

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 December 2022

Resources and F&R OSC Customer Feedback Report 2021/22

Recommendation

That the Committee considers and comments on the content of the Warwickshire County Council Corporate Customer Feedback overview report 2021/22.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Summary of feedback received

Feedback is always welcomed from customers of the Council's services. The Council receives 4 types of feedback: comments, compliments, complaints, and questions. There were 5,017 cases created during 2021/22, which is an increase of almost 6% (4,737) on the previous year.

1.2 Customers have a choice of channels to provide their feedback: digitally via a self account they can set up through the Council's website, telephone, face to face at an outlet, or by post. Generally over recent years the use of a self account for feedback has been around 70%, rising to over 77% during 2020/21. However 2021/22 has seen a decrease in the proportion of complaints created via a self-account and a fall in the overall usage of self-accounts by 3% to 74%.

1.3 During the financial year 2021/22 the volume of cases processed and closed (4,746) decreased by just over 3% (4,903) on the previous financial year.

1.4 Timeliness

The Council has specific Service Level Agreements (SLA) for timeliness of response to feedback classed as a question or a complaint. Most cases that are received by the Council are dealt with by the appropriate Directorate team. During 2021/22, there were 3,228 cases assigned to teams across the Council. Of the 2,585 complaint and question cases assigned and processed during the period, 77% (89% of questions and 68% of complaints) were closed within the appropriate SLA. There is no SLA performance target for questions, however the target for complaints is 70%.

1.5 Complaints

- During 2021/22 there were a total of 1,941 complaints closed across the Council either by an assigned Directorate team, by the customer relations team or at triage. This represents an increase of over 21% on 2020/21 and over 27% more than during 2019/20. Of those closed 1,464 cases achieved the service level agreement (i.e., timeliness requirement), which means that over 75% of complaints were managed within required timescales. This achieves the authority's target of 70%.
- Most of the complaints raised focused on perceived issues with communication, physical environment issues, and protection of users. However, Contact Us currently only allows the selection of one complaint reason for each complaint raised; therefore, this may not provide a holistic view of all issues.
- 15.5% of the complaints closed were not upheld
- 17% of complaints have been upheld either fully or partially
- 23% of questions have been answered as part of a complaint.

1.6 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) can consider complaints from individuals against local authorities. The LGSCO usually expects the complainant to have completed the Council's own complaints process before it will consider a complaint. In the year 2021/22 the LGSCO received 54 complaints and enquiries and closed off/completed 58 complaints in respect of the Council (which included a number of complaints received by the LGSCO in the previous year).

In 14 cases the complainants were referred back to the Council for local resolution; in 3 cases advice was given to the complainant by the LGSCO; and in 3 cases the complaint or enquiry was incomplete or invalid.

Therefore, whilst the LGSCO concluded 58 complaints or enquiries only 38 were counted as a complaint decision by the LGSCO with 19 being closed after initial enquiries and 19 complaints being subject to full investigation by the LGSCO, 14 of which were upheld whilst 5 were not. This means that the LGSCO upheld 74% of the complaints it investigated against the Council which is slightly higher than the average for similar local authorities in this period (71%).

In the previous year (2020/21) the LGSCO closed off/completed 41 complaints or enquiries about the Council, undertaking 9 full investigations and upholding 6 of them giving an uphold rate of 67%. Therefore, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of complaints the LGSCO has upheld, however there was a slight increase in the number of complaints or enquiries considered by the LGSCO in this period. The difference between 2020/21 and 2021/22 is also not entirely unexpected given that there was a period during 2020 where the Ombudsman stayed claims given the pressures on Local Authorities responding to the pandemic.

Further details about the LGSCO complaints for 2021/22 can be seen in a report which was taken to Cabinet on 8 September 2022.

1.7 Learning from feedback

Putting things right where they have gone wrong and learning from issues raised is the most important part of our customer feedback process. Where there are opportunities for learning and change beyond the individual complaint raised, we look carefully at how best to do this. From the information captured on the system the main categories of learning have been recorded as follows:

1. Poor communication by officers, both internally and with the customer
2. Better planning required
3. Staff training needed
4. Improve the time for completing cases

- 1.8 The customer feedback report will be fundamentally reviewed for 2023 to reflect changes the Council is making to the customer experience, and useful feedback from Communities OSC

2. Financial Implications

None

3. Environmental Implications

None

4. Supporting Information

Performance highlights:

- 4.1 Number of cases created during 2021/22 was 6% up on 2020/21.
- 4.2 During 2019/20 approximately 70% of all cases were created digitally however during 2020/21 this increased to over 77% and fell slightly during 2021/22 to 74%. It should be noted that this is a corporate figure and there are differences across Directorates. For example, during 2021/22, the Communities Directorate received 80% of its feedback digitally whereas People Directorate received 38% of feedback digitally.
- 4.3 Of the 2,585 cases assigned to directorate teams, 77% (2,000) of cases were closed within the appropriate SLA (68% of complaints and 89% of questions), which is a decrease of 4% on 2019/20.
- 4.4 Over 82% of complaint cases during 2021/22 were in relation to:
- Communication 45%

- Physical environment issues 26%
- Protection of user over 12%

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

Not applicable

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – WCC Corporate Customer Feedback Overview report.

Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

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