

London Borough of Enfield

General Purposes Committee

20th October 2022

Subject: Enfield Council Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021-22

Cabinet Member: Cllr Tim Leaver

Executive Director: Fay Hammond, Executive Director of Resources

Key Decision: N/A

Purpose of Report

1. To summarise the findings of the Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021-22. The report focuses on the nature of complaints and learning they provide to improve services in the future.
2. To provide the General Purposes Committee with an overview of MEQ response quality analysis findings as per their request in May 2022.

Proposal(s)

3. Note the findings and improvement actions included in the Corporate Complaints Annual Report

Relevance to the Council's Corporate Plan

4. Analysing corporate complaints, Members Enquiries (MEQs) and compliments on an annual basis provides valuable insight into customer experience. This learning informs Enfield Council's future approach to service improvement.

Background

5. This annual report covers the period of 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. It focuses on the nature of complaints received by the Council, handling performance and learning elicited to shape future service improvements. It also provides insight into MEQs and compliments received during the same period.
6. The report content has changed compared to previous years to provide improved insight and learning such as multiple year trend analysis, greater granularity regarding service volumes and response performance breakdowns. Recent technology changes will provide further detailed insight for 2022/23 report.

7. In addition, the annual Ombudsman Complaints Report is now incorporated into the Annual Corporate Complaints Report to provide a holistic overview of complaints and learning.
8. The Annual Statutory Complaints reports for Adults and Children Social Care are produced separately to the Corporate Complaints report as these complaints are processed and monitored under a specific statutory framework. The Children's Social Care report has been produced and the Adults Social Care report is nearing completion. Dates to present these to relevant scrutiny panels are currently being identified.

Main Considerations for the Council

Corporate Complaints Annual Report 21/22 Findings Summary

9. During 2021/22, Enfield Council received 2,069 complaints and 7,844 MEQs. Response time performance targets were not achieved although there were in-year performance improvements (Complaints - 77% on time responses; MEQs – 78% on time responses).
10. When comparing 3 year-trends, both Complaints and MEQ volumes have increased year-on-year with the highest received for both areas between April 21 to March 22. Complaint response performance time has remained broadly the same despite the increase in volume. MEQ volumes have significantly increased year-on-year whilst response performance has decreased.
11. There were reduced escalations from first to final stage complaints as well as the number of decisions upheld in favour of the complainant by the Ombudsman.
12. The majority of complaints related to service delivery, quality and staff conduct. High volume service areas included Waste Operations, Housing Repairs, Housing Advisory and financial assessment, income & debt services. These also represent high contact service areas (e.g. bin collections and council housing repairs) and services which have experienced significant demand increase, notably homelessness applications post Covid-19 which almost doubled compared to the previous year.
13. Member Enquiries demonstrated significant focus on fly-tipping, resident missed bin collections as well as maintaining public spaces, preventing homelessness and traffic calming measures.
14. Ombudsman upheld complaints identified development opportunities to reduce service delays and improve documentation processes.

Improvement Actions

15. A series of corporate and individual service improvements are underway to improve response times, quality and service delivery.
16. At an organisational level, changes to resources structures, processes and systems are being implemented and embedded throughout 22/23 to improve

initial handling delays and provide improved insight to inform targeted service improvements.

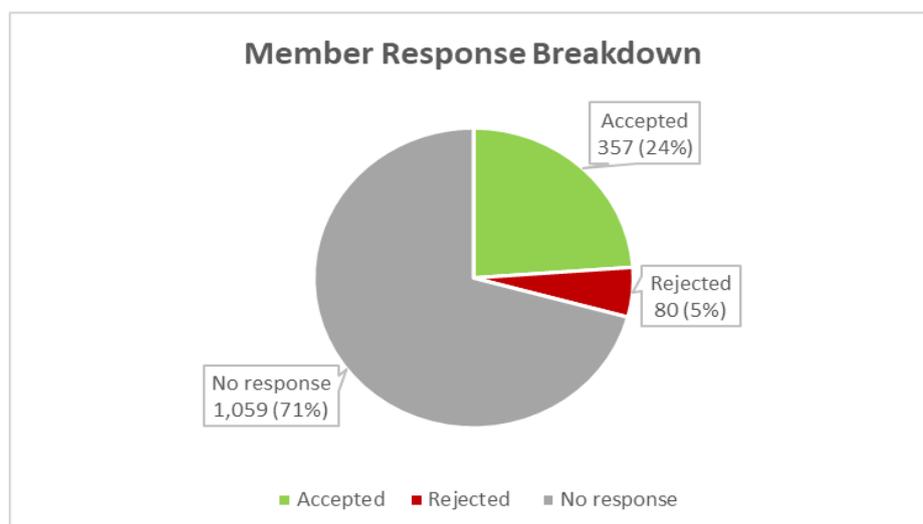
17. Complaints learning from 21/22 have informed a series of specific service level action plans. These include enhanced staff training and induction programmes, service redesigns, recruitment drives and improved customer communication processes to enhance service delivery and reduce the initial complaints received.

Annual Report Feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

18. The Annual Corporate Complaints Report was presented to OSC on 29th September 2022. Feedback from the Committee identified the following enhancements which will be added to the report prior to publication on the Council's website.
19. 'Complaint Volumes by Service/Team 2021/22' graph in section 3.3 (p.7) only includes services which received at least 1% of the total complaints. The remaining 20% of complaints consists of:
 - Services which received very few complaints individually, but which total 11% of complaints
 - 9% of complaints which were not assigned a service category
20. For GPC's information, the later point has been addressed as a control issue through the new case management system requiring service identification as part of the handling process.
21. OSC also requested further information regarding Ombudsman upheld complaints. This is currently being developed and will be shared with GPC separately.

GPC Requested MEQ Response Quality Analysis – Summary Findings

22. In May 2022, GPC asked for further information regarding MEQ response quality. Due to the new MEQ case management system (Verint), it is now possible to provide summary findings from the initial analysis (5th May – 31st July 2022). This section highlights the main findings.
23. A total of 1,701 MEQs were received during the period, out of which 1,496 were due for response by 31st July 2022. Below is a breakdown of the Member responses:



24. As the majority of responses were neither rejected nor accepted by Members, there are limitations to this initial analysis and regular quarterly analysis throughout the year will develop quality insight and learning.
25. The top 5 reasons for rejection were as follows:

Reason	No. of Rejections
Follow up questions	15
Not fully answered	11
Unhappy with response (approach/policy)	9
Unhappy with response (disputed by resident)	8
Monitor until case/work concludes & confirm outcome	8

26. Firstly, the largest reason for rejecting responses was not due to quality issues, but rather Members wishing to ask follow-up questions. With no recourse to communicate with officers within the system, responses were rejected in order to ask these questions
27. Secondly, quality issues related to lack of detailed information and failure to address all the points raised. The majority of senior officer responses subsequently addressed these gaps. Learning from these responses will contribute towards a new officer guide when responding to an MEQ.
28. Thirdly, dissatisfaction with the response related to either a policy/approach taken or resident disputing the officer's initial response. For the former, most senior officers explained why the approach/policy was in place or necessary. For the latter, senior officers provided further information either evidencing or explaining the Council's position.
29. Lastly, there were occasions where Members wished to be advised of case outcomes and consequently rejected initial responses to ensure the case remained open. It was not possible to identify a specific MEQ category where this was a frequent occurrence. However, this could be due to the data limitations.
30. In terms of improvement actions from this learning:
- **Follow up questions:** a technical enhancement is currently being tested to allow two-way communication between officers and Members within the system. Work is also underway to provide Members with the opportunity to ask a set of follow up questions once they receive the response prior to accepting/rejecting it. The implementation date is yet to be confirmed as it is subject to testing. However, once implemented this will enhance the user experience and remove this rejection 'reason'.
 - **Response quality improvements:** Learning from the responses will contribute towards a new officer guide when responding to an MEQ.
 - **Advising on outcome post response:** Explore options for officer reminder process to update Member once outcome is known, including any system/technical solutions.

Financial Implications

31. The improvements in service delivery associated with changing the structure, processes and systems have been incorporated into the 2022-23 budget

Legal Implications

32. There are no Legal implications

Workforce Implications

33. There are no workforce implications

Property Implications

34. There are no Property implications

Other Implications

35. There are no other implications

Options Considered

36. Not applicable as this report is to note the findings from the Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2021-22.

Conclusions

37. 2021/22 saw the largest volume of Complaints and MEQs compared to the last three years and challenges regarding response performance. However, there were reductions in the number of complaints escalated from first to final stage. The Ombudsman also upheld fewer complaints compared to the previous year.
38. From a customer perspective, there were high complaint volumes regarding waste management, housing, homelessness and financial support. Member Enquiries demonstrated significant focus on fly-tipping, resident missed bin collections as well as maintaining public spaces, preventing homelessness and traffic calming measures.
39. In addition to redesigning corporate resource structures, processes and systems to improve response time and quality, a number of actions plans are underway at an individual service level, informed by complaints learning throughout the year. These include enhanced staff training and induction programmes, service redesigns, recruitment drives and improved customer communication processes to improve service delivery and reduce the initial complaints received.

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Date: 06/10/22

Appendix: Enfield Council Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021/22
(attached separately).