

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 6 NOVEMBER 2013**

**PORTFOLIO: SERVICE DEVELOPMENT, IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

**REPORT FROM HEAD OF INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES**

**SUBJECT: CUSTOMER FEEDBACK UPDATE AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION STATISTICS APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2013**

**1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 To note the customer feedback and freedom of information statistics for April – September 2013.

**2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Executive has previously received information on the number of comments, compliments and complaints as part of broader reports on the Access to Services Strategy.
- 2.2 The information attached in Appendix A shows the total number of complaints, comments and compliments received by service area and by type of complaint for the first six months of 2013/14. Comparative information is also provided on the figures for 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13.
- 2.3 It is pleasing to note that the Council continues to receive a number of compliments across most service areas, and that these have increased in the first 6 months of 2013.
- 2.4 Complaints are discussed within the individual departments to ensure that action is taken where necessary and that lessons are learnt and improvements are made as a result. The number of complaints is higher than in the previous year, and this can be accounted for by the issues with the verge cutting.
- 2.5 This report also contains in Appendix B information about the volume of freedom of information enquiries that we are receiving. The number of enquiries has risen markedly from 403 in 2010/11 to 530 in 2011/12 with a slight reduction to 514 in 2012/13. In the first six months of 2013/14 there have been 266 enquiries, which is up slightly from previous years. The level of complexity of some means that they are taking an increasing amount of officer time to process.
- 2.6 There are statutory requirements covering the ability to charge for assembling information under the Freedom of Information Act. There is an exemption from the obligation to comply with a request where the cost of compliance is

estimated to exceed the 'appropriate limit' of £450. Costs are calculated at £25 per hour per person regardless of the actual rate of pay, which means that the limit will be exceeded if it is estimated to take 18 hours or more. In the last year one request was refused on these grounds and the request was withdrawn.

- 2.7 We do have an ability to recover reasonable costs incurred. This covers 'communication costs', for example photocopying and postage, but cannot cover the cost of staff time. The rate set is £5 if the request is likely to take more than 50 A4 sheets of paper. In reality this charge is rarely applied as most enquiries are answered by email.

### **Customer Feedback and Consultation Update**

- 2.8 Membership of the Have Your Say Group continues to hover around the 400 mark, with a similar number of new members joining compared to those wanting to leave. This constant change in the composition of the group can be considered positive as it brings fresh ideas and views to the group on an on-going basis.
- 2.9 The group is promoted on a continuous basis at community events. For example flyers were placed in the goody bags at the Community Older Persons Event in May (in Ashingdon) and October (in Hullbridge). Libraries and council reception areas have flyers about the group. The packs that are sent out to new residents contain the flyer and, facilitated by RRAVS, the national volunteering website Do-It contains information about joining the group.
- 2.10 The group has been involved in five main consultation exercises over the last six months, these being:
- Budget survey - opened on 23 September for 12 weeks
  - Community Safety Partnership Survey – opened on 1 August for 12 weeks
  - Local Council Tax Support Scheme – opened on 19 August for 6 weeks
  - Rochford District Matters circulation survey – for the Autumn edition
  - On going affordable housing survey
- 2.11 Members of the group are about to be asked to take part in the annual mystery shopping exercise. Consultations continue to be posted on the Have Your Say webpage and feedback included in the quarterly Have Your Say newsletters.
- 2.12 The current in-house customer feedback system has been fully operational for about just over a year. The channels monitored are face to face, email and web. Residents have the opportunity to click on an icon at the end of emails and on all webpages to leave any feedback and comments. Reports are compiled every quarter and are discussed at the Customer Access and Consultation Group. The icon has recently been changed to a more visual

'thumbs up, thumbs down' image. It is hoped responses will increase as a result.

2.13 The face to face surveys are now held at the Rochford reception twice a year and annually at Rayleigh. Interviewing takes place over the course of a morning. Residents are asked to comment on the experience they just encountered with Council staff. Response rates vary depending on the day of the week the survey is held and other factors such as the weather.

2.14 For all channels residents are given the opportunity to leave contact details for a council officer to follow up on their comments. Overall satisfaction with the service the Council provides remains high.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

3.1 None.

### **4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Council needs to learn from customer feedback in order to make improvement to services wherever possible.

### **5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Comments, compliments and complaints are monitored so that we are able to assess any equality implications from them.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Head of Information and Customer Services**

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### **Background Papers:**

None.

For further information please contact Sarah Fowler (Head of Information and Customer Services) on:-

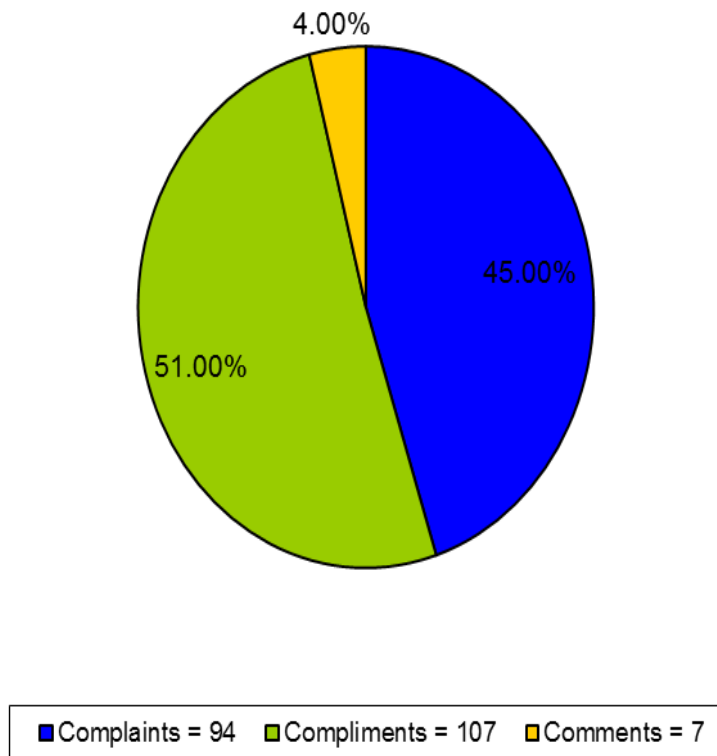
Phone: 01702 546366 Extn 3800

Email: [sarah.fowler@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.fowler@rochford.gov.uk)

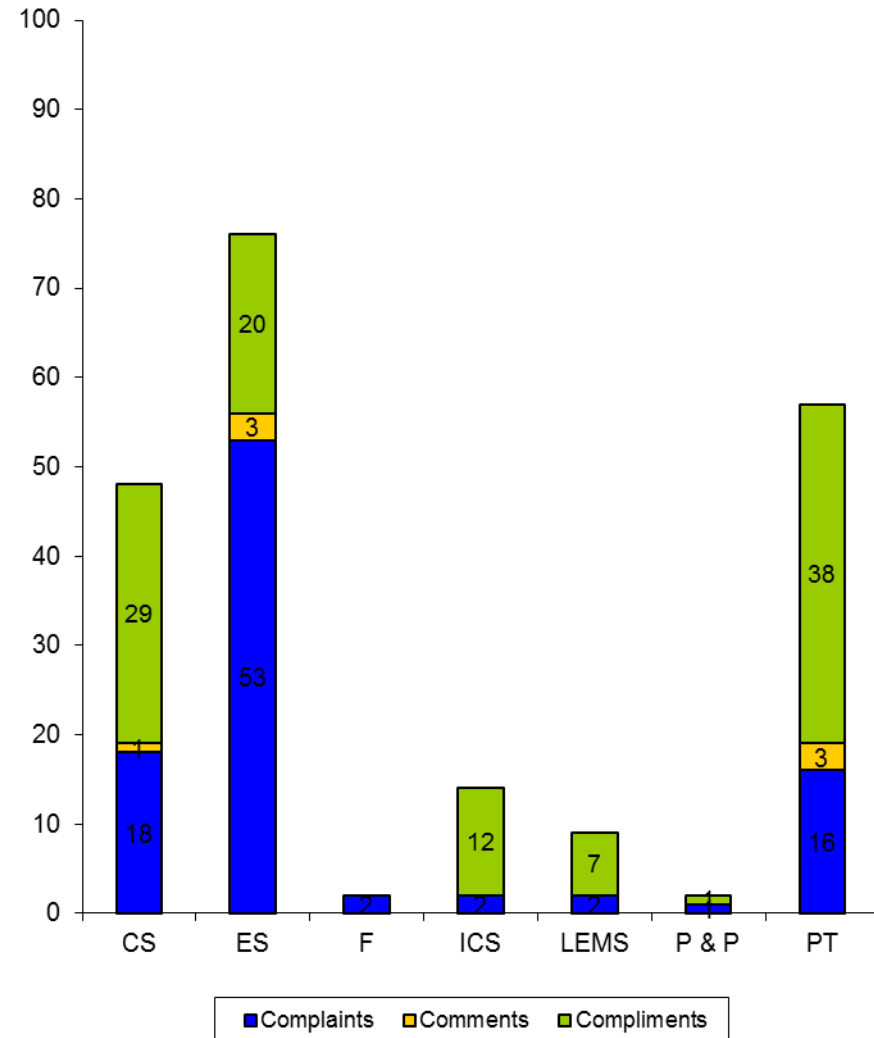
If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

**CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT 01.04.2013 to 30.09.2013**

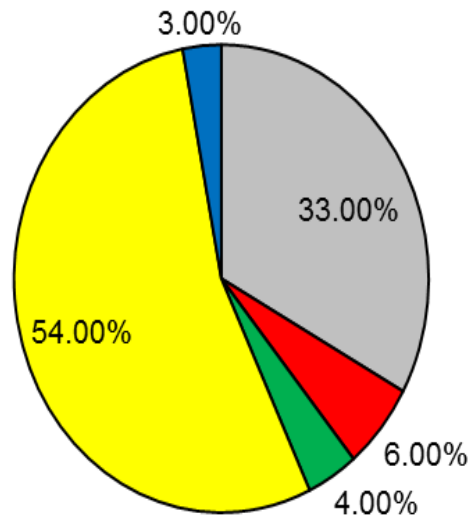
**Total Feedback Received Corporately**



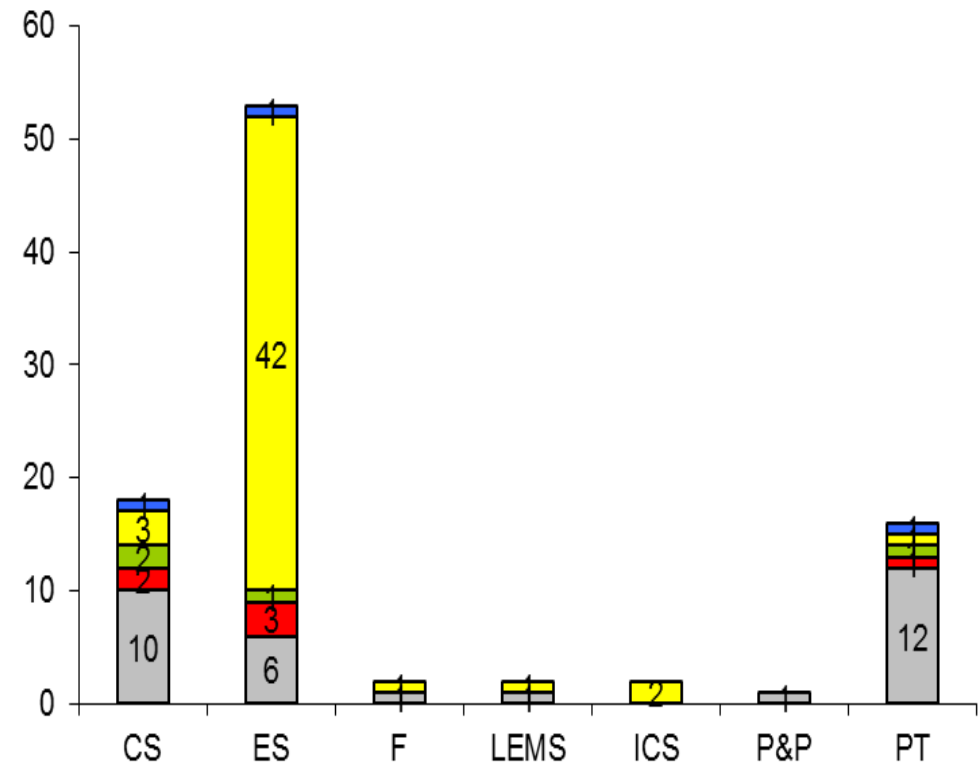
**Total Feedback Received by Service**



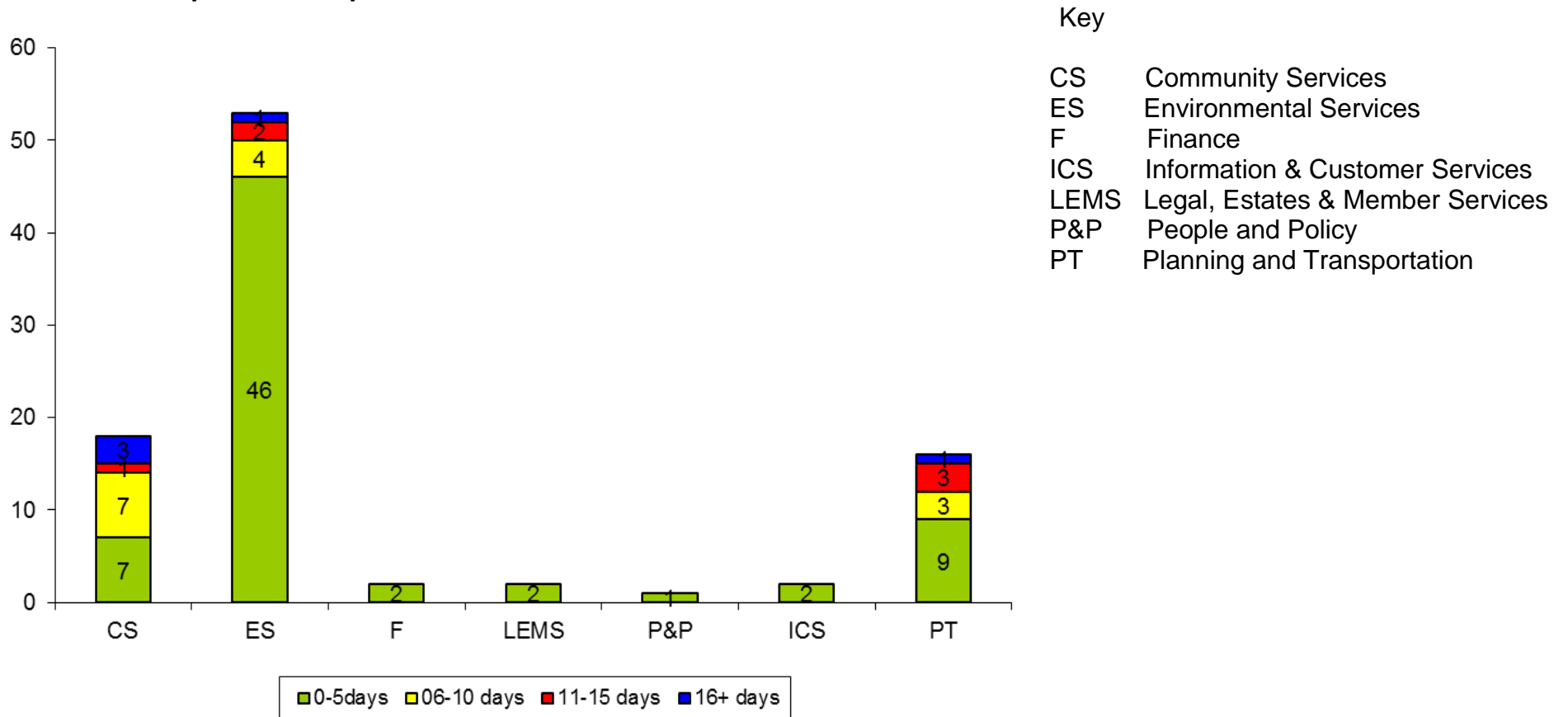
Total Complaint Categories



Complaint Category by Service



Time taken to respond to complaints



Total 0-5 = 69 Total 6-10 = 14 Total 11-15 = 6 Total 16+ = 5

## Customer Feedback; Analysis of Corporate Quarter/Annual Statistics

Period		Total Feedback received				Total Complaint Categories					No. of days taken to send a full reply			
		Compliments	Comments	Complaints	Racial Incident	Council Process / Policy	Dissatisfied with Staff Attitude	Other	Service Error/Task Not Done	Timeliness/ Delays	0-5	6-10	11-15	16+
2010/ 2011	Q1	47	2	30	0	12	3	5	8	2	18	7	2	2
	Q2	30	5	27	0	15	2	2	5	3	9	4	9	5
	Q3	40	2	18	0	6	3	0	6	3	8	6	1	3
	Q4	33	4	53	0	39	3	1	6	4	33	12	7	1
	Annual	150	13	128	0	72	11	8	25	12	68	30	19	11
2011/ 2012	Q1	45	2	15	0	10	2	1	0	2	8	6	0	1
	Q2	45	4	35	0	18	5	1	7	4	24	7	2	2
	Q3	51	2	19	0	6	3	1	8	1	8	8	2	1
	Q4	38	3	17	0	7	5	1	4	0	5	8	1	3
	Annual	179	11	86	0	41	15	4	19	7	45	29	5	7
2012/ 2013	Q1	24	2	42	0	9	2	0	25	6	31	6	2	3
	Q2	28	1	22	0	14	1	3	4	0	12	5	2	3
	Q3	30	0	18	0	4	2	3	7	2	15	0	2	1
	Q4	24	1	20	0	5	3	2	6	4	13	2	1	4
	Annual	106	4	102	0	32	8	8	42	12	71	13	7	11
2013/ 2014	Q1	54	4	53	0	9	3	3	35	3	41	6	5	3
	Q2	53	3	41	0	22	3	1	15	0	30	8	1	2
	Q3													
	Q4													
	Annual													



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMPARISON

April 2010 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013

	<b>April - March 2011</b>	<b>April- March 2012</b>	<b>April – March 2013</b>	<b>April – Sept 2013</b>
<b>Community Services</b>	49	72	110	72
<b>Corporate Collation</b>	74	145	128	55
<b>Environmental Services</b>	99	124	118	48
<b>Finance</b>	51	54	23	14
<b>People and Policy Unit</b>	33	23	15	13
<b>Info &amp; Customer Services</b>	43	32	46	28
<b>Legal Services</b>	13	19	14	10
<b>Planning / Transportation</b>	41	61	60	26
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>266</b>

Quarterly comparison on total FOI requests received by RDC

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Quarter 1	74	127	120	124
Quarter 2	105	123	130	142
Quarter 3	91	120	119	
Quarter 4	133	160	145	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>266</b>