

REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE – 10 DECEMBER 2008

PORTFOLIO: SERVICE DEVELOPMENT, IMPROVEMENT & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

REPORT FROM: HEAD OF INFORMATION & CUSTOMER SERVICES

SUBJECT: ACCESS TO SERVICES STRATEGY - UPDATE

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To agree in principle the proposed projects outlined in paragraph 3.7;
- 1.2 To receive a further report once the detailed access to services business case has been assessed by officers; and
- 1.3 To note the complaints statistics for April – September 2008.

2 FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE No: 14/08

3 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 In December 2006 the Audit Commission undertook an Access to Services inspection. The report produced by the inspection team was considered by the former Policy, Finance and Strategic Performance Committee on 19 April 2007 and the recommendations agreed. The recommendations were pursued firstly through the implementation of specific projects and secondly by using funding obtained through Building Capacity East for the employment of the consultancy firm Tribal to help build our capacity and knowledge in this area.
- 3.2 Tribal found during the course of their research that whilst the Council receives a high level of customer satisfaction, we resolve relatively few customer enquiries at first point of contact, we lose around 12% of calls, and transfer a number of callers before they reach the correct destination; this experience is also reflected in the feedback from the focus groups. There is also a view from our residents that extended operating hours would be welcomed.
- 3.3 To address these issues and meet increasing customer expectations, Tribal identified that we need to consolidate how we deal with customers to enable us to answer more questions on first contact, which in turn should enable us to achieve economies of scale. We need to develop our system of management of customer records so that we maintain a joined up view of each household/resident that identifies any special needs and also enables us or the customer to track service requests. We also need to further develop our website as it is a cost effective way for us to deliver services that can release resource to the frontline for those residents who need personal contact.

However, we need to ensure we make these service enhancements without compromising the existing high level of customer satisfaction.

- 3.4 This culminated in a report to the Executive Board on 11 December 2007 that contained the Access to Services Strategy. The Executive Board approved the overall direction of the Access to Services Strategy, subject to the production of a detailed business case for the centralisation of the management of the frontline customer service with recognition that, in view of customer preference, a review of opening hours for face to face services aiming to extend the hours would be an appropriate aspiration.
- 3.5 On 23 April 2008 the Executive Board received an update report on progress covering the implementation of a programme of mystery shopping of services on a reciprocal basis with Castle Point and Southend Councils (and now also Chelmsford and Basildon Councils), the review of the complaints procedure, the review of translation arrangements, the overhaul of the “welcome pack” for new residents, and the development of the intranet ‘customer insight’ and ‘customer services’ areas to, respectively, share knowledge and understanding of our communities and to bring together all our policies and procedures relating to customer services.
- 3.6 The detailed business case for the re-organisation of the management of the frontline customer service and back office administrative procedures has been developed by Tribal and is now being assessed by officers in terms of the detail and costs involved, and this will be reported to the Executive once the work is complete.
- 3.7 However, as initial steps it is proposed that the following projects are taken forward:-
- Combination of the Rochford reception and the Planning reception, thereby providing an improved experience for residents seeking to access our services in person by locating services in a single place;
 - Separation of the tasks of switchboard from reception duties at the Rochford office, thereby providing an improved service for both telephone callers and personal visitors;
 - From April 2009 for a trial period of six months, to extend switchboard and reception hours of operation from 5.30pm to 7pm on a Thursday evening. This will provide an opportunity for us to monitor the demand for an extended hours service, and then in the future consider appropriate staffing levels in the areas receiving most contacts;
 - Review the external phone numbers advertised to rationalise where possible these contact points to provide a more consistent telephone response.
- 3.8 Subject to Executive in principle approval, the detail of these projects will be taken forward in consultation with the portfolio holder.

- 3.9 Following the review of the complaints procedure a new recording system has been written as part of the intranet that enables the corporate monitoring of complaints and produces comparative reports. The first reports from this new system for the period April to June and July to September 2008 are attached in Appendix 1. These reports are still under development, but currently show the total number of complaints, comments and compliments made, this information by service area, and then details about the types of complaints received. It is pleasing to note that the Council is receiving a number of compliments across all service areas. In terms of complaints, these are discussed within the individual departments to ensure that action is taken where necessary and that lessons are learnt and improvements made as a result.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The business case identifies a number of options for front-line and back-office service delivery and these are currently being assessed by officers.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In overall terms, there is a risk to the Council's reputation and future inspections if we do not continue to develop and improve our services following the Audit Commission's Access to Services inspection.
- 5.2 In consideration of the demand from residents for extended opening hours, there is a risk that we will not meet their expectations if we do not continue to enhance and extend the way in which we deliver services.
- 5.3 The business case identifies the risks associated with the options for service improvement.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The initial proposals within the report can be contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

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 & Customer Services

Background Papers:-

Report to Executive Board 23 April 2008.

For further information please contact Sarah Fowler on:-

Tel:- 01702 318135

Email:- sarah.fowler@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

Customer Feedback Reports for the periods:

April – June 2008

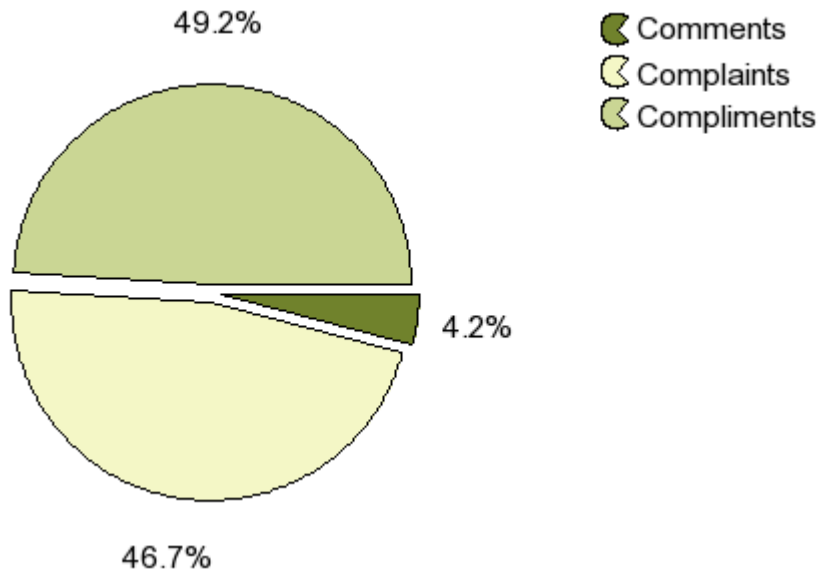
July – September 2008

Key

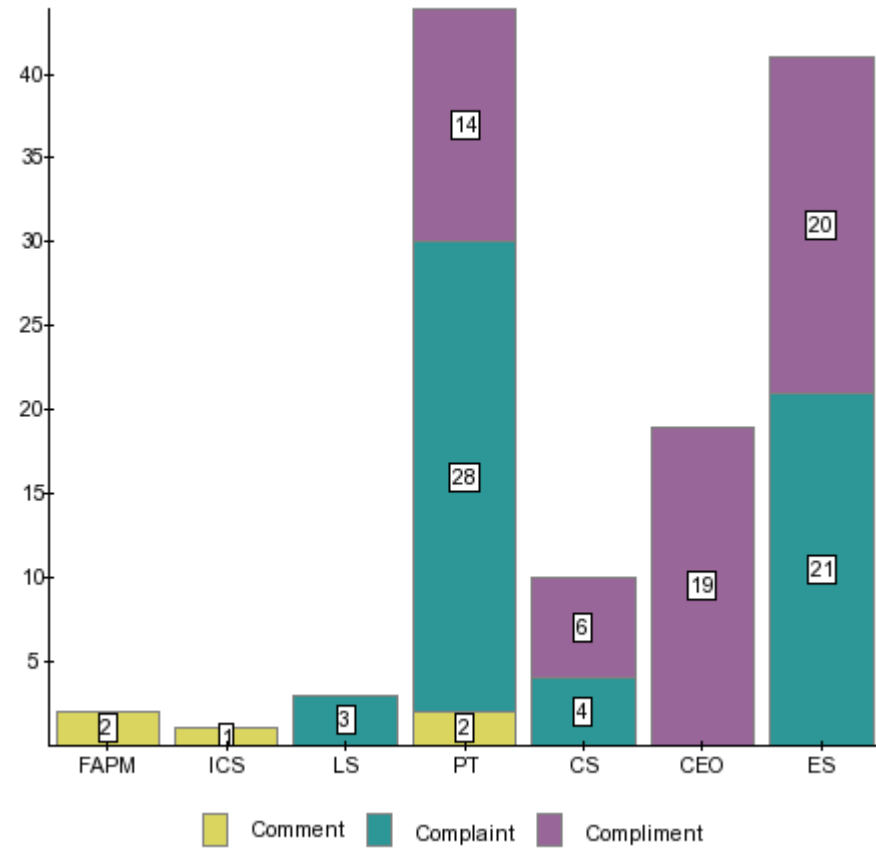
FAPM	Finance, Audit and Performance Management
CEO	Chief Executive Office
CS	Community Services
ES	Environmental Services
ICS	Information and Customer Services
LS	Legal Services
PT	Planning and Transportation

Feedback Report - 01-04-2008 to 30-06-2008

Total Feedback Received Corporately

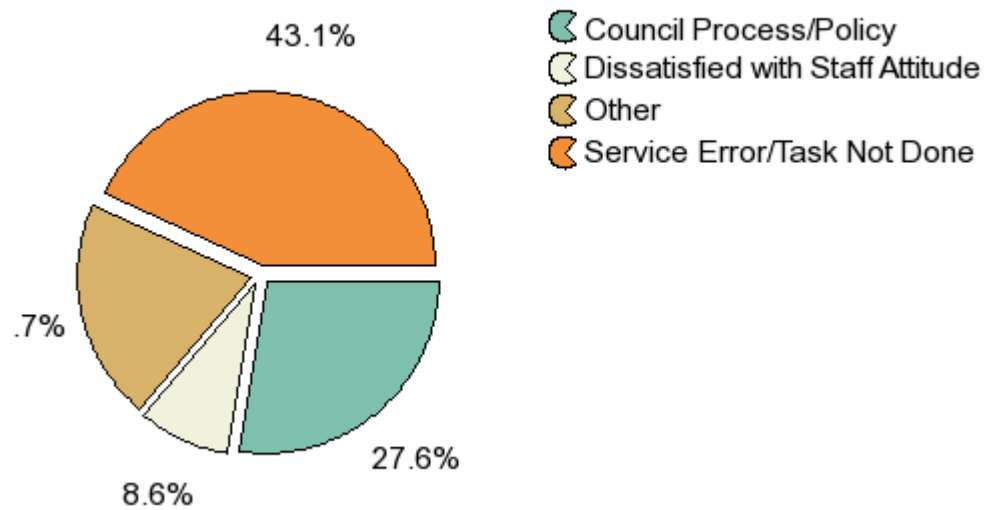


Total Feedback Received by Service

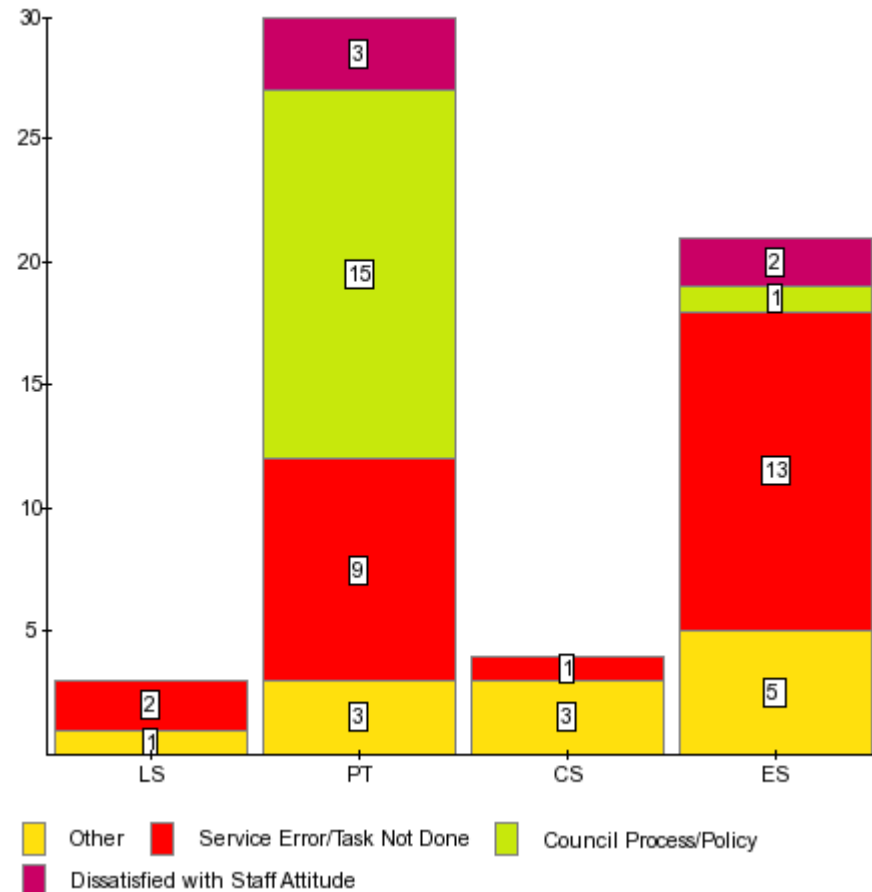


Comments = 5 Complaints = 56 Compliments = 59

Total Complaint Categories



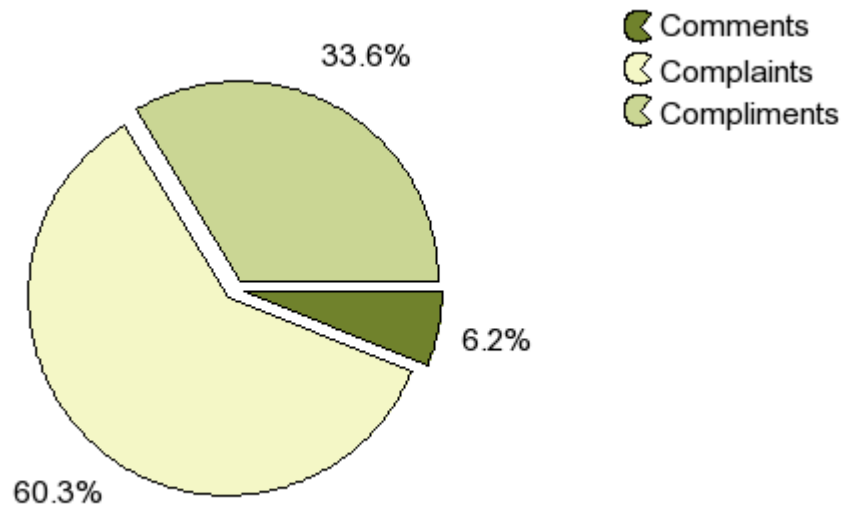
Complaint Categories by Service



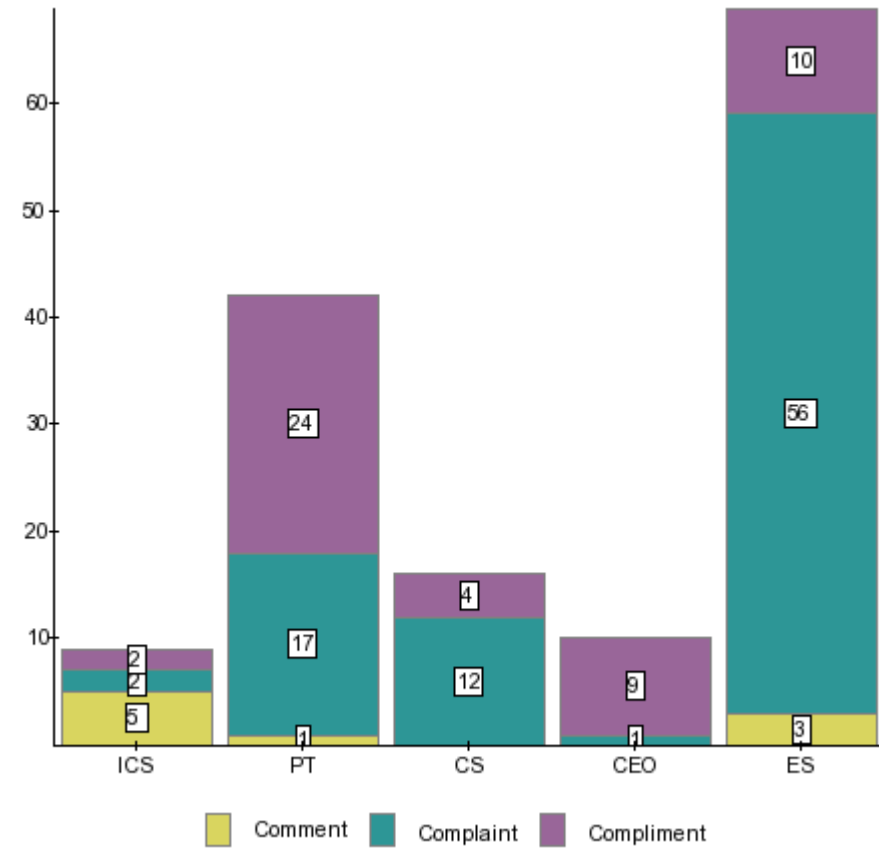
Council Process/Policy = 16 **Dissatisfied with Staff Attitude = 5**
Other = 12 **Service Error/Task Not Done = 25**

Feedback Report - 01-07-2008 to 30-09-2008

Total Feedback Received Corporately

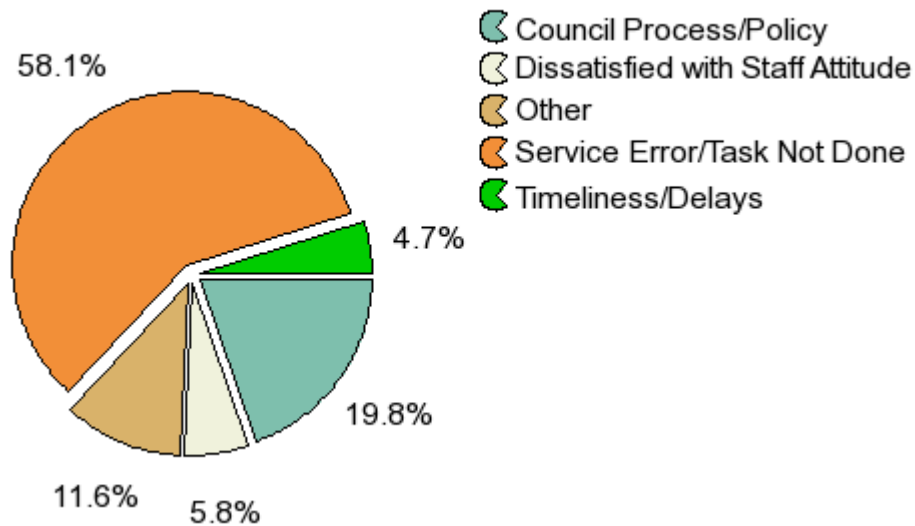


Total Feedback Received by Service



Comments = 9 Complaints = 88 Compliments = 49

Total Complaint Categories



Council Process/Policy = 17 **Dissatisfied with Staff Attitude = 5**
Other = 10 **Service Error/Task Not Done = 50**
Timeliness/Delays = 4

Complaint Categories by Service

