STANDING ITEMS

1. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION: QUARTERLY REPORT

Purpose

To provide a summary of the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by the Council in quarter one of 2014/15.

Background and procedure for processing FOI requests

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 came into force in January 2005 and allows members of the public to request information from public authorities. Some information might be withheld to protect various interests which are allowed for by the Act. If this is the case, the public authority must give the reason why it has withheld information.

FOI requests

FOI requests have increased in numbers and complexity over the years since the legislation was introduced. The Council received 60 requests in the first year 2005/06, rising to 624 in 2013/14. Figures relating to the past four financial years are set out below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Number within deadline</th>
<th>Within 21 – 30 days</th>
<th>31+ days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15 to date</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>153*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not all deadlines for June 2014 have passed.

169 requests were received in quarter one of 2014/15. This represents an increase of 47 requests, or a 38.5% increase on quarter one of the previous year.

In June 2014 the Committee requested to consider the Council’s monthly disclosure logs, which detail the nature of the Freedom of Information requests the Council receives. The disclosure logs for quarter one 2014/15 are set out at Appendix ‘H’.
Data for Q1 2014/15

(a) Departmental split

The chart indicates where FOI requests for quarter one of the financial year 2014/15 were directed. Some requests were referred to other authorities or agencies (logged under ‘referral’) and some were dealt with by more than one department within the Council (logged under ‘various’). The method of recording departmental split will be updated in the next quarterly report to reflect the new staff structure.

A summary of the individual FOI requests sent to the Council since April 2010, having regard to Data Protection requirements, is available from the Council’s website.

(b) Origins of requests

The Council also records where the requests are coming from, as indicated in the chart below. Origins have been divided into the following categories:

- commercial companies;
- individuals;
- charities;
- students and researchers;
- government agencies (including MPs); and
- the press.

If a request is sent from an anonymous email address the origin is recorded as ‘not known’.

Contact Officer
Ms A Fieldhouse (Ext 5531)
2. PROGRESS NOTE ON IMPROVEMENTS TO THE COUNCIL’S COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURES

Group Manager (Corporate Services)
(Part 2 Item)

Purpose

To provide an update on work in progress to improve the Council’s complaints handling procedure.

For members’ information, appendices ‘I’ and ‘J’ relate to this item.

Background and current position

In January 2014 Cabinet approved a number of measures to improve the effectiveness of the Council’s complaints handling procedure.

A detailed schedule of actions taken and planned for each of the 13 recommendations approved by the Cabinet is attached as Appendix ‘I’. In summary, the current position is as follows:

1. **Management Reporting** - a procedure has been introduced to identify, for all parts of the Council, the number of complaints received each month and the number dealt with within the target of 10 working days. A short monthly report will be produced, the first of which, showing data for April and May 2014, is attached as Appendix ‘J’. Work is underway to refine the process and ensure consistency of approach and data.

2. **Revisions to the complaints procedure** - the process for escalating complaints has been modified to reflect the new organisational structure. The revised procedure has been published on the Council’s website.

3. **Training** - an awareness programme has been initiated to ensure that all staff are conversant with the complaints handling process.

4. **Central IT system** - the changes outlined above are not dependent on a centralised system, but the development of a specification will continue in order to ascertain whether such a system could simplify the extraction and input of information.

Further progress reports will be provided on a quarterly basis.

Contact Officer: Mr C Head (Ext 5806)
List of Background Papers:
Report to Cabinet, January 2014
## COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE CHANGE PROGRAMME
### STATUS REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Target date</th>
<th>Status / Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Information about the complaints procedure should be included in the Borough News and other appropriate Council publications.</td>
<td>February 2014</td>
<td>COMPLETED. A revised text was put on the website on 28 February 2014. This has been updated to reflect the new organisation structure and will be included in the next edition of Broxbourne News.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Basic standards for the provision of information with regard to the complaints procedure should be developed.</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>COMPLETED. Incorporated in the revised procedure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) A clear link to the complaints section in the Customer Care Guide should be placed on the homepage of the Council's intranet and any future revisions publicised to all staff.</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) A programme of awareness training for staff should be implemented.</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>COMPLETED. A programme of awareness training sessions began in June.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) All services should implement changes to their systems and procedures to ensure that: a) all complaints, however received, are recorded; b) complaints include both expressions of discontent with service provision and criticism of the behaviour or actions of officers; and c) frequently occurring problems or complaints of a similar type can be identified and appropriate action taken.</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>COMPLETED. Incorporated in the revised procedure. Where identified, specific improvements will be introduced thereafter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) A corporate level system should be devised and</td>
<td>December 2014</td>
<td>A procedure is now in place to identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Target date</td>
<td>Status / Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implemented as soon as possible, the objective of which is to</td>
<td></td>
<td>the number of complaints received each month and responses made within the target of 10 working days to enable management review and challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collate the data from all services to enable management review and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenge.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) The guidance set out in the Broxbourne Customer Care Guide</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>The number of complaints received each month and responses made within the target of 10 working days to enable management review and challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should be expanded and developed into a corporate complaints</td>
<td></td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>procedure.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Customer Care Guide has been amended to include the revised procedure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Consideration should be given to the appointment of an Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal not approved by Cabinet. No further action required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person to act as an arbiter in the most serious cases and to take</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the role of ‘critical friend’ in future reviews of the procedure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) The corporate system and procedures should incorporate regular</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reviews of responses in order to ensure that complainants are not</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporated in the awareness training programme now underway. Where identified, specific improvements will be introduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being sent standard letters and are having their complaints treated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seriously.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) An officer at Head of Service level should be given the role of</td>
<td>December 2013</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 December 2013 – Head of Business Management appointed as Corporate Complaints Manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) A designated Cabinet Member should be given responsibility for</td>
<td>January 2014</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complaints handling.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decision made at 21 January 2014 Cabinet meeting to give responsibility for this to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Target date</td>
<td>Status / Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12) The responsibilities of the Complaints Manager should be set out in writing and should specifically include all of the items listed in the LGO Guidance and in the other proposals listed above. | January 2014 | COMPLETED  
The post holder is aware of the requirements. |
| 13) The Complaints Manager should provide to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee a detailed work programme setting out realistic timescales for the implementation of the proposed changes, and thereafter submit a quarterly monitor providing performance data and highlighting any issues. | February 2014 | COMPLETED  
Report submitted to 18 February Cabinet and to 4 March Scrutiny Committee.  
Further progress reports will be submitted on a quarterly basis to both Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee. |
| 14) Scrutiny Committee should conduct a review of the complaints procedure every three years. | January 2016 | COMPLETED  
This has been added to the Scrutiny Committee work plan. |
### MONTHLY COMPLAINTS REPORT – MAY 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Apr-14 Number of complaints received</th>
<th>Apr-14 Number responded to within 10 days</th>
<th>May-14 Number of complaints received</th>
<th>May-14 Number responded to within 10 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Services</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Control</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenues &amp; Exchequer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Force</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLMSO</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Safety</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Centres</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel &amp; Payroll</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Building Control</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>441</strong></td>
<td><strong>430</strong></td>
<td><strong>385</strong></td>
<td><strong>378</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in this table is drawn from systems that currently record service requests as complaints, and so the above numbers are artificially high. Work is in hand to refine the process to capture more accurately the number of genuine complaints. In May more than 98% of these enquiries and complaints were responded to within the 10 day deadline.
3. **UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE’S PANELS**

**Purpose**
To apprise the Committee of the work of its panels.

*For members’ information, the electronic copy of this report contains hyperlinks to relevant web-pages and reports.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PANEL</th>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>OUTCOME / UPDATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Joint Cabinet-Scrutiny Panels | Broxbourne Youth Strategy 10 April 2013 25 June 2014 | Broxbourne Youth Strategy  
An initial meeting was held on 10 April 2013. Members considered the draft strategy and agreed to meet again following public consultation. The Panel met again to consider consultation results on 25 June 2014. The Strategy will be considered at the 16 July meeting of the Cabinet. |

Contact Officer:  
Mr J Moore (Ext 5645)

List of Background Papers:  
None.

4. **LOG OF MONITORING REPORTS (up to and including 11 July 2014)**

**Purpose**
To provide members with a list of monitoring/information reports issued in the 2013/14 and 2014/15 municipal years.

The following items were sent (most through the member services e-communication) to members on the date shown in column two. Details of how to access the documents and any other relevant information is given in the rightmost column. Monitors issued since the last log of monitoring reports and relevant comments are highlighted. Previous logs of monitoring reports are available on request to Member Services. The Committee is invited to examine any of the published monitors and identify any issues or others matters on which the Committee may wish to comment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitor</th>
<th>Date of issue (period to which monitor relates)</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Comments and access information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitor</td>
<td>Date of issue (period to which monitor relates)</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Comments and access information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Statistics</td>
<td>Last issued November 2013 (Q2 2013/14)</td>
<td>Monitor of key workforce statistics including sickness levels and turnover.</td>
<td>Available on request from Member Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO Business Plan Monitor</td>
<td>Last issued 14 March 2014</td>
<td>Monthly monitor of the progress of BLMSO against targets established in its business plan. Please note that this document is confidential as it contains commercial information.</td>
<td>Available on request from Member Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Neighbourhood Projects Monitor</td>
<td>13 June 2014 (Q4 2013/14)</td>
<td>Quarterly monitor which details projects completed during the past quarter and projects to be completed in future.</td>
<td>Available on request from Member Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Monitor</td>
<td>6 June 2014 (Jan-March 2014)</td>
<td>Monitor describing the work of the community development team.</td>
<td>Available on request from Member Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor</td>
<td>Date of issue (period to which monitor relates)</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Comments and access information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Monitor</td>
<td>Last issued 14 March 2014 (Q3 2013/14)</td>
<td>Quarterly monitor detailing supply and demand for housing.</td>
<td>Available on request from Member Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone and Customer Contact Monitor</td>
<td>Last issued 14 March 2014 (Q3 2013/14)</td>
<td>Quarterly monitor presenting key indicators of the Council’s customer contact performance. It includes analysis of the ways in which, and the reasons why, customers contact the Council.</td>
<td>Available on request from Member Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits Monitor</td>
<td>Last issued 31 January 2014 (Q3 2013/14)</td>
<td>Report setting out the service performance and other general information about the benefits service.</td>
<td>Available on request from Member Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT Projects Update</td>
<td>Last issued 3 January 2014 (Q3 2013/14)</td>
<td>Quarterly update advising of progress with information technology projects undertaken in the past quarter.</td>
<td>Available on request from Member Services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Officer:
Mr S Everett (Ext 5731)

List of Background Papers:
None