

ITEM NO. 1
PART 1 SECTION C

CORPORATE COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MONITORING REPORT

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to advise Members on comments, compliments and complaints which have been received through the Authority's Complaints Policy by the Directorate for the six month period from October 2013 to March 2014.

Background

The following number of comments, compliments and complaints have been received by the Environment Directorate:-

Comments – 0
Compliments – 15
Complaints;
Stage 1 - 10
Stage 2 - 10

Compliments

Case 1

From South Wales Police complementing the hard work and dedication of Parking Enforcement Officers in the Cwmavon area.

Case 2

From a resident of Heol Cae Gurwen, Gwaun Cae Gurwen complimenting the workforce on their quick response on clearing their road of debris.

Case 3

From a resident of Ynysmaerdy Road thanking the Senior Waste Supervisor for resolving their situation regarding recycling bags.

Case 4

From a resident of Neath Port Talbot complimenting staff at Margam Cemetery for their professionalism and helpfulness at a very emotional time for them.

Case 5

From a resident of Crud yr Awel, Neath, thanking the workforce for cutting down a fallen tree which was covering their car.

Cases 6 – 15

From 10 residents of Neath Port Talbot complimenting the Directorate on their new online ordering of refuse and recycling equipment.

Complaints – Stage 1

Case 1

A complaint was received by a company in Skewen regarding refuse being repeatedly left outside the rear lane of their premises. The matter had been reported and dealt with previously however as it was still on-going, the complainant requested the matter to be investigated as part of the Authority's complaints procedure.

Conclusion

The area was inspected and letters were sent to the adjoining residents who were believed to be causing the problem. The complaint was investigated within the ten day guidelines.

Case 2

A complaint was received by a resident of Neath regarding the manner in which his refuse receptacles were being returned to him. The complainant stated that the refuse crews were continually leaving his empty food waste receptacle inside the glass box receptacle. The matter had been reported previously but the practice had continued.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found that as this was the correct manner in which crews had been instructed to leave receptacles, the complaint was not

upheld. The complainant was informed of this. The complaint was investigated within the ten day guidelines.

Case 3

A complaint was received from the resident of Llanquicke Road in Ynysmeudwy regarding the poor condition of the highway. The matter had been reported previously however as the condition of the road remained unchanged the complainant wished for the matter to be investigated further.

Conclusion

As the complaint had been logged for future programming the complaint was not upheld and investigated within the ten day guidelines.

Case 4

A complaint was received from a resident of Neath regarding the unacceptable time in waiting for his recycling receptacles. Previous requests had been made to the Authority but as the complainant had not received any receptacles or had an explanation as to the cause of the delay, he wished to make a complaint regarding the service.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found that whilst some receptacles were on order, others could have been delivered immediately. An apology was made to the complainant with an explanation as to the cause of the delay. The complaint was dealt with within the ten day guidelines

Case 5

A complaint was received by a resident of Cwmavon as his refuse receptacles were frequently not being emptied correctly. In addition, his repeated request for a calendar had not been actioned.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found that whilst it was not possible for his receptacles to be emptied mechanically, refuse crews were instructed to fully empty the receptacles by hand on collection. A calendar was also sent to him as requested. The complaint was investigated within the ten day guidelines.

Case 6

A complaint was received from a resident of Neath regarding the manner in which a Waste Enforcement Officer had spoken to her whilst investigating an incident. The complainant stated that the officer had been rude and intimidating in his manner.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated by the section manager and found that the officer had acted professionally in undertaking his duties and concluded that officers had to be assertive but courteous in obtaining the information required. The complaint was not upheld however it was considered prudent to continue the investigation by letter only. The complaint was investigated within the ten day guidelines.

Case 7

A complaint was received from a resident of Bryncoch who wished to make a complaint regarding her recycling receptacles being repeatedly missed by collection crews.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found that her collection had been missed on several occasions previously. An apology was issued and the refuse crews were informed of the matter. The complaint was investigated within the ten day guidelines.

Case 8

A complaint was received from a resident outside the County who wished to make a complaint regarding a parking fine she had received and the subsequent enforcement officers' visit which resulted in the incorrect vehicle being clamped.

Conclusion

Due to the complexity of the complaint the matter was referred to a magistrate court hearing. The court found the Authority has acted lawfully and the complaint was not upheld. The complaint was not investigated within the designated ten day guidelines due to court proceedings.

Case 9

A complaint was received from a resident of Abbots Moor as refuse crews were continually leaving her neighbour's refuse receptacles in her parking space. The matter had been reported previously but as the complaint had not been resolved she wished the matter investigated further.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and the refuse crews were informed to cease this practice. The complaint was responded to within the ten day guidelines.

Case 10

A complaint was received from a resident of Cimla as her refuse receptacles were continually being left on the grass verge near her property which made it difficult for her to retrieve them. This practice had previously been reported to the Authority and resolved however it had commenced again.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found the receptacles were being left in a dangerous location by crews. The crews were informed to cease this practice. The complaint was investigated within the ten day guidelines.

Complaints – Stage 2

Case 1

A complaint was received from a resident of Ystradgynlais regarding a parking fine he had received. He states that whilst he acknowledged having received the ticket, he stated no further correspondence had been received by him prior to a debt collection officer calling at his address. He also stated that he had previously contacted the parking section but as he remained dissatisfied with the situation he wished his complaint escalated to a Stage 2 investigation.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and a time line of correspondence was produced which confirmed that the correct correspondence had been sent to his address. It was also noted that the complainant had contacted the parking office during this time but had failed to provide the information required by the

parking section to assess his claim. In view of this, as correct procedures had been followed the complaint was not upheld. The complaint was responded to within the twenty day guidelines.

Case 2

A complaint was received from a resident of Briton Ferry regarding the behaviour of a Civil Enforcement Officer who had issued her with a parking ticket. The complainant stated that the officer had been rude in his manner and was not sympathetic to her situation. Her complaint had previously been investigated by the parking manager however, as the complainant remained dissatisfied with the response, she now wished for the matter be escalated to a Stage 2 investigation.

Conclusion

It was noted that the CEO had previously been interviewed by his manager regarding the allegations made against him and he had denied the complainants version of events. All CEO's are issued with a personal recording device which is retained up to 30 days in order to investigate such instances however as the complainant had contacted the Authority after this time period this information was not available. It was considered, however, that as the officer had acted correctly in issuing the ticket, the complaint was not upheld. The complaint was investigated within the twenty day guidelines.

Case 3

A complaint was received from a resident of Glyncorwg regarding an on-going threat of flooding to his property due to recent pavement repairs in the vicinity. The matter had previously been reported to the Authority but as no action had been taken the resident wished for his complaint to be escalated to a Stage 2 investigation.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found previous remedial works had been undertaken in the highway in front of his property to alleviate flooding however the problem now appeared to be on the footpath leading to his property which was not the responsibility of this Authority. The matter was reported to NPT Homes who carried out additional remedial works to his footpath which resolved the problem. The complaint was investigated within the twenty day guidelines.

Case 4

A complaint was received via the Ombudsman's Office from a resident of Coed Hirwaun stating that his refuse receptacles were continually being missed. The complainant stated that he had reported the problem on several occasions to the Authority however no action had been taken.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found there had been a breakdown in communication between officers and the collection crew and reporting procedures had not been followed. This was acknowledged by the section and an apology was sent to the complainant. The complaint was investigated within the twenty day guidelines.

Case 5

A complaint was received from a resident of Caewern regarding his refuse receptacles along with his neighbour's receptacles not being returned to their correct location by refuse crews. The matter had previously been reported but as the practice remained unresolved, he wished for his complaint to be escalated to a Stage 2 investigation.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found that refuse crews were continuing to leave refuse receptacles in an app hazard manner even though the problem had been brought to their attention previously. The crew were spoken to individually regarding the practice and the situation was monitored over several weeks to ensure the receptacles were returned correctly. An apology was sent to the complainant. The complaint was investigated within the twenty day guidelines.

Case 6

A complaint was received from a resident of Glynneath regarding the condition of the gullies along his road. The complainant stated that his property had been in danger of flooding one evening due to the gullies not being cleaned to a satisfactory standard. In addition he wished to log a secondary complaint regarding the time taken for his call to be answered by the out of hours' staff.

Conclusion

On investigation it was found that whilst the gullies had previously been cleaned, an additional vehicle was sent the following day to clean the gullies in

the vicinity of his property in order to avoid the possibility of flooding in the area. His additional complaint regarding the time taken to answer his call was also investigated and it was found that a surge of calls had been received by the out of hours' team that evening due to the inclement weather which resulted in the delay. The complaint was investigated within the twenty day guidelines.

Case 7

A complaint was received from a resident of Gwaun Cae Gurwen regarding the level of charges levied against her for obtaining a parking ticket. In addition she wished to log a complaint regarding the unacceptable behaviour of the debt collection officer who visited her property. The complainant stated that she had not received any correspondence from the Authority leading up to the visit, and in addition, she did not wish for her complaint to be investigated by the parking section due to a breakdown in communication. Her complaint was therefore investigated as a Stage 2 investigation.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and evidence of a time line of correspondence was produced which confirmed correspondence had been sent to her address. It was also noted that the complainant had contacted the parking section during this time which confirmed she was aware of the penalty charges against her. As correct procedures had been followed the complaint was not upheld and was answered within the twenty day guidelines. Her complaint regarding the actions of the debt collection officer was forwarded to the debt collection agency for investigation.

Case 8

A complaint was received from a resident residing outside the County stating his vehicle had been clamped due to the non-payment of a parking ticket. The complainant stated that he had not received any correspondence from the Authority leading up to his vehicle being clamped. He also stated that he had previously addressed his circumstances with the parking section but as the matter remained unresolved he wished to escalate the matter to a Stage 2 investigation.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found the parking section had correctly obtained the complainants address from DVLA records. It was found that the

complainant has since moved from his recorded address nine months previously but he had not informed the DVLA of his change of circumstances which had resulted in him not receiving his penalty charge notices. As officers had followed national guidelines in obtaining his address via DVLA records, it was considered that correct procedures had been followed and the complaint was not upheld. The complaint was investigated within the twenty day guidelines.

Case 9

A complaint was received from a resident of Dyffryn Cellwen via the Ombudsman's Office regarding the time taken for the Authority to install a dog waste bin on a public footpath near his property. The complainant stated that he had contacted the Authority on previous occasions regarding the matter however he remained dissatisfied that his request had not been actioned.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found a delay was caused due to a failure to find a suitable location where the bin could be serviced effectively by the cleansing crew. It was found that whilst the land was in the ownership of the Authority, the footpath did not form part of the public highway nor was it a public right of way. After consultation with all parties concerned a suitable location was agreed upon where a dog waste bin could be installed and serviced effectively. The complaint was investigated within the twenty day guidelines.

Case 10

A complaint was received from a resident of Skewen stating the parking section had amended his parking permit which deemed he was no longer allowed to park outside his property. His complaint had previously been considered by the parking section but was not upheld. He therefore wished to have his complaint escalated to a stage 2 investigation.

Conclusion

The complaint was investigated and found that whilst his previous parking permit had been valid for the road outside his property, this was not in line with the Authority's Parking Permit Policy which states an applicant's address must match their parking permit. His circumstances had previously been considered by the Head of Service and it was confirmed that in order to comply with the policy, officers were within their rights to amend his permit and his complaint

was not upheld. The complaint was investigated within the twenty day guidelines.

Appendices

None

Recommendation

That the comments, compliments and complaints monitoring report be noted.

List of Background Papers

Mail Monitoring system
File Ref. TA8 & TA8/C

Wards Affected

Aberavon, Briton Ferry East, Bryn & Cwmavon, Bryncoch South, Bryncoch North, Cimla, Coedffranc Central, Dyffryn, Glyncoerrwg, Glynneath, Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen, Margam, Onllwyn and Pontardawe.

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