting policies which link to complaints.
 - ICT – Identifying any scope for improvements to support recording, monitoring and capturing learning
 - Performance monitoring – Reviewing the indicators used to monitor complaints performance to assess if they are still appropriate and help us to improve, or look to introduce new indicators where appropriate. This will also include looking at the current method of collecting satisfaction information for complaints.
 - Literature/Information available for customers
 - Training and guidance for employees on dealing effectively with complaints and compliments
 - Improving both identifying and implementing learning.
 - Consideration of the resources needed to support effective management of complaints and compliments in the future.

Complaints Scrutiny Panel

10. The Complaints Panel was originally established in 2011 to scrutinise trends in complaints and identify areas for improvement.
11. The panel received detailed performance information and presentations and feedback from managers around reasons for complaints to help inform learning and changes to services. In particular this identified and helped address issues raised regarding surveyors.
12. As part of the review, the project officer is now meeting with the panel on a monthly basis and members are working with us to develop policies, procedures and guidance.
13. Updates on the panel's activity will be reported to future committee meetings.

Internal Audit

14. An internal audit of complaints was carried out in August 2013. This found that the control systems and procedures for the service were satisfactory with the two following areas of best practice recommendations:

- Efficiencies could be achieved with the recording of step one complaints. They are currently recorded on both the Corporate Complaints System and on Northgate.
- There were no reports available from the Corporate Complaints System to identify trends in Service areas. Efficiencies could be achieved if the report was available directly from the system instead of adapting a report in an excel spreadsheet.

15. These recommendations will be considered as part of the complaints and compliments review.

Next Steps

16. Findings of the review and recommendations will be reported to Board in May. Following this, subject to approval the new guidance and approach will be implemented with the appropriate resource to support this.

Link to values

17. This report relates to the following company values;
- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
 - Being a listening and learning organisation
 - Being open, honest and transparent

Impact on tenants

18. The way in which we deal with complaints and learn from them helps us to improve services for all customers.

Risk Management Implications

19. The Homes and Communities Agency's Regulatory Framework requires landlords to have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.
20. This continued focus on complaints ensures that we operating within these requirements.

Financial Implications

21. The review of complaints will involve considering the financial implications of any recommendations put forward. This will be presented as part of the overall report to Board for consideration.

Equality and Diversity Implications

22. TGHC is committed to involving people from diverse communities to ensure everyone's views, needs and aspirations are considered in the decision making process.

23. The review will consider how improved profiling of complaints can be carried out to understand whether there are any persistent trends in dissatisfaction.

Value for Money implications

24. Through taking complaints and compliments seriously and identifying learning from this process, this ensures that things can be addressed potentially reducing the number of complaints and its associated work in the future.

Environmental implications

25. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

Consultation carried out

26. Consultation on the review has already begun with discussions at the Service Managers Meeting to identify the key areas of concern or improvement for employees. Employees and customers will be involved throughout the review.

Health Implications

27. There are no direct health implications arising from this report.

Recommendation

28. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the update on complaints and compliments to date and to: -
- agree to receive the Annual Activity Report on Complaints and Compliments at May's Committee;
 - agree to receive 6 monthly updates on Complaints and Compliments thereafter.