

CLACKMANNANSHIRE COUNCIL

Report to Scrutiny Committee of 20 November 2008

Subject: Complaints System Review

Prepared by: Stuart Crickmar, Business Improvement

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1. Scrutiny Committee agreed that a focus group should look at the effectiveness of current arrangements for recording and learning from complaints data to improve customer service. This report outlines the findings of that work.
- 1.2. A number of service management information systems were analysed to understand if all complaints were being captured and logged on the Council's complaints database. Analysis suggests that complaints are being logged on the system by Complaint Monitors as per Council procedures.
- 1.3. The analysis confirmed that the figure of around 150 formal complaints per annum is likely to be reasonably accurate.
- 1.4. A further piece of work considered the effectiveness of the current information system used to log and monitor Council complaints. Based on the volume of complaints received each year, a desktop appraisal suggests that the current system, whilst somewhat outdated, could be brought up to date as a cost-effective option.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Committee notes the findings of the focus group and ongoing work to improve the management of comments, complaints and compliments.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The comments & complaints system currently handles approximately 150 complaints each year. The present system was built in-house in 1997 by the Information Technology service.
- 3.2. At Scrutiny Committee concern was expressed that possibly not all complaints were being captured on the database, and therefore, no accurate, comprehensive picture was available to inform learning and continuous improvement from complaints data. A focus group was tasked to explore the

issue, which in turn requested that Business Change investigate the issues, explore options and make recommendations.

- 3.3. The analysis conducted by Business Change formed two distinct parts:
 - a review of 'complaints' captured on four major council management information systems during 2006/07: FLARE (Waste and Environmental Health etc), Anite (Housing), the Leisure Services system and the Social Services system; and
 - a desktop appraisal of other information systems available for capturing complaints.
- 3.4. On FLARE, 20,415 records were reviewed. Of these, 1,590 (7.7%) made reference to the word 'complain' or a variation of, e.g. complains, complained, complainant etc. The remainder could be categorised as requests for service, for example "can I organise a bulky uplift?". Of the 1,590 (service failures), 15 (less than 1%) were found to be formal complaints, as opposed to "my bin wasn't lifted today, can someone come back and sort it out?", which may be categorised as a service failure. All 15 formal complaints had been logged on the Council's comments & complaints system. Further breakdown is provided in Appendices A and B for illustrative purposes.
- 3.5. On Anite, 42,480 records were reviewed. Of these, 34 made reference to the word 'complain' or a variation of, e.g. complains, complained, complainant etc, and may therefore be regarded as service failures. Complaints were logged directly on the comments & complaints system.
- 3.6. Within Social Services a statutory complaints officer maintains a comprehensive record of all complaints. All complaints that are logged on the Social Services system are also recorded by the monitoring officer on the Council's Comments & Complaints system. For the year 2006/07, 10 complaints were recorded.
- 3.7. Leisure Services also maintain a comprehensive record of all complaints. All 29 recorded for the year 2006/07 were inputted directly to the Council's comments and complaints system.
- 3.8. Not all service management information systems were analysed, however, this significant sample indicates that service requests, service failures and formal complaints can be differentiated for analysis purposes. The analysis also confirms that formal complaints are being systematically logged on the comments and complaints system by service Complaint Monitors as per the procedure.
- 3.9. Based on the sample, the evidence seems to suggest that the figure of approximately 150 formal complaints per annum is reasonably accurate.
- 3.10. An evident gap is systematic recording of comments and compliments; at present the focus is mainly on complaints recording. Work is ongoing through the Customer First programme to address this.

- 3.11. The present comments and complaints IT system was developed in 1997. It was developed in-house on the Lotus Notes platform. The system has two sister systems, both of which are also designed on the Lotus Notes platform: Councillor Enquiries and Freedom of Information. The quality of these systems has been recognised at a national level, with the Councillor Enquiries system being promoted to other councils by the Improvement Service.
- 3.12. In 2006, working with Admin & Legal Services, Business Improvement & Technology Services staff produced a document setting out the requirements for a replacement management system that would bring the existing corporate comments & complaints system fully up to date. That project was, in some respects, overtaken by follow up work to the Crerar Review which recommended that for the public sector, a *'standardised complaints handling system should be introduced, overseen by the Ombudsman'*. The follow up *"Fit for Purpose Complaints Action Group Report"* has recently been presented to Scottish ministers and the outcome is awaited. In the circumstances, the decision to delay further work on an in-house system was taken.
- 3.13. Desktop work conducted as part of this exercise found that the majority of those councils researched had developed in-house systems. Three councils of those researched procured 'off-the-shelf' systems, with initial start up costs ranging from £35,000 to £110,000. Whilst the research was limited in its scope, it is unlikely that a business case for any such investment could be justified based on approximately 150 complaints per annum.
- 3.14. As part of the Customer First programme, work is already underway to link the existing comments and complaints system with our developing Customer Contact Management System. This, to some extent, will facilitate easier complaints, comments and compliments recording for contact centre and CAPS staff as well as providing a richer source of management information. Implementation of the integration is currently planned for December 2008.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. Based on the analysis undertaken, it would appear that the figure of approximately 150 formal complaints per annum is a reasonably accurate representation of the number of formal complaints (as defined in the Comments and Complaints procedure) received.
- 4.2. From the analysis conducted there would appear to be no evidence to suggest that formal complaints logged on to service management information systems are not being logged on to Council's comments and complaints system.
- 4.3. From the service management information systems analysed it was possible to differentiate between service request, service failures (not done right first time) and formal complaints, each of which could be broken down for further analysis, e.g. type, date, geographic area if required, thus providing a rich data source for learning and improvement. However, currently there is no one

system that gives an overview across the Council; service systems have to be interrogated individually.

- 4.4. Work is presently underway to integrate the current comments and complaints system with our Customer Contact Management System, which should to some extent provide an improved overview. Work is also ongoing to improve the quality of data available for comments and compliments received to further aid improvements in customer service.
- 4.5. Desktop analysis concluded that, based on the research conducted, there would appear to be no sound business case to justify the cost of procuring an off-the-shelf system on the basis of 150 formal complaints per annum. Upgrading the present in-house system is likely to be the most cost-effective option, however, a final decision will not be made until Scottish ministers have issued their response to the *"Fit for Purpose Complaints Action Group Report"*.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6.2. Declarations

- (1) The recommendations contained within this report support or implement Corporate Priorities, Council Policies and/or the Community Plan:

- **Corporate Priorities (Key Themes)** (Please tick)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Achieving Potential | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maximising Quality of Life | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Securing Prosperity | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Enhancing the Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maintaining an Effective Organisation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

- **Council Policies** (Please detail)

- **Community Plan (Themes)** (Please tick)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Community Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Economic Development | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Environment and Sustainability

Health Improvement

- (2) In adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. (Please tick)
- (3) The full financial implications of the recommendations contained in this report are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. (Please tick)

Head of Business Improvement & Technology Services

Director of Corporate Development

Report to Scrutiny Committee

To accompany all Reports to Scrutiny Committee

To: Head of Administration And Legal Services

Author: Stuart Crickmar	Date: 24 October 2008
Service: Business Improvement & Technology Services	
Date of Meeting: 20 November 2008	
Title of Report: Complaints System Review	

Recommendation that the attached report be:

1. Given unrestricted circulation

(tick appropriate box)

2. Taken in private

By virtue of paragraph ____ of schedule 7A, Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Appendices attached to this report (if none, state "none")

1. Appendix A & B, both contained within the report.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

List of Background Papers (if none, state "none")

1. None
- 2.
- 3.

Note: All documents specified must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of the meeting at which the report is considered.

Appendix A: Analysis of FLARE entries for 2007 containing 'complain' or variation of

Description	Volume	%
Abandoned Vehicle	1	
Air Quality COMPLAINT	4	
Bread & Flour Confec	2	
Breeding Estabm'nt COMPLAINT	1	
Commercial Waste Service COMPLAINT	248	2%
Compl. against member of staff	1	
Concern about Animal Welfare	1	
Condition general – Private	1	
Dampness – Private	1	
Dog related	131	
Disrepair – Private	2	
Domestic	11	
Dust COMPLAINT unknown premise	1	
General advice	2	
Graffiti	1	
Grass Areas	1	
H&S Other	1	
Household Kerbside COMPLAINT	19	
Household Waste Service COMPLAINT	1033	65%
Housing Areas	1	
Landscaping	1	
Litter - Landscape Areas	1	
Miscellaneous	8	
Noise	17	
Nuisance	7	
Odour	4	
Other Food COMPLAINT/Problem	23	
Ownership of Ground	2	
Planters/Floral Tubs	1	
Public Parks	1	
Request for new bin	1	
Shrub Beds	1	
Signs	1	
Smoking COMPLAINT – business / person	12	
Street Sweeping COMPLAINT	39	
Structural Disrepair	1	
Trees	1	
Unhygienic Practices / Premises	4	
Weed Killing	1	
Woodlice	1	
Total	1590	

Appendix B: Analysis of FLARE entries for 2007 found to be Formal Complaints

Extract from FLARE lines of 2007				
LL	Landscaping	21/09/2007		Formal Complaint
RCC	Commercial Waste Service Complaint	29/06/2007	FK10 1JL	Formal Complaint
RHC	Household Waste Service Complaint	13/04/2007	FK10 1TF	Formal Complaint
RKC	Household Kerbside Complaint	16/02/2007	FK10 2ND	Formal Complaint
RHC	Household Waste Service Complaint	26/02/2007	FK10 2SZ	Formal Complaint
RKC	Household Kerbside Complaint	27/03/2007	FK10 2UD	Formal Complaint
LG1	Grass Areas	19/09/2007	FK10 2XG	Formal Complaint
RKC	Household Kerbside Complaint	10/01/2007	FK10 3ER	Formal Complaint
RCC	Commercial Waste Service Complaint	10/04/2007	FK10 3SA	Formal Complaint
E21	Nuisance - accumulation refuse	02/04/2007	FK10 4HR	Formal Complaint
RHC	Household Waste Service Complaint	06/07/2007	FK10 4ST	Formal Complaint
RCC	Commercial Waste Service Complaint	14/03/2007	FK11 7AP	Formal Complaint
RHC	Household Waste Service Complaint	18/09/2007	FK12 5DE	Formal Complaint
LG1	Grass Areas	25/05/2007	FK13 6DE	Formal Complaint
RHC	Household Waste Service Complaint	18/09/2007	FK14 7DQ	Formal Complaint

