



# **STANDARDS AND ETHICS QUARTER 1 REPORT 2018/2019**

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This is the quarterly report to the Audit & Governance Committee detailing both the figures for the Ethical Indicators and the figures for the Local Determination of Complaints process for 2018/19.

For clarification purposes the months covered by the quarters are as follows:

Quarter 1 – 1 April to 30 June

Quarter 2 – 1 July to 30 September

Quarter 3 – 1 October to 31 December

Quarter 4 – 1 January to 31 March

The report is split into 2 parts for ease of reference; Part 1 refers to the local determination of complaints, part 2 is the table showing the ethical indicators figures.

The report will enable the Audit & Governance Committee to build up a picture over time of how many complaints are received and where these are coming from. The parts of the Code of Conduct which have been breached will also be recorded to enable training to be targeted effectively.

# Part 1 - Local Determination of Complaints

[www.nwleics.gov.uk](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk)

The Monitoring Officer received 1 complaint in Quarter 1 of 2018/19 relating to 1 District councillor.

## **2.1 Assessment Sub-committee Decisions**

There have been 0 Assessment Sub-committee meetings in this quarter.

As members will be aware, the Monitoring Officer now pursues an informal dispute resolution process prior to initiating formal proceedings via the Sub-committee route.

**1 complaint received in Quarter 4 2017/18 has been resolved informally in Quarter 1.**

## **2.2 Timeliness of Decision**

The Standards for England Guidance stated that the Assessment Sub-committee should complete its initial assessment of an allegation “within an average of 20 working days” to reach a decision on what should happen with the complaint. The Council has taken this standard and adapted it under the new rules to aim to hold an Assessment Sub-committee within 20 working days of notifying the parties that informal resolution is not possible.

## **2.3 Review Requests**

There have been no review requests in Quarter 1. Review requests can only be made following a decision of ‘No further Action’ by the Assessment Sub-committee where there is submission of new evidence or information by the complainant.

## **2.4 Subsequent Referrals**

None to report – see above.

## **2.5 Outcome of Investigations**

There were no investigations concluded in this period.

## **2.6 Parts of the Code Breached**

This section is intended to show where there are patterns forming to enable the Audit and Governance Committee to determine where there needs to be further training for Councillors. Targeting training in this way makes it more sustainable and, hopefully, more effective.

2 So far this year, the following areas of the code were found to have been breached:

N/A

## Part 2 – Ethical Indicators

REF	Performance Indicator Description	Officer Responsible For Providing Information	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
			2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19
1.0	Objections to the councils accounts	Financial Planning Team Manager	0	0						
1.1	Follow up action relating to breaches of the Member/Officer Protocol (Members)	Head of Legal And Support Services	0	0						
1.2	Disciplinary action relating to breaches of the Member/Officer Protocol (staff)	Human Resources Team Manager	0	0						
1.3	Public interest reports	Senior Auditor	0	0						
1.4	Number of whistle blowing incidents reported		0	0						
1.5	No. of recommendations made to improve governance procedures/policies		17	25						
1.6	No. Of recommendations implemented		12	5						

# Stage 1 Complaints

First stage of a formal complaint. A formal complaint can be made if a customer believes a service within the Council has let them down, we did something wrong or a service we provided was unfair. We have 10 working days to provide to response to the complaint.

Complaints responded to on time in Q1 **70%**

We received an average of **10** Complaints a month in Q1

Our average response time was **10 days**

- Top 3 types of Stage 1 complaints Q1**
- Revenues and Benefits
  - Planning and Development
  - Housing Repairs

The average response in Q1 was in line with our corporate complaints policy of 10 working days. The success of this can be mainly down to a more structured approach when dealing with complaints. Having a dedicated Feedback resource allows for complaints to be logged within 2 working days of receipt so the information can get out to the teams to allow the investigation to begin as soon as possible. A lot of hard work has gone into building relationships with teams and managers to enable good working practice which in turn benefits the complainant with an on time response.

**29** Stage 1 complaints were resolved in Q1. This is an increase of **12%** from Q1 17/18

REF	Performance Indicator Description	Officer Responsible for Providing Information	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
			2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19
<b>Stage 1 Complaints Received</b>			2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19
2.0	Total no. of Stage 1 complaints received	Corporate Complaints Officer	28	30						
2.1	No. of Stage 1 complaints Resolved		26	29						
2.2	No. of customers who raised their Stage 1 complaint to a Stage 2		5	2						
2.3	No. of Stage 1 complaints still open and within 10 days		2	1						

# Stage 2 Complaints

complaint:

If the customer is dissatisfied with our response to their Stage 1 complaint, they can ask for this to be raised to a Stage 2 for further investigation. These investigations are carried out by Heads of Service. We have 10 working days to provide a response to the complaint.

Stage 2 Complaints responded to in Q1 **100%**

We received an average of **2** complaints a month in Q1

Our average response time was **21** days. Two particularly complicated cases have increased this average

- Top types of Stage 2 complaints Q1**
- Planning and Development
  - Housing Asset Management
  - Planning Policy

7 Stage 2 complaints were resolved in Q1. This is more than twice as many as in Q1 17/18. This is due to having a dedicated Feedback resource and also the efficiency of teams getting their responses back.

The high average response time for stage two cases can be attributed to the complex nature of certain Planning Complaints. These require detailed investigation in order to provide an appropriate response that ensures the complainant's concerns are addressed.

REF	Performance Indicator Description	Officer Responsible for Providing Information	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
			2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19
<b>Stage 2 Complaints Received</b>										
3.0	Total no. of Stage 2 complaints received	Corporate Complaints Officer	5	7						
3.1	No. of Stage 2 complaints Resolved		3	7						
3.2	% of stage 2 complaints answered on time		60	29						
3.3	No. of Stage 2 complaints still open and within 10 days		2	0						

## Definition of an MP Enquiry:

These are enquiries sent in from local MP's on behalf of their constituent. These can be independent enquiries or could be linked to an earlier complaint which we may not have resolved to the customer's satisfaction. We have 10 working days to provide a response to the enquiry.

MP enquiries responded to in Q1 **100%**

We received an average of **3 MP enquiries** each month in Q1

Our average response time was **7 days.**

## What the MP Enquiries were about:

- Housing Management
- Environmental Protection
- Revenues and Benefits

9 MP enquiries were resolved in Q1. This is a decrease of **11%** from Q4 17/18. The biggest reduction in MP enquiries is Housing and Property Services which suggest service improvements are reducing referrals to the MP.

REF	Performance Indicator Description	Officer Responsible for Providing Information	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
			Actual 2016/17	2017/18	Actual 2016/17	2017/18	Actual 2016/17	2017/18	Actual 2016/17	2017/18
<b>MP Enquiries received</b>			Actual 2016/17	2017/18	Actual 2016/17	2017/18	Actual 2016/17	2017/18	Actual 2016/17	2017/18
4.0	Total no. of MP enquiries (req) received	Head of Legal and Support Services	19	9						
4.1	% of req responded to on time		63	67						



## Definition of an Ombudsman complaint:

If the customer has followed our Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints procedure and is still unhappy with the outcome, they are entitled to take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman for independent judgement. They will review the details and decide whether we, as a Council, have a case to answer in respect of the complainant.

Ombudsman Complaints received in Q1 was 0

Ombudsman complaints resolved in Q1 were 0

0 cases resolved

- 0 not upheld
- 0 upheld

## What the Ombudsman complaints were/are about:

- No new Ombudsman complaints were received during Q1

We currently have one Ombudsman case now outstanding. This is a case which is related to Revenues and Benefits. The Ombudsman has recently asked for further information which is to be supplied to them by the end of October 2018.

REF	Performance Indicator Description	Officer Responsible for Providing Information	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
			Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19
<b>Ombudsman Complaints received</b>			Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19
5.0	Total no. of Ombudsman Complaints received	Head of Legal and Support Services	0	0						
5.1	No of req still open and within 10 working days		0	0						

- No of complaints still open **1**
- There were **14** cases that were over due in Q1. This is an increase of **50%** against Q4 of 2017/18.
- **6** Service Areas received 1 or more complaints.
- No. of service areas that did not receive any complaints = **19**

The breakdown of Service Areas that received 1 or more complaints in Q1 is:

- Housing Asset Management
- Planning and Development
- Environmental Protection
- Housing Management
- Revenues and Benefits
- Planning Policy

Total number of complaints responded to in Q1  
**37**

We received an average of 12 Complaints per month in Q1

Our average response time was **12 days**

**36** complaints were resolved in Q1. This is equal from the same period in 17/18

## What we do differently as a result of the complaints received:

- Developing the relationship between Feedback (the complaints team) and the Service Areas has resulted in an improvement in:
  - Easier communication of lessons to be learned back to the Service Area so that repeat complaints are reduced
  - An improvement in the response time and the quality of responses
- Feedback from complaints is being used to inform the emerging strategies such as reforms to Customer Services and the Pre-application Process in Planning

# Freedom of Information (FOI)

## Type of FOI requests received:

### Business as usual (BAU) requests:

If the requested information can be quickly and easily sent to the requester then it may be dealt with within the normal course of business and treated as BAU.

**Total number of BAU requests in Q1**

**58**

### Transfers:

Are FOI requests received by us but do not fall within our remit– i.e. Adult Social Care, Children’s Services or Highways are a few examples.

**Total number of Transfers in Q1**

**29**

### Subject Access Requests (SAR):

A SAR is a request from an individual to see information an organisation holds on them.

**Total number of SAR received in Q1**

**3**

### Land charges (LC) searches:

Specific information about a particular property and the surrounding area for buyers and sellers.

**Total number of LC Searches in Q1**

**40**

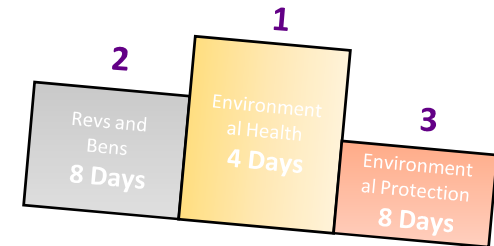
**31** unique visitors to the council’s open data page

We received an average of **14** FOI’s a month in Q3

Our average response time was **12** days

We had a decrease of **64%** compared to Q1 (17/18) for number of FOI’s received

**Top 3** service areas with the **quickest** response times FOI’s



REF	Performance Indicator Description	Officer Responsible for providing information	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
			Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19
Freedom of Information Act Indicators			Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19
6.0	Total no. of requests (req) received	Records Management Officer	120	43						
6.1	% req answered on time		100	84						
6.2	No. of non compliant req		9	0						
6.3	No of FOI appeals		0	0						
6.4	Number withheld due to exemptions/fees applied		5	7						

# Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Indicators

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REF	Performance Indicator Description	Officer Responsible for Providing Information	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
			Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19	Actual 2017/18	2018/19
7.0	No. of directed surveillance authorisations granted during the quarter	Senior Auditor	0	0						
7.1	No. in force at the end of the quarter		0	0						
7.2	No. of CHIS recruited during the quarter		0	0						
7.3	No. ceased to be used during the quarter		0	0						
7.4	No. active at the end of the quarter		0	0						
7.5	No. of breaches (particularly unauthorised surveillance)		0	0						
7.6	No. of applications submitted to obtain communications data which were rejected		0	0						
7.7	No. of notices requiring disclosure of communications data		0	0						
7.8	No. of authorisations for conduct to acquire communications data		0	0						
7.9	No. of recordable errors		0	0						