



GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2019

10.00 AM COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillor Keith Glazier (Chair)
Councillors Nick Bennett, Godfrey Daniel, Rupert Simmons and David Tutt

A G E N D A

- 1 Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2019 (*Pages 3 - 4*)
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Disclosures of interests
Disclosures by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
- 4 Urgent items
Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgent.
- 5 Customer Experience Annual Report (*Pages 5 - 46*)
Report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Environment
- 6 Amendment to the Constitution - Scheme of Delegation to Officers (*Pages 47 - 56*)
Report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
- 7 Travel on County Council Business Policy (*Pages 57 - 58*)
Report by Chief Operating Officer
- 8 Re-engagement of previously redundant employees (*Pages 59 - 60*)
Report by Chief Operating Officer
- 9 Employee Loans Policy and Scheme of Delegation to Officers (*Pages 61 - 62*)
Report by Chief Operating Officer
- 10 Any other non exempt items previously notified under agenda item 4
- 11 Exclusion of Public and Press
To consider excluding the public and press from the meeting for the remaining agenda items on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in paragraphs 1, 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) or information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

- 12 Draft decision of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (to follow)
Report by the Assistant Chief Executive
- 13 Any other exempt items considered urgent by the Chair

PHILIP BAKER
Assistant Chief Executive
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent
LEWES BN7 1UE

12 September 2019

Contact Andy Cottell, 01273 481955,

Email: andy.cottell@eastsussex.gov.uk

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Governance Committee held at Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes on 16 July 2019.

PRESENT Councillors Keith Glazier (Chair), Nick Bennett, Godfrey Daniel, Rupert Simmons and David Tutt

12 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2019

12.1 RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 25 June 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

13 REPORTS

13.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

14 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK 2018/19

14.1 The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive on the annual review of the Corporate Governance Framework for 2018/19. The Assistant Chief Executive informed that Committee that the report had been considered by the Audit Committee on 12 July and the Committee wished to make 2 comments

- 1) The Committee requested that for future reports further context/explanation should be provided regarding the table in Appendix 1. The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that further detail would be included in the report for 2019/20; and
- 2) The Committee requested that further detail be provided regarding the first action point under Adult Social Care and Health on page 15 of the agenda. The Assistant Chief Executive proposed that the following sentence be added to this action point

'These collective arrangements are intended to improve governance and delivery of plans on a whole system basis for the population of East Sussex, whilst ensuring clear oversight and reporting to the constituent member organisations' governing bodies, who remain statutorily accountable for setting their respective priorities and budgets'.

14.2 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) approve the action plan for the next year;
- 2) note that items identified to enhance governance arrangements are reflected in Business Plans and that implementation will be monitored through the year;
- 3) confirm that Members are satisfied with the level of assurance provided to them through this report and the Council's governance framework and processes;
- 4) noted the comments from the Audit Committee as set out above;
- 5) confirm that there are no further significant governance issues that should be included in the Council's Annual Governance Statement; and
- 6) approve the Annual Governance Statement for signature by the Leader and the Chief Executive and publication within the Statement of Accounts subject to the inclusion of the additional wording proposed above.

15 INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2018/19

15.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Finance Officer regarding the Grant Thornton report on the audit opinion on the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts. The Chief Finance Officer reported that an amendment to the report was required as follows: On page 34 of the agenda pack, the second paragraph under the heading 'Financial governance - savings plans' contains the following sentence 'The temporary shortfall in year was compensated by £7.3m of additional one-off savings and the use of £1.6m of reserves'. This should be replaced by the following 'The temporary shortfall in year was compensated by £7.3m of one-off funding and the use of £1.6m of reserves'.

15.2 The Committee RESOLVED to –

- 1) note the Independent Auditor's (GT) Report to those charged with governance on ESCC Accounts and the Value for Money conclusion report, including the amendment referred to above;
- 2) authorise the Chief Finance Officer to sign the formal Letter of Representation to GT UK LLP; and
- 3) approve the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts for publication.

16 EAST SUSSEX PENSION BOARD - APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRS

16.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Finance Officer regarding the appointment of vice chairs to the East Sussex Pension Board.

16.2 The Committee RESOLVED to appoint Diana Pogson and Stephen Osborn as vice chairs of the East Sussex Pension Board as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

Report to: Governance Committee

Date of meeting: 20 September 2019

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Customer Experience Annual Report

Purpose: To provide an update on measures being taken to further improve customer experience and information about the Council's performance in 2018/19 in handling complaints, compliments and formal requests for information, including the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's annual letter.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Governance Committee is recommended to:

- (1) note the progress of the Customer Project Board in the implementation of a series of measures to improve customer experience and agree recommendations for 2019/20 and beyond as set out in the report;
 - (2) note the number and nature of complaints made to the Council in 2018/19; and
 - (3) note the contents of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's annual letter to the Chief Executive.
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1 Improvements in Customer Experience

1.1 In 2015 a Customer Project Board was set up with representatives from all departments to undertake a review of customer experience. The aim was to identify a strategy for better and more consistent customer experience across the authority, considering our corporate priorities, particularly making best use of our resources in the current financial climate, and a One Council approach.

1.2 A two-phase Customer Experience (CX) Improvement Plan was agreed in order to identify and implement some practical improvements and medium-term objectives to improving customer experience across ESCC. Phase One of the plan involved piloting feedback measurement systems from customers using our website and receiving emails from us. As reported in May 2018, the pilot was successful and our learning from this is summarised in section 2 below. Phase Two of the CX Improvement Plan was implemented in 2018/19 and comprised:

- a) continuing to gather customer feedback from our digital channels (website and emails) to increase the overall volume of to provide a wider evidence base for decision making and to allow more teams to trial the system.
- b) starting a new pilot of gathering feedback from customer contact via telephone calls and face to face visits from September 2018 to May 2019 inclusive.
- c) the launch of a Customer Services Network in June 2018 which is made up of staff in customer facing roles from across ESCC. There are approximately 20 members across Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Community, Economy and Transport, and Chief Executive Office.
- d) embedding the Customer Promise with contracted and commissioned services into the Procurement process, in both £181k+ and £25k to £181k frameworks. This was achieved with the cooperation and commitment from staff in Procurement.
- e) updating and rolling out the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour policy and guidance which were approved by CMT in January 2019. These replaced the Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy. We held four introductory sessions for staff, which were well attended. In

these sessions we reached over 60 staff from 25 different services from across the departments. We also attended team meetings where requested.

- f) contributing to the development of a Customer Services training course with Personnel and Training, where they had identified a lack of this type of training. It was launched in October 2018.
- g) relaunching the Customer Services Managers Group, a group for Customer Services Managers or equivalents from East Sussex District and Borough Councils, Brighton & Hove City Council and Sussex Police, to come together to improve signposting between the councils and share best practice. The group focuses where the services and enquiries overlap, and in particular where the public finds it difficult to differentiate between our authorities, such as traffic and safety, speeding, maintenance of roads and verges, waste collection and facilities.

2 Summary: what we've learned from CX Implementation Plan Phase One and Two

2.1 The Board has gained a number of key insights through Phase One and Two of the CX Improvement Plan. The main lesson learned is that there is significant value in gathering feedback from customers from across ESCC, and by gathering feedback from a wide range of services and contact channels, we now have a good awareness of the level of customer satisfaction across the organisation. However, we have not been able to succeed in getting valuable feedback from all contact channels that we've investigated, and this is discussed further in Appendix One.

2.2 We have built up a reliable picture of how customers view ESCC overall across most channels. Customer satisfaction is highest where staff interact with customers. There is an 80% overall customer satisfaction level for email interaction; 93% by telephone; and 76% for face to face interactions. The satisfaction level is consistently lower (64%) for our website, where customers self-serve, a channel which is becoming increasingly important for ESCC in reducing the costs of service delivery and information provision, especially in the light of the Core Offer. It is recommended that website customer satisfaction levels form a key part of the future focus of our CX work. We will need to do some further proactive, systematic work to better understand why the website overall receives lower ratings and how we can improve this. It would also be useful to benchmark this rating with other authorities to understand what is a typical level of satisfaction. It is crucial that this channel meets customer needs if we are going to rely on it increasingly in the future.

2.3 We've learned the quality of feedback varies from the different types of channels. The feedback from digital channels (website and emails) is particular effective for highlighting where improvements can be made. The ratings and comments left on a daily basis directly correlate with the customer's experience and how clear and useful the information and transactions have been. The telephone surveys have proven challenging both technically and in providing valuable results. This was primarily due to the difficulty in gaining staff engagement to ask customers to take part in the survey. A number of other technical options were investigated for continuing a Council-wide telephone survey, but none of the options have proven financially or technically possible. The face to face surveys provided some useful results, such as an overall level of satisfaction, but the uptake of the surveys across the locations varied. The project team has investigated using software that gives the customers the ability to leave comments about their visit, which would be useful to gain further insight. Please see Appendix One for an evaluation of Phase One and Two of the project and Appendix Two for the results of the surveys.

2.4 The Board has found that the Customer Services Network has proven very popular with staff and has been successful in providing valuable customer insight, sharing best practice, providing peer support, and tackling difficult issues and frustrations. We feel the network can provide valuable insight, contribution and evidence to the Customer Project Board when considering changes being made to services due to the Core Offer and the impact on customer satisfaction, and can act as a group of champions to lead on new approaches etc.

2.5 Through the project's research and feedback gathering, the project team have been able to develop the skills and knowledge about what is technically and practically possible in the field of CX

and what works for ESCC. The team have learned that being flexible in their approach has been essential for success and feel that it is the best course of action going forward when gathering feedback. We've learned that the satisfaction level is realised quickly and remains static (if nothing is changed, e.g. web content is not amended), and whilst the running costs of feedback systems are low, snapshots and one-off campaigns are equally effective as embedding long-term customer feedback into everything we do.

2.6 The project team can apply the knowledge acquired during the CX project and provide ongoing support across ESCC, adding value to specific projects, in particular when changes are being designed for services (e.g. implementation of the Core Offer). The measurement tools and evaluative skills can help monitor CX and ensure that, overall, that experience is a good one, even if it is in an environment where our communications with customers is more standardised and where we channel shift to greater online self-service. The team can also contribute a CX perspective to wider agendas such as digital / AI developments for ESCC and identify how they could be exploited to deliver a good CX at lower cost.

3 CX recommendations for 2019/20 and beyond

3.1 The Board has the following recommendations for providing a permanent focus of CX within ESCC, based on the lessons learned in Phases One and Two of the project. Further rationale supporting these recommendations is presented in Appendix One and the results of the feedback streams are provided in Appendix Two:

- a) The CX project to end, but the CET Customer Services Team to continue to lead on the corporate CX agenda and incorporate the activities below (if approved) into its role.
- b) CX development work across ESCC to continue to be reported to CMT in this annual report.
- c) The Customer Project Board to become the CX Board and meet twice a year to discuss and approve developments for CX, with highlight reports provided virtually to the Board for the two alternate quarters. The Board would therefore provide a corporate overview of ESCC's CX activity and take a view on issues and recommendations raised by the Customer Service Network, Customer Services Managers group and Corporate Content Strategy group.
- d) The webpage feedback surveys to continue and increase. Webpage feedback has been proven very valuable in improving customer experience and correcting or improving content of the website, but as discussed above, we need a better understanding of why customers have overall low levels of satisfaction with its use, and seek to improve this.
- e) The email feedback surveys to continue where teams wish to carry on using them, and to be used on an ad hoc basis as agreed by the Board. Email surveys provide us with valuable feedback for assessing this communication channel, but a more flexible approach would be more appropriate.
- f) The telephone surveys to be discontinued from an ESCC-wide approach.
- g) The face to face feedback surveys to continue, with a change of software to enable customers also to leave comments.
- h) The Customer Services Network to be continued.
- i) To work towards to establishing a comprehensive (as much as possible) customer contact baseline for ESCC. This includes telephone calls, emails, and online forms. Understanding where our high volume contact points are will be important in order to further evaluate CX and also to help channel shift customers where appropriate. However, it is essential that before we channel shift customers that we ensure our online alternative is easy, clear and any transactions are fit for purpose. Website feedback surveys will also play a vital role in this shift. Please see Appendix Three for details on the data already gathered and this proposed development.

3.2 The total cost for 2019/20 for the survey software would be approx. £1,700. For 2020/21 and onwards, the survey software would cost approx. £2,000 per annum. Costs can be absorbed within CET's Customer Services Team's budget, due to a small reduction of staff resources, from a staff member reducing to part time to allow for caring responsibilities.

4 Complaints and compliments

4.1 The Council received 774 complaints in 2018/19, which represents a very small increase of 0.5% from 2017/18 where there were 770 complaints. Of the 774 complaints, 266 were partly or fully upheld, that is 34% of all complaints, which is a decrease from the previous year at 39%. A detailed review, by department, is attached as Appendix Four. Please note that departmental comparisons of complaints and compliments are not valid due to the varying nature of services provided by departments.

4.2 Analysing trends and reasons for complaints provides us with valuable feedback on how we can provide services that meet customers' needs and manage their expectations. How we handle complaints is a crucial element of customer experience, and is an area where the Council is seeking continuous improvement to ensure we resolve individual customer's problems as effectively as possible, but also to identify where possible service-wide improvements that can be made to create a better experience. Further details are attached as Appendix Four.

4.3 The Council continues to receive more compliments than complaints. In 2018/19 we received 2,244 compliments; further details are provided by department in Appendix Four. Ensuring that we provide channels for both positive and negative feedback which are easy for customers to access and which can be analysed and acted upon by teams, is a priority for the Customer Project Board.

5 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman letter

5.1 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) sends a letter annually to each local authority summarising the number of complaints received, and the decisions made about the authority during the period. The LGSCO informs the Council of the complaints it has investigated and how many were either upheld or not upheld.

5.2 For 2018/19 the LGSCO received 87 complaints about ESCC, a decrease from 96 in 2017/18. There were 90 complaints where decisions were made during 2018/19, a slight increase of 2% from 88 in 2017/18. This report focuses on the complaints where decisions were made in 2018/19 and within these the ones that were investigated. The difference in the number of complaints received compared to the number of decisions made is due to the time it takes to investigate. Some decisions made in 2018/19 relate to complaints originally made in 2017/18. Appendix Four provides a breakdown by department of the complaints and the LGSCO letter for 2018/19 as Appendix Five.

5.3 For 2018/19, of the 90 complaints where decisions were made for ESCC, 41 complaints were investigated, and of those, 28 were upheld. There has been an increase for ESCC in 2018/19 of the percentage of upheld complaints (of those investigated) to 68%, which is above the national average of 58%. When compared to the total number of decisions made by the LGSCO in 2018-19 (as opposed to cases that go through to a full investigation), the upheld figure is 31%. The upheld rates for previous years are listed in Appendix Four.

5.4 This year the LGSCO provided an additional report on the compliance of the remedies they recommended for complaints they upheld. The LGSCO believes this will provide a more comprehensive and insightful view on our approach to complaint handling. The LGSCO provided specific recommendations and often with a time-frame for completion, which they followed up with authorities and gathered evidence that recommendations were implemented. Of the 28 upheld complaints for ESCC, the LGSCO recorded the compliance of recommendations for 22 complaints. ESCC succeeded on satisfying compliance on all 22 of the complaints.

5.5 The report on compliance provides descriptions of the recommendations for each of the 22 complaints, and since there can be more than one recommendation per complaint, this shows more of a trend of what the remedies were for the injustices caused or maladministration, than the 'decision made' report. The following were the remedies that ESCC carried out (but there were a further two unidentified 'other remedies'):

- Apology (16)
- Financial Redress (18): due to avoidable distress / time (10), quantifiable loss (5), loss of service (3)
- New appeal, reconsidered decision, reassessment (5)
- Procedure or policy review / change (4)
- Training and guidance (2)
- Add or correct records (1)

5.6 The LGSCO noted this year that they issued one public report about ESCC in 2018/19, regarding the handling of a child's absences from school. A public report of a complaint is issued by the LGSCO when it believes it's in the public interest to highlight a particular issue or when an authority disagrees with a recommendation. In this instance the LGSCO issued the report as ESCC did not accept all of the analysis and recommendations within the draft decision statements. In the end, the public report issued contained a significantly more measured and accurate view of the events than previous draft decision statements and we accepted the recommendations in full. The Governance Committee considered the report and the Council's response at its meeting on 26 June 2018.

6 Formal requests for information

6.1 There were 2,039 information requests in 2018/19 compared to 1,814 in 2017/18. These requests relate to the Environmental Information Regulations, Freedom of Information Act, and Data Protection Act. These include requests where information was provided in full or part, where no information was provided or held, and requests that were not valid or were withdrawn.

6.2 During 2018/19 the Council achieved a 94% compliance rate in meeting Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests within the 20 working day deadline. The monitoring threshold set by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is 90% to be answered within this timescale.

6.3 We continue to have a high number of FOI and EIR requests, receiving 1,597 in 2018/19 compared to 1,491 in 2017/18, an increase of 7%. We continue to explore efficiencies in order to meet the increase. As stated in the customer and support service section of the Core Offer, we have a statutory obligation to respond to formal information requests. We encourage staff to respect the public's right to ask these requests and to view responding to these requests as part of their core duties, and as part of our Core Offer. However, we will find ways to make information more readily accessible for the public to reduce the need to make a request and in the process try to reduce staff time needed to answer bespoke requests.

6.4 In October 2018, we launched the 'disclosure log'; this log is part of the functionality of the case management system and it publishes our FOI and EIR responses on the Council's website. The disclosure log has helped improve transparency and access to public information in general. And although it should be recognised that few FOI requests are identical, the log has already proven useful to point the public to previous requests in order to provide answers in full or in part to their requests.

6.5 With the widely publicised new data protection legislation that came into force on 25 May 2018, the number of data protection subject access requests (SARs) increased significantly in 2018/19. We received 442 requests in 2018/19 compared to 323 requests in 2017/18, an increase of 37%. There is no limit applied to staff time for SARs; it is the Council's obligation to provide the information.

6.6 Complaints regarding the final responses to FOI and EIR requests have their own procedure, first as an internal review carried out by Orbis Public Law, and then the option to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if the customer remains dissatisfied. For SARs, we review our response if the customer remains dissatisfied and ask for legal support if it is particular complex.

In 2018/19, we received nine requests for internal reviews, the same number as in 2017/18. The Customer Services Team and Orbis Public Law continue to work together to identify where improvements can be made due to customers being dissatisfied with our responses to their requests. Out of the nine internal reviews, Orbis Public Law found fault in the way the exemptions, allowed by the legislation, were applied for three cases. There was no fault found with four internal reviews and one is still outstanding.

6.7 In 2018/19, the ICO received six complaints about the Council, compared to eight in 2017/18. All six complaints were regarding SARs. Of the six complaints the ICO ruled that the Council had been compliant in discharging its statutory duties in three cases, and non-compliant in three cases. Of the three upheld complaints, one was remedied by raising awareness with ESCC staff on recognising SARs from the public, one by providing further information to the requester, and the other providing an apology for the delay in our response to the requester.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 This report provides an overview and progress on measures being taken to further improve customer experience and summarises the annual results for complaints, compliments, the LGO letter, and formal information requests received in 2018/19.

7.2 The Governance Committee is recommended to:

- (1) note the progress of the Customer Project Board in the implementation of a series of measures to improve customer experience and agree the recommendations for 2019/20 and beyond;
- (2) note the number and nature of complaints made to the Council in 2018/19; and
- (3) note the contents of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's annual letter to the Chief Executive.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Anita Cundall

Tel. No. 01273 481870

Email: anita.cundall@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

Governance Committee

20 September 2019

Appendix 1 Lessons learned and recommendations from Phase One and Two

1 Introduction

1.1 The Customer Project Board and Customer Services Team (CST) have continued their work in Phase Two of the Customer Experience (CX) Improvement Plan in 2018/19. This appendix provides an evaluation of the key strands of the project, discusses what we've learned, and makes recommendations arising from both Phase One and Two. Appendix Two provides the results of the different types of feedback collected from digital channels, telephone calls, and face to face visitors.

2 Evaluation of key developments in 2018/19 and recommendations for 2019/20

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The pilots for gathering customer feedback have proven valuable in assessing how satisfied our customers are and where improvements can be made. Some areas of customer service have already been improved on the basis of the feedback received and these examples are detailed in Appendix Two. There is potential for making more improvements for our customers and it is recommended that ESCC continues this valuable CX work in 2019/20 and further. Having customer satisfaction measurement systems in place helps monitor customer satisfaction in a structured way, which could also be helpful in measuring customer satisfaction as we move to implement the Customer and Support Service Core Offer, whereby we will expect people to use online resources wherever possible and accept automated rather than personalised responses to general enquiries. Whilst it is clear that the Core Offer will not enable us to deliver overall levels of customer experience we have previously provided, it is nevertheless important that our services meet this new, basic customer need.

2.1.2 At the end of Phase Two of the project, we're confident that we now have a good baseline of customer satisfaction across a range of services, which ESCC didn't have prior to starting these pilots. They have enabled us to understand how customers view ESCC and how we can continue making improvements in our interactions with them.

2.1.3 Throughout the project, we have developed an understanding about what is possible in terms of technical solutions. We have established that a flexible approach to customer feedback is the best course of action, rather than embedding continual customer feedback into everything we do. The results have been positive, and it has been encouraging to learn that customer service across ESCC is very good and that our members of staff strive to provide excellent customer service.

2.2 CX project continuation and the Customer Project Board

2.2.1 It is recommended that the CX project ends as a project and the objectives of this work are moved into CST on a permanent basis. CST would continue developing customer satisfaction monitoring and evaluation and CX development work would be a core part of this team's remit.

2.2.2 It is also recommended that the Customer Project Board becomes the CX Board and meets twice a year to discuss developments, with highlight reports provided virtually for the two alternate quarters. Membership is proposed to continue at Assistant Director level unless the role is delegated. These meetings are crucial for identifying, co-ordinating and evaluating cross-department developments in CX improvement across ESCC. The Board would continue to act as the governing Board for approvals of this work and discuss issues raised by the Customer

Service Network, Customer Services Managers group and Corporate Content Strategy group, which all feed into CX development. CST would lead on CX on behalf of the Board for ESCC as a whole, taking the CX project mainstream and as a permanent function within the team.

2.2.3 CST would continue to work dynamically, and lead or participate in specific projects to measure customer satisfaction, particularly when we make changes to services impacting the customers. CST would continue to be involved with the development of the website, helping teams to improve the information that is offered to customers and thus improving the customer experience, and would continue its involvement in further recommendations from the Board to the Council's approach in channel shifting and the wider digital / AI agenda.

2.3 Digital channels: email and webpage

2.3.1 We have continued to use Customer Thermometer for email and webpage feedback in 2017/18, 2018/19 and into 2019/20. This system uses a simple 1-4 rating and comment box. The volume of feedback regarding the website and email correspondence has steadily increased since this feedback started to be collected in August 2017. For comparison, in Q4 of 2017/18 2,689 individual pieces of feedback were provided and in Q4 of 2018/19 this had risen to 3,311, a 23% increase. The number of teams using the surveys has also increased since the start of the pilot. As of March 2019 there are now 15 teams using the survey within their emails compared to 10 teams in March 2018. The number of webpages that include the Customer Thermometer has also increased from 88 in March 2018 to 549 in June 2019.

2.3.2 The satisfaction rate for 2018/19 across emails has stayed consistent at approximately 80% customer satisfaction (when customers choose excellent and good). This has been a relatively unchanging satisfaction rate since the start of the pilot. Customers are generally very happy with the service they receive by email. We do receive a reasonable number of comments on how to improve the service or how to increase customer satisfaction using this method of feedback. When comments are left by customers expressing dissatisfaction with an email, these are often related to the decision made rather than the service that was given.

2.3.3 It is recommended that email feedback is continued but with a more flexible approach. Teams could choose to continue using the survey on their emails continually, or for one-off campaigns, or for set periods of time as a snapshot, depending on their needs. As reporting is time consuming, this would be particularly useful for teams who have a low volume of customer feedback. It could be used as a periodic 'temperature gauge' of customer service, for example, focusing on when changes occur on certain webpages, and when there are high volume times of the year, for example when school admissions are open. This approach would give us the opportunity to monitor large projects, especially those implementing Core Offer changes to services. As we have found that feedback does not vary on emails over long periods of time, a more flexible and periodic approach would work for this type of feedback.

2.3.4 The satisfaction rate over the year 2018/19 for ESCC's webpages is 64%. This is lower than the satisfaction rate for email interactions with customers. Webpages solicited more comments from customers than emails did. A number of services have found the comments left by customers very useful and these have significant changes to their webpages, including Children's Services, Blue Badges and Parking. The improvements and the impact these had on the satisfaction ratings can be seen in Appendix Two. Other services have been able to make minor changes and corrections, such as fixing broken links, correcting out-of-date contact details, and improving poorly written and out-of-date information. Throughout the pilots staff have expressed that the comment function is the most helpful for making changes and understanding why a customer might be dissatisfied.

2.3.5 The website feedback is very valuable, especially in cases where we are trying to channel shift our customers to a self-service model. This will only really work if we can direct customers to a site that has the correct information and is easy to use. The website acts as the 'shop window' for the Council and we need to help services get this information right in order to fulfil our Council priorities and help with the implementation of the Core Offer. Going forward it is recommended

that we undertake some further systematic work to better understand why the website overall receives significantly lower ratings than other channels and how we can seek to improve it.

2.3.6 It is recommended working alongside Adult Social Care and Digital Services who are preparing to pilot a chatbot on the Blue Badge webpages. We would use Customer Thermometer alongside the chatbot to monitor customer satisfaction rates during the pilot. Blue Badge webpages have proved one of our lowest customer satisfaction areas and a chatbot is being investigated as an alternative option if the customer is unable to find the information they require. This would also support channel shifting within this department.

2.3.7 The system used to pilot the digital feedback is easy and flexible to use. It provides us with useful and real time information that is presented on an online dashboard, and although reporting can be time consuming, we have put measures in place to make it easier and quicker to report.

2.3.8 It is recommended that we continue with the digital feedback using the same software, Customer Thermometer, and continue with the same teams, but advertise Customer Thermometer to more teams and encourage them to use the survey on an ad hoc basis, where appropriate. Customer Thermometer is inexpensive and works well for what we are using it for.

2.4 Telephone feedback

2.4.1 As part of Phase Two of the CX project, a telephone survey was piloted. This type of survey has been the most challenging. Firstly, it has proved very difficult to deliver from a technical point of view due to the varying telephony systems ESCC uses, and there is no universal fix that can accommodate these different systems.

2.4.2 Secondly, the level of engagement from staff with the telephone survey pilot was low. Staff were provided with a script to ask the customer whether they would like to participate in a customer satisfaction survey, to be asked at the end of the phone call. This meant that the survey was self-selecting as opposed to all the other feedback methods used (face to face iPad, email and webpage) where any customers can choose to give feedback. Team Managers and some staff members fed back that they felt very uncomfortable asking every customer to complete the survey, particularly customers who were clearly dissatisfied with the service. There were some concerns that staff 'cherry-picked' customers and this may have resulted in survey responses biased towards the positive. Agile working by a number of staff also meant that transferring a customer to the survey was not possible as staff who work remotely are unable to transfer calls from their mobile.

2.4.3 To try to increase the number of surveys that were completed, the Principal Customer Services Officer, along with Team Managers, attended team meetings to encourage members of staff to take part. Whilst this increased the number of surveys for a few weeks, the number began to drop again soon after.

2.4.4 Telephone feedback has been very positive, with 93% of customers who completed the survey indicating that they were satisfied with the service they had received during their telephone call during the nine month pilot. However, this needs to be considered in the context of the comments above that there may have been bias towards staff inviting obviously 'happy customers' to participate in the surveys, although we have no real way of knowing the extent of this, if indeed it was a real factor. There were a small number of verbatim comments left which were all positive and complimented the staff who took the call.

2.4.5 Some teams that take a larger number of phone calls, namely Highways and Parking, gained more value from the telephone surveys than the smaller teams. The number of surveys asked was higher and thus the amount of data to draw conclusions was much larger. These teams are also part of services that are contracted out and the managers found the data useful to monitor the performance of the contract.

2.4.6 Due to the poor engagement levels of staff in the pilot, the project team revisited and investigated a number of options that were previously looked at in the research stage of this pilot. This was to see whether there were any further developments in technological options that could be used to make telephone surveys more successful for both staff and customers. However, there were no easy solutions. The following are two options that come close to meeting our needs:

- There is one option where customers are given an automated introduction at the beginning of a telephone call to opt-in to a survey at the end of their call. This removes the onus from the member of staff having to answer the question at the end of the call. This option comes with a cost of £22k per annum and it would not work on all of the telephony systems we use. Because of the high cost of implementing and limited applicability, we decided not to pursue this as an option.
- We investigated a further option of using a text service after the telephone call. This means that at a later time the customer receives a survey via text. This is also expensive, and it includes using mobile telephone numbers for other purposes than the core service the customer is receiving, which is difficult without engaging explicit consent from the customer. The biggest concern with this option is that it results in being very similar to the method we piloted, where the onus falls back onto staff to ask the customer to take part in a telephone survey at the end of a call due to needing to gain explicit consent. For this reason and the cost, we decided not to pursue this option.

2.4.7 For the reasons described above, it is recommended to discontinue telephone surveys on an ESCC-wide approach. However, East Sussex Highways (ESH) has expressed an interest in continuing the telephone survey with their contact centre, at their own expense. ESH have some of our highest call volumes across ESCC, taking 45,374 external calls for the year 2018/19. This would involve a new contract between ESH and cMetrix, our current telephone survey provider. ESH will provide the Customer Services Team monthly feedback statistics for their telephone survey results. This will enable the team to continue monitoring some customer satisfaction on the telephone.

2.5 Face to face feedback

2.5.1 Phase Two of the project, also included piloting a face to face survey using iPads. These were placed in the entrances of five ESCC buildings: County Hall, Ocean House, St. Mary's House, Eastbourne Library and Hastings Library. The customer satisfaction for this method of feedback averaged indicated 76% of customers who completed this survey were satisfied with the customer service they had received during their visit to the council site they had visited that day. Feedback results by location are presented in Appendix Two.

2.5.2 This feedback method has been very successful in the public libraries, and customers are feeding back that they like the fact that we provide the devices as it shows accountability for the service we're providing. They have not been used as much in the three reception areas. This could be due to the fact that customers do not necessarily see themselves as customers when they are accessing these Council buildings. In addition to this, it was not always practical or technically possible to locate the devices in the ideal places (i.e. close to the point where they exit the building) so many customers may not have seen or walked past them.

2.5.3 The survey software used did not have the function to allow the customer to leave a comment explaining why they were leaving the feedback they did. The teams involved in the pilot thought that it was difficult to draw conclusions from the data that was gathered. In reception areas, it was difficult to know what the customer was leaving feedback on, as the customer may be leaving feedback for a number of different services.

2.5.4 It is recommended to continue to use these devices as they are easy to use and we can gain success rates for particular locations. We also own the iPads so we are able to use them more flexibly. It is recommended that they are rotated around other locations, for example, The Keep, other libraries, and used at events. Teams have expressed interest in using the iPads to undertake their own customer survey at events and so this would be a useful service to offer.

2.5.5 It is recommended that we change the software on the iPads to Customer Thermometer. This would be much more flexible and allows us to compare the face to face, email and website feedback within the same system. It also means that customers will be able to leave a comment which can be acted upon and help to build a bigger picture of how customers view the Council. The survey would drop down to one question, as per the email and webpage survey, followed by a comment box. The use of one question and a comment field may increase response rates and encourage customers leave comments.

2.5.6 Since the responses have been lower within reception areas, it is recommended that a six month pilot within reception areas is undertaken to see if a change in software, and a new approach of questioning, solicits a larger number of responses.

2.6 Customer Services Network

2.6.1 It is recommended to continue the Customer Services Network (CSN) which began in June 2018. It has proved very popular with staff and has been successful in tackling with some difficult issues and frustrations amongst teams and services. It's an excellent platform for staff across the Council to help one another discuss the issues facing their services and share best practice and suggest solutions. The group could be a valuable group to provide insight and evidence for the CX Board when considering changes due to the Core Offer, and how these changes affect the customer experience.

2.7 Customer Contact Baseline

2.7.1 It would be beneficial to work towards establishing a reliable, comprehensive and ongoing baseline of the customer contact ESCC receives, which we do not currently have. This includes telephone calls, emails, and online forms. Understanding where our high volume contact points are will be important in order to further evaluate and improve CX, and this data would enable us to identify high volume areas of contact where there is the potential to channel shift online. Initial work to gather this data has been undertaken and is presented as Appendix Three. We have encountered limitations in gathering this data systematically, regularly and comprehensively, due to the numerous systems used to deliver our communication channels. However, processes can be put in place to collect this in the future if it is seen as valuable. There is no significant cost to this; by and large it is a question of staff resources and prioritisation of this work. So far, we have been able to gather data for incoming telephone calls received, and this is also included in Appendix Three.

3.0 Costs for implementing the recommendations

3.1 For all feedback surveys, Customer Thermometer (CT) would be used. CT works on a 'credits' basis. Each month, additional credits are added to the account which allows us to receive survey responses. One survey equals one credit used. When we started the pilot we paid for a large number of credits which have yet to be used. For the next six months, the cost would remain at \$9 (~ £7.10) per month. After this, the cost to continue using Customer Thermometer would be \$209 per month (~ £165), and this provides us with 3,000 credits every month. The 3,000 credits are based on our webpage and email monthly average survey responses, plus the average number of face to face iPad survey responses we have received. The estimated cost for 2019/20 for CT credits would be approx. £500.

3.2 In order to switch the iPad face to face survey over to CT, there is an initial set up cost of \$299 (~ £235) per tablet. We have five tablets and so to set up a new survey on all five would be a total cost of \$1495 (~ £1,174).

3.3. The total cost for 2019/20 for the survey software would be approx. £1,700. For 2020/21 and onwards, the survey software would cost approx. £2,000 per annum. This cost would be absorbed within CET's Customer Services Team's budget.

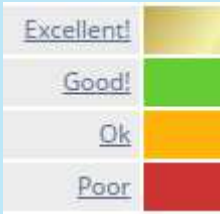
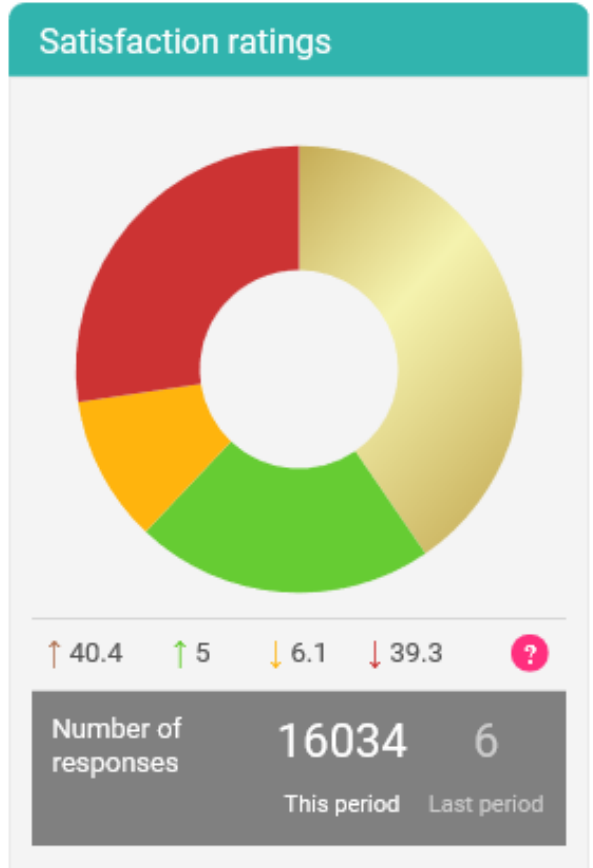
4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The Customer Experience Improvement Plan in the CX project has provided us with feedback from customers that we previously did not gather. It also allowed us to pilot different methods of feedback to see what works and what doesn't. We now have a large amount of data that can help us to understand how customers view their interaction with the Council and also help us to form decisions to make the experience better for our customers. Being able to continue the work with these recommendations would allow us to carry on with our improvements to customer experience across all methods of customer contact. Baselineing our customer contact means that we can use this alongside our feedback collected and help us to understand the most cost effective way of having contact with our customers. We can use this data to channel shift our customers and continue to monitor customer satisfaction across our customer contact channels.

Appendix 2: feedback surveys

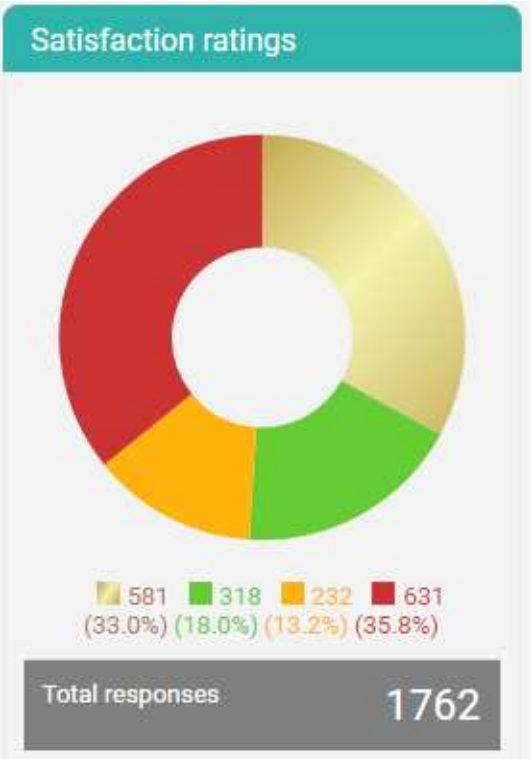
1.0 Feedback on digital channels: email and feedback

We have received a total of **16,034 responses** for our digital channels since the start of the pilot in August 2017 and a total of **3,441 comments** have been left providing feedback that teams can act upon.



1.1 Webpage feedback and response rate

- In March 2018, Customer Thermometer Surveys were on a total of 88 webpages.
- In June 2019, Customer Thermometer Surveys were on a total of 549 webpages. These webpages cover Communities, Economy, and Transport, Children’s Services and Adult Social Care.
- There is a total of 2,968 webpages on the East Sussex County Council website.
- In Q4 of 2018/19, 1,762 individual piece of feedback were provided from our customers. This compares to 1,328 for Q4 in 2017/18. This represents an increase of 33%.
- In Q4 of 17/18 the customer satisfaction rate was 60% and by Q4 18/19 it had increased to 64%.
- Satisfaction ratings for Q4 2018/19 can be seen below:



Excellent!	Gold
Good!	Green
Ok	Yellow
Poor	Red



1.2 Examples of recent improvements made from webpage feedback

Team / where	Reason for change	Date changes made	Changes made	Difference in feedback
Blue Badges (ASC) webpages	Multiple comments left detailing issues with the Blue Badges webpages. Customers were not happy with the confusing information given.	January 2019	Additional information added to webpages. Information that customers had asked for was also included.	The satisfaction rating across Blue Badge increased but then decreased again.. This has been fed back to the ASC Web Team.
Parking (CET) webpages	Multiple comments have been left on the Parking permit webpages which express dissatisfaction about information being unclear. There were also concerns around the permit application process being difficult to access and issues with the uploading of documents.	February 2019	Removed PDFs and replaced them with web content. This meant increasing the web content but it provided customers with easily accessible information.	Since this change, customer satisfaction has increased by 12%. Any negative comments continue to be provided to Parking web authors for their information .
Registration (CET) webpages	In January 2019 there were a number of broken links on the Registration webpages. This was due to Registration services creating their own website that sat outside of the East Sussex County Council main website. As a result some links became broken.	February 2019	The broken links were fixed and removed where necessary.	There have been no comments left about broken links since the changes were made.
Bexhill Hastings Link Road (CET) – BHLR webpages	Multiple red clicks on these pages. Customers found the pages long and couldn't access information they wanted.	March 2019	It was discovered that a large amount of data on the BHLR webpages was old and no longer needed. As a result a piece of work was undertaken to clean up this section of the website.	Since this change, we have not received any comments highlighting the information is out of date or misleading for customers.

1.3 Webpage feedback – next improvements

From the results for 2018/19, two significant areas that have been identified where further improvements can be made.

Blue Badge webpages

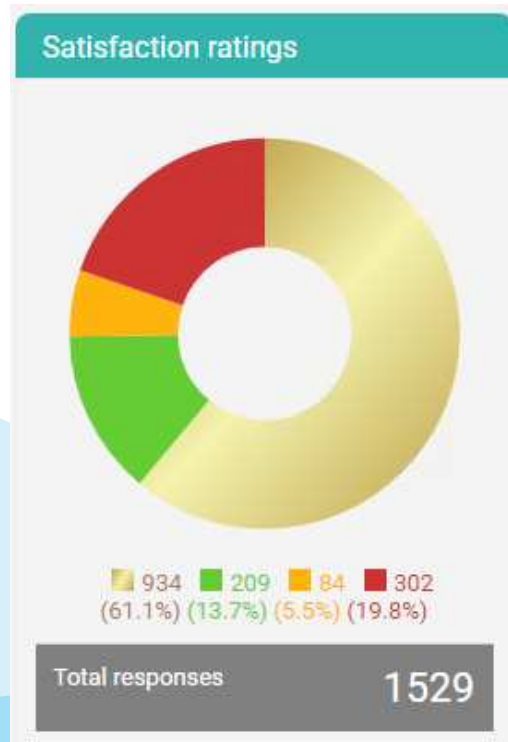
- ASC have been working to improve the Blue Badge webpages which consistently receive negative feedback.
- Small, quick amendments were made in January 2019. The satisfaction rate rose initially and then dropped again and currently the Blue Badge red clicks are sitting consistently at 49% (customers choosing poor).
- We can see from the comments that customers are dissatisfied with the information telephone line advertised to the public. Some comments include:
 - “The number to call 01323 464244 is on a continuous loop! I have spent a number of weeks trying to speak to someone about a stolen Blue Badge and to arrange a replacement without any success.”
 - “someone needs to man the disability blue badge line”
- There is no resource to staff the Blue Badge Information line five days a week.
- Having discussed with the ASC Information and Guidance Team we are aware of a pilot of a chatbot on the Blue Badge pages to answer customer questions. If this proves successful, the team could work towards removing the Blue Badge information telephone line following the necessary provisions being put in place to mitigate any concerns on accessibility.

‘Contact Us Online’ webpages

- Since the Contact Us Online webpage was re-formatted at start of February 2019, the customer satisfaction has dropped significantly to 27% (excellent, good or ok). The previous version of this page was our highest rated rate webpage at 100% (excellent, good or ok) from April 2018 to end of January 2019. Digital Services have investigated alternative options of how to provide this information, for example other Council contact us pages have been investigated, and improvements will be made shortly to improve customer satisfaction.

1.4 Email feedback and response rate

- In March 2018, 10 teams across Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) and Children’s Services (CS) were using Customer Thermometer for email feedback.
- In June 2019, 20 teams across CET and CS were using the Customer Thermometer for email feedback.
- The Health and Social Care Connect Team in Adult Social Care (ASC) were approached about being involved in the pilot but declined. This was due to their email communication being largely related to informing clients that their case is being progressed and passed to the relevant team.
- In Q4, 18/19, the customer satisfaction rating was 80%, down from 88% in Q4 of 17/18.
- Comments with ‘Poor’ ratings often relate to the decision being made rather than the customer service received.
- Comments also include compliments about staff, congratulating them on their good customer service.
- Satisfaction ratings for Q4, 2018/19:



Excellent!	
Good!	
Ok	
Poor	



1.5 Feedback from teams and team managers regarding the pilot

Interest from staff and managers in using Customer Thermometer has increased since the beginning of the pilot. As the tool is used more, managers began to see the benefit of having such a tool that can provide insight into our website and email correspondence. Reluctance to join Customer Thermometer usually centres around the following concerns:

- Dissatisfaction is difficult to act upon as people are usually unhappy about the response given rather than the service provided. This is more appropriate for email feedback rather than webpage feedback.
- A large amount of follow up work would be created as a result of the feedback. In reality, this has not happened, and where it has happened the work needed is justified and has proven that work has needed to be done to provide information to customers.
- Customers may use it as a reporting tool for incidents and safeguarding concerns. We have been trialling Customer Thermometer with Adult Social Care and have included with the landing page of the survey, a short paragraph asking that customers call Health and Social Care Connect if they have concerns for someone's welfare. A similar message is in operation with Children's SPOA team. Since the teams began trialling the Customer Thermometer on their webpages over a year ago, there has only been one safeguarding concern which was highlighted as soon as it arrived in the reporting dashboard.

The feedback has been extremely useful for teams and has provided 'real-time' comments to alert teams to:

- Broken links which can be fixed immediately
- A lengthy customer journey due to a missing link that a customer was able to point out.
- Areas for possible development where the customer wanted additional information
- Customers alerting us to difficulties accessing content on devices. This allows us to test and ensure it is working

2.0 Telephone survey feedback

- A total of seven teams took part in the telephone pilot: Customer Services Team, Parking, Libraries, and Highways, within CET. Admissions and Transport and Customer Relations in CSD and Health and Social Care Connect in ASC.
- At the end of the telephone call, the customer was asked by the call handler whether they would like to take part in a short telephone survey. If the customer agreed, they were put on hold whilst the member of staff enters a telephone number and a code (identifying which service the caller has used) to put the customer through to the survey.
- The customer is asked a total of five questions. Each question answered is logged onto the system. If customers do not finish the questionnaire, the questions they do answer are still logged and reported on. The customer is also able to leave a verbatim comment if they would like.
- There were 1,734 telephone surveys in total and the pilot ran from September 2018 to May 2019.
- 93% of customers who completed the survey indicated that they were satisfied with the service they had received during their telephone call.

2.1 Telephone survey feedback results

Services	Total number of calls taken for 2018/19	Number of surveys answered	Overall satisfaction	Time taken to respond	Helpfulness and politeness of staff	Fully understood your needs	Quality of information and advice given
Customer Services (CET)	606	25	92%	80%	93%	94%	91%
Parking (CET)	32,678	70	91%	87%	95%	95%	92%
NSL Parking (CET)	Unknown	32	96%	80%	99%	100%	100%
Highways (CET)	45,374	444	91%	83%	94%	94%	90%
Libraries (CET)	37,976	414	93%	82%	94%	93%	93%
Admissions and Transport (CS)	20,603	81	97%	96%	97%	97%	96%
Customer Relations (CS)	5,647	61	91%	75%	94%	93%	90%
Health and Social Care Connect (ASC)	56,938	607	95%	86%	95%	95%	94%

3.0 Face to face survey feedback results

- Face to face survey devices were placed in high traffic entrance areas in five buildings across the County: Eastbourne and Hastings Libraries, and St. Mary’s House, Ocean House and County Hall reception areas.
- The customer is asked five questions in the survey, although there was no facility to leave a comment.
- There were 2,014 responses in total and the pilot ran from September 2018 to May 2019.
- The library sites received the most feedback with the reception areas receiving the least.
- The data was consistent over the nine months that they were used.
- 76% of customers who completed the survey indicated they were satisfied with the customer service they had received during their visit to the council site that day.

Services	Total number of surveys answered	Our service overall	Advisors understanding of your query	How knowledgeable was our advisor	Helpfulness and politeness of staff	Best customer service
County Hall	144	86%	74%	74%	77%	76%
St Mary’s	107	84%	80%	83%	85%	83%
Ocean House	351	48%	40%	40%	45%	42%
Eastbourne Library	798	84%	75%	77%	79%	76%
Hastings Library	614	78%	70%	67%	72%	70%

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Governance Committee

20 September 2019

Appendix 3 Development of a customer contact baseline

1 Purpose and aim

1.1 We currently lack a single, comprehensive dataset of customer contacts across all channels, including customer contacts with outsourced and commissioned services. We have investigated the work that would be required to create a comprehensive view of our customer interactions on an ongoing basis, and this Appendix explains this work and the recommendations for the next steps.

1.2 As part of the Customer Experience (CX) project, we have been working to fill in the 'gap' between complaints and compliments, which are the type of contacts that we've traditionally reported on. We are achieving this by gaining customer feedback and this Appendix explains expanding our work to better understand customer contact and how this could drive channel shift to help our customers help themselves. Understanding the nature of enquiries could be a next stage where the baseline data highlights high volume areas which could be investigated in greater depth for the reasons behind the contact.

1.3 This data is important as we cannot know customer journeys without it and it is difficult to identify where development is needed. In order to do this we need to trust the data and be able to access it. Due to the distributed customer contact model of East Sussex County Council (ESCC), we first needed to locate and validate the data sources for customer contact. The Council uses many different technological systems to interact with its customers, and not all of them are able to provide the data we would like. This Appendix explains the contact channels and the reporting capabilities and reliabilities of each system, and what can be done to take this forward if it is of interest to the Customer Project Board and CMT.

1.4 The potential benefits of gathering the data would be to:

- Provide senior managers, CMT and Members with oversight of customer interactions across different channels, with trends in volumes.
- Enable us to target customer experience feedback measurement systems to areas of highest volumes.
- Identify opportunities for channel shift to reduce cost and improve efficiency, for example by replicating success in other areas of the Council, and measure its impact.
- Continuing to imbed the Customer Promise into the culture of ESCC and enabling us to monitor its implementation through the development of KPIs measurable from the baseline data (and its subsets).
- Provide evidence to ensure consistency across the Council and outsourced services in delivering excellent customer service or be able to identify areas where we can improve customer experience.
- Increase accountability to customers and residents of East Sussex by publishing customer satisfaction and performance data.

2 Scope of data

2.1 We carried out a work request with IT&D in order to have a Business Analyst (BA) assigned to the work. The BA carried out the work needed to confirm the reliability of the reporting, validate the data and any data cleansing. This work took place from February to June 2019.

2.2 For this exercise we focused on the following customer contact points, which also include outsourced and commissioned services:

- Customer facing telephone numbers: we are only able to report on total incoming external telephone calls received (not just those which are answered) due to the limits of the systems
- Customer facing email addresses: external incoming emails
- Online forms (webforms and e-forms): submissions of forms

For this exercise we excluded:

- Incoming letters, these are currently not counted
- Enquiries via social media. Customers do contact us with enquiries through social media as a communication channel. This is a channel that could be investigated if going forward with this work.

3 Availability and reliability of data

3.1 The table below summarises the contact channels, systems, and the reliability of the reporting available:

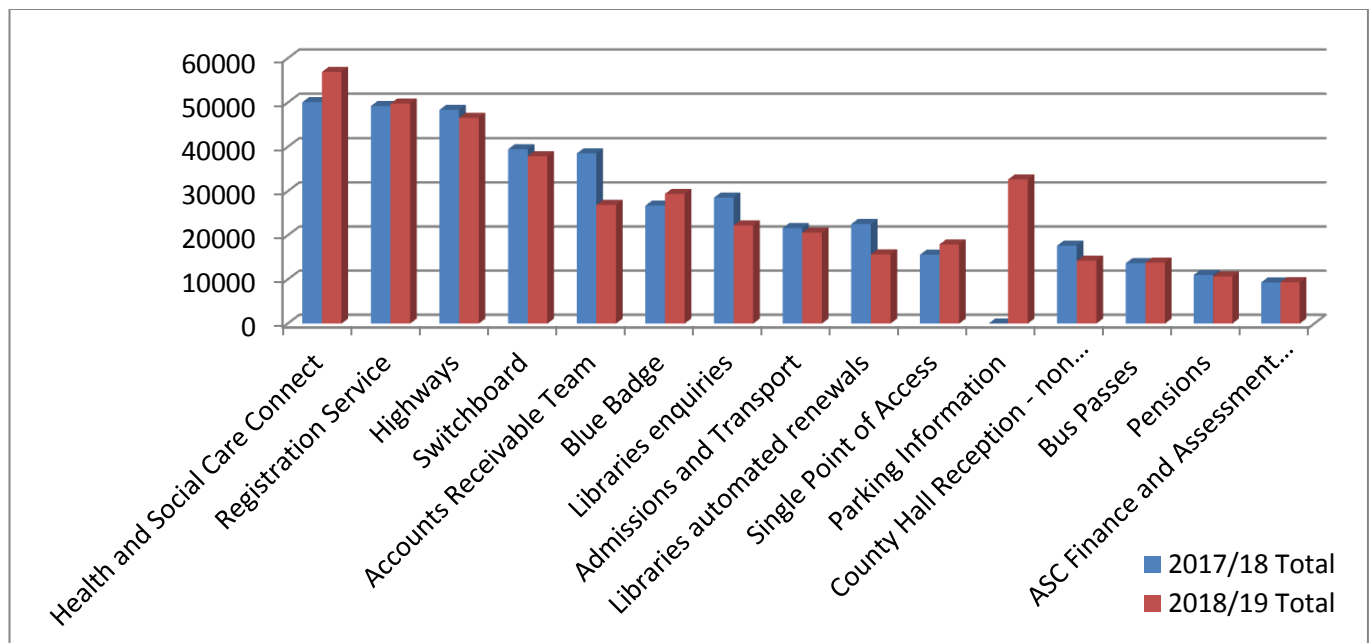
Contact channel	System, reporting reliability
<p>Customer facing telephone numbers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “non-geo” numbers, e.g. 0345s, 0300s. There are 12 numbers advertised on ESCC website ▪ Other numbers advertised on the website, e.g. 01273, 01323. There are approx. 100 telephone numbers listed on the website, these are individuals and team numbers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systems: KCOM and Precision ▪ Reporting: Accurate ▪ Only incoming / received calls from external numbers. <i>Please note:</i> these figures <i>will</i> include staff calling from their ESCC mobiles into office landline telephone numbers.
<p>Customer facing email addresses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Email addresses listed (personal and group) on the website ▪ Approx. 100 email addresses are advertised on the website ▪ There are approx. 1,600 group email inboxes in ESCC, of which 400 – 450 are customer facing. This is discussed further in the sections below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ System: Promodag ▪ Reporting: Accurate ▪ Only IT&D can access Promodag and staff have limited resources to provide the reports needed. However, once the report is configured and automated, very little staff time should be needed to receive monthly reports. ▪ Incoming external emails. Reporting cannot rule out auto-responses from external customers ▪ It has been confirmed that Promodag will be able to report when we move to Office 365
<p>Webforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ These are forms created in Umbraco or webforms which are embedded into webpages which are connected to information systems, e.g. a database a service uses to log enquiries ▪ There are approx. 90 – 110 webforms and e-forms combined on the website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systems: Umbraco and various information systems ▪ Reporting: Accurate ▪ However, access varies. Figures from Umbraco need to be worked through with Digital Services. Access to figures of webforms via information systems would entail contact with each service who manages their system.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All received webforms
<p>e-forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are forms which act as an email. There are approx. 90 – 110 webforms and e-forms combined on the website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System: custom development within the website Reporting: not possible. These forms are sent internally to email inboxes and they are counted as internal emails. However, we are working with Digital Services to find a workaround where we count the number of “thank you for your submission” webpages, which should give us figures of how many times e-forms has been used by customers.

4 Data results

4.1 Our aim was to gather monthly figures in order to reveal seasonal fluctuation. It wasn't possible to gather this data for the last three financial years as there was too much restructuring in services and systems to make it possible to report on 2016/17. Instead data from 2017/18 and 2018/19 were used. However, we needed to enter estimates for 'non-geo' telephone numbers for April, May and June in 2017 as the data were not available in KCOM.

4.2 **Customer facing telephone numbers:** We have been able to pull together figures for telephone calls. For all the telephone numbers advertised on the ESCC website, we received a total of 474,107 in 2018/19 and 469,004 in 2017/18. The number of received calls has increased from the previous year. The last year included the extending of Health and Social Care Connect's opening times, and for this telephone number, there were approx. 6,000 more calls from 2017/18 to 2018/19. The following are the top 15 numbers with the highest received telephone calls for the last two financial years.



4.3 **Customer facing email addresses:** We were unable to receive email data due to the limited resource availability of IT&D staff. Please see further steps in recommendations below.

4.4 **Online forms:** We were unable to receive these data. We will need to work with Digital Services to gain access.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 As is evident from the information gathered, there are a number of ways customers can contact us and there is a possibility of creating a customer contact baseline. Although it is initially challenging to draw out the data from the various systems, it is possible to create a basic baseline. It would be too resource heavy to propose bringing contact channels into one system or better systems for reporting. This exercise has proven there are enough data to pull together to establish an initial baseline.

5.2 In the process of this investigative work, we have identified the approximate number of customer facing telephone numbers, email addresses and online forms. This is important as the numbers are high across all of the contact channels and potentially confusing for customers. It would be beneficial to carry out an exercise in trying to reduce these numbers for customers and for staff, or at the very least delete unused and obsolete points of contact. This also means we can focus on the right places to make improvements for customers and on the effectiveness of how they contact us, making information clearer.

5.3 As part of this investigation we investigated obtaining dashboard software or platform in order to present the data to CMT. We could not identify software readily available in ESCC. We also investigated purchasing software but this was too expensive. Since our aim for this work is to start small, with the available data, and, if this development proves beneficial and meaningful, expand to where the need arises, we identified that MS Excel can be used to fit our needs for the beginning. The BA has arranged for us to create a dashboard in MS Excel once we have received all the data. We would also like to investigate how this can be presented onto the intranet or website if needed (without it appearing as a document to open).

5.4 The Corporate Content Strategy Group and Digital Services have also expressed a need for the data and to be presented meaningfully via a dashboard, along with other key data identified. This collaboration is still underway.

5.5 We believe there is still some way to go, and if the following recommendations are approved and carried out, the next steps would be to focus on exploring and delivering the benefits listed in section 1.4, for customers, staff, senior managers and CMT. It is recommended:

- **The Customer Project Board and CMT to approve gathering data on telephone calls, emails, and online forms.** CET Customer Services Team would carry out reporting on the available data. This recommendation involves requesting the email data reports in IT&D to be prioritised and setting up automated reports. In order to provide this information there may be a possibility to use the CX Project reserve funding to pay for the reporting to be set up for both the email addresses and the online forms.
- **Present a baseline of contact channels at the next Customer Project Board.**
- **Justify and reduce the number of points of contact where possible.** There is potential for some quick wins by making information simpler and clearer for the customer on the website. It could also benefit staff by having fewer contact points to manage. This work would include:
 - **Telephone numbers:** ensure all numbers are up to date and necessary
 - **Group email inboxes:** There are approx. 1,600 group email inboxes for the Council, with about approx. 400-450 public facing, and 300-350 non-public facing, and about 800-900 group email addresses potentially not current and no longer used. Approx. 100 emails of both group and individual email addresses are advertised on the website. Other group email addresses can easily be deleted, and it is suggested they are deleted if they haven't been used in the past year.
 - **Online forms:** ensure all forms are up to date.
- **Create routine monitoring of customer facing email inboxes:** Currently there is no oversight of the creation or deletion of them. It would be beneficial to consider this to be done as the approval

step of a new address or to create automated reports and monitor the usage with the deletion of unused accounts as the result. The Customer Services Team can create a two pronged approach – one from the frontend to ensure the contact details are the simplest, clearest information for the customers (and reduce where possible) and from the backend to ensure that deletion of unused accounts is monitored and carried out.

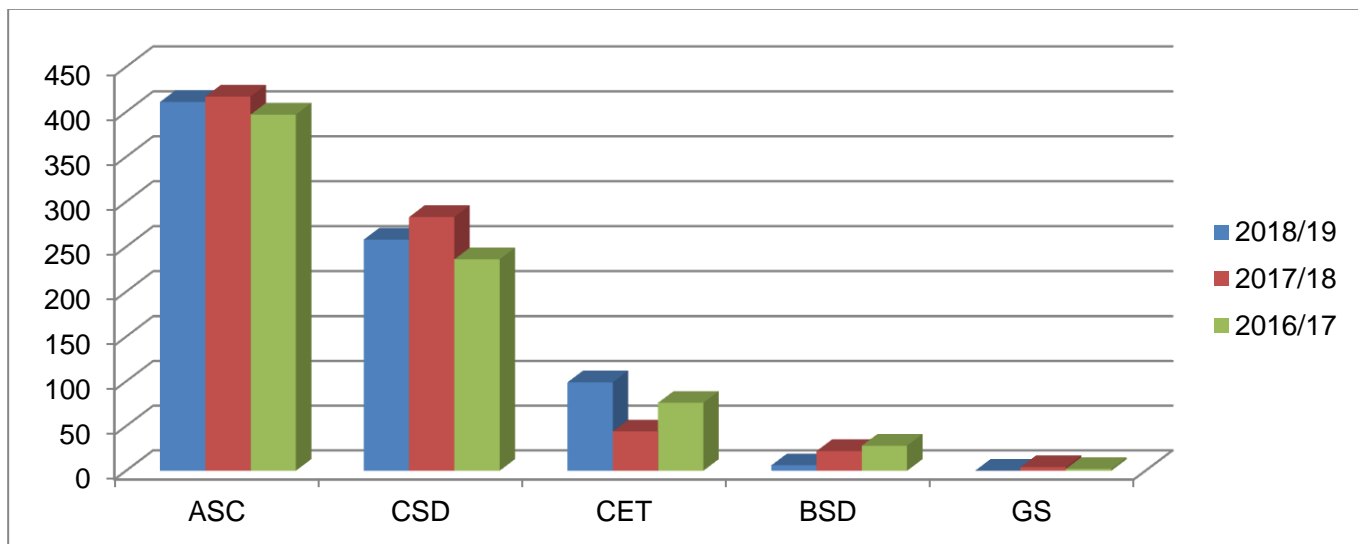
- **Investigation of benefits:** Once the baseline has been established, report to CMT in an annual report the progress on investigating the benefits listed in section 1.4. This would entail establishing baselines for the customer contact channels and prioritising high to low in order to identify the high volume customer contacts areas to focus on.

5.6 This development is not without its issues, but the exercise for establishing a baseline is important to progress. The data will need cleansing and rationalising in order to make it fit for the baseline. It would be beneficial to know how other councils report on these issues, which would also help if we wish to benchmark our data with comparator or neighbour authorities. The results can be presented to the Customer Project Board and to CMT to offer explanations about what meaningful data and analysis can be made.

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1. Summary

1.1 The chart below shows the number of complaints received in 2018/19 by department compared with 2017/18 and 2016/17. ESCC received 774 complaints in 2018/19 compared to 770 complaints in 2017/18, which represents an increase of 0.5%. Please note comparisons of complaints and compliments between departments are not valid due to the nature of the different services provided by each department.



1.2 The following table presents the number of Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints for ESCC where decisions were made and the percentages of upheld complaints compared to national rates for 2018/19, 2017/18 and 2016/17. LGSCO complaints by department are represented in the sections below.

Year	Investigated	Upheld	Not upheld	Not investigated	Total	ESCC uphold rate %	National uphold rate %
2018/19	41	28	13	49	90	68%	58%
2017/18	35	16	19	53	88	46%	57%
2016/17	32	21	11	47	79	66%	54%

2. Adult Social Care

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
Number of complaints received	411	417	↓1.4%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	179	196	↓8.7%
Number of compliments	1375	1444	↓4.8%

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 There was a slight (1.4%) decrease in the complaints received about Adult Social Care (ASC) services compared to last year, and 44% of complaints were upheld or partially upheld, which is less than in 2017/18, when 47% of complaints were upheld in full or part.

2.1.2 The proportion of complaints reported by clients themselves increased significantly to 43% from 24% in 2018/19. Clients appear to feel more confident to let us know when they feel that something is not right. Increased use of email and the availability of an online complaints process may have encouraged this shift.

2.1.3 ASC target response times were down significantly this year, with only 49% of complaints achieving a response within 10 to 20 working days, compared with 68% in 2017/18. Partly, this was as a result of implementing a new electronic records system where response times were recorded retrospectively and sometimes the dates did not record accurately. It may however also be an indicator of the impact of having a reduced number of managers and the competing demands on their time.

2.1.4 ASC recorded fewer compliments this year, although like last year, the department received almost 350% more compliments about its services than complaints.

2.2 Action taken to improve the service

2.2.1 This section provides analysis of the top three themes of complaints for ASC in 2018/19 and actions related to these themes.

2.2.2 There were 114 complaints received about the provision of services provided or commissioned by ASC. This is significantly higher than last year where 60 complaints about the provision of services were recorded. There were 44 complaints (38%) upheld or partially upheld. The dominant theme related to the quality or standard of ASC services falling below expectation or an inadequate service provided by a third party provider, such as home care agencies or residential care homes.

2.2.3 Like last year, often issues relating to the quality and charges for social care services were presented to the department on receipt of an invoice. Where it was found that the services had fallen below expectation or had not been received as planned, charges were sometimes reimbursed or waived.

2.2.4 Extensive work has been undertaken to try to ensure people are aware of potential charges but closer working with NHS services can confuse people or create a barrier to accept that most ASC services are subject to a client contribution. Work is ongoing to ensure timely and relevant information is provided and that this is recorded in case notes.

2.2.5 The next highest complaint category related to assessment functions with 98 recorded for this year and 32 (32%) either upheld or partially upheld.

- There were 70 complaints related to assessments for social care support, with 23 (33%) upheld or partially upheld. Almost half of these complaints challenged the outcome or decision of the assessment.
- Financial assessments received 20 complaints with 3 (15%) upheld in full or part, and 60% of these complaints were about the outcome of the assessment to identify the amount someone pays towards their care.
- Blue Badge mobility assessment outcomes recorded 8 complaints, with 2 (25%) partially upheld. No themes were apparent.

2.2.6 Stringent application of national eligibility criteria and financial guidance did leave some people feeling that their individual circumstances had not always been considered. Where complaints were upheld, assessment outcomes were reviewed and individual actions taken to ensure the service provided met clients' and carers' identified needs.

2.2.7 The third biggest area of complaints related to reported shortfalls in staff actions and behaviour such as attitude, respect and confidentiality. There were 35 complaints received with 40% (14) of these complaints upheld or partially upheld. In these instances, supervision and/or further training was provided to support staff to reflect on and develop their practice.

2.2.8 Other actions taken to improve services in 2018/19 included:

- The integration of ASC Occupational Therapists into district and borough councils to improve the processing of Disabled Facilities Grants.

- Developing a new service for adults whereby people are assessed in an environment similar to home rather than a hospital setting, which it is hoped patients will find more beneficial and will improve hospital discharges.
- The Blue Badge service has implemented an automated messaging service that updates Blue Badge applicants at every stage of the process by email or text.
- A provider of falls detector equipment undertaking a review of its falls detector batteries in partnership with the Council.
- A review of both the content and frequency of chase letters when writing to the family/estate of deceased clients
- A review of the system where Direct Payments accounts transfer from Children's to Adult Services, to avoid delays
- A review of the processes involved with invoicing clients in extra care housing to ensure better accuracy and flow

2.3 Compliments

2.3.1 ASC has continued to receive far more compliments (1375) about its services than complaints (411). People's comments clearly show how much they have valued support, often referred to as both life changing and affirming.

2.3.2 This year people appear to have particularly valued work by our Carers' Services (468), Joint Community Rehabilitation Service (140), and Integrated Locality Teams (124).

2.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

2.4.1 The table below sets out the LGSCO findings for complaints about Adult Social Care.

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Advice given	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld					
2018/19	14	7	8	5	5	0	39
2017/18	9	13	6	3	11	0	42

2.4.2 There has been a 7% decrease in the complaints to the LGSCO (from 42 complaints in 2017/18 to 39 in 2018/19). The number of complaints investigated has remained steady from 22 in 2017/18 to 21 complaints in 2018/19. There has been an increase of complaints upheld, from 9 in 2017/18 to 14 complaints in 2018/19.

2.4.3 Further analysis for Adult Social Care of the LGSCO complaints will be provided in the department's Annual Complaints Report. The report will be available later in the year and published on the Council's website: [Comments, compliments and complaints annual report](#). This report is provided under the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations, 2009.

3. Children's Services

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
Number of complaints received	258	283	↓ 8.8%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	50	78	↓ 35.9 %
Number of compliments	178	281	↓ 36.7%

3.1 Summary

3.1.1 Children's Services received a total of 258 complaints during the reporting period, a decrease of 8.8% from last year. Complaints from adults on behalf of children dropped from 266 to 222, a decrease of 16.5%. The number of complaints from children and young people dropped from 16 to 3 a decrease of 81.3%. In previous years, complaints from young people have related to domestic matters within children's homes. This large drop may represent a greater number of issues being dealt without a formal complaint being logged. In 2018/19, 19% of complaints were upheld/partially

upheld compared to 27% in 2017/18. Digital channels now account for 89% of complaints related contact, up from 84% last year.

3.2 Action taken to improve the service

3.2.1 Children's Services (CS) continues to use the learning from complaints and how people contact us as a tool in improving the services offered by the department and in improving our digital offer through our website. We have continued to track key themes and complaint types to make enhancements to our call and complaint handling process.

3.2.2 A new corporate complaints handling system was implemented during summer 2018 and allows for greater visibility and monitoring of key themes through regular automated reporting. We continue to develop meaningful complaint insight data which is shared with key stakeholders to ensure efficient processes and avoiding duplication. For example, we share information with our Information Governance Team to prevent case work being duplicated as well as notifying Assistant Directors weekly of cases with Ombudsman involvement. Both of these reports are automated and highly efficient.

3.2.3 Actions taken to improve services in 2018/19 include the following:

- Within Children's Social Care we have improved the notification process when a court order comes to an end. This followed feedback that the involvement ending was not clear and that greater clarity was welcomed by parents when CS involvement had ceased.
- We have also revised the joint-working process covering complaints regarding schools safeguarding to better clarify lines of responsibility and provide clarity to service users. The headline policy has not changed, and schools remain responsible for managing their own complaints, however we have simplified the referral routes when a complaint may include a safeguarding referral that needs to be assessed within our school safeguarding team.
- Additionally, following feedback from complaints we have revised key policies around fabricated and induced illness and are working to update the pan-Sussex procedures relating to this issue.
- Within our ESBAS service, improvements have been made to the attendance management process where revised guidance has been provided for staff around the home visit protocol: where a door knock takes place, practitioners must record whether the child has actually been seen. As part of this guidance, it is now policy and procedure that practitioners will ask to see the child on a visit if they have not been seen at school for a considerable time and no contact has been received from parents to professionals.
- Within our ISEND Assessment & Planning Team, the staff induction programme has been reviewed to take account of learning from themes raised in feedback and complaints. In addition, revised training and guidance has been issued relating to statutory processes, which historically have been a theme of complaints to the service. A revised staff supervision process is in place and all managers have received the appropriate training to maximise staff performance.
- Within the Communication, Planning & Performance service, we used data from complaints to review and prioritise changes and improvements to online web content. Specifically we have taken learning around the school admissions process to ensure the clearest picture is given to parents at the point of applying to reduce the likelihood of becoming dissatisfied at a later date and needing to complain.
- We have revised and updated our guidance for complainants at Stages 2 and 3 of the statutory process to ensure clarity and ease of access. We have also invested time in updating our revised complaints system to ensure better handling of complaints through the process.

3.3 Compliments

3.3.1 The total number of compliments received throughout the year is down from 281 to 178, and the ratio of compliments per complaint is down from 1.0 to 0.7. For the second year in a row, the volume of compliments has reduced. To try and address this we have implemented a new simpler process for logging complaints and have reinstated a monthly reminder to service delivery teams to send in their compliments for logging. Moving forward we will continue to share the positive messages coming through the compliments with key members of staff so that this can be learnt from in the same way as we learn from complaints.

3.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

3.4.1 The table below sets out the LGSCO findings for complaints about Children’s Services:

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2018/19	12	5	2	3	12	34
2017/18	6	4	7	3	14	34

3.4.2 Of the 34 complaints, 17 complaints were investigated and of those 12 were upheld.

3.4.3 There will be further analysis of these complaints in the Children’s Services Annual Complaints Report. The report will be published on the Council’s website later in the year: [Children’s Services Annual Complaints Report](#). This report is required under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

4. Communities, Economy & Transport (CET)

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
Number of complaints received	99	44	↑125.0%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	34	12	↑183.3%
Number of compliments	690	964	↓28.4%

4.1 Summary

4.1.1 There has been an increase of complaints received in CET in 2018/19. This was reported to and noted by the Departmental Management Team in CET during the year, recognising that the department would exceed the previous year’s total number of complaints half way through 2018/19. However, CET continues to receive a relatively low number of complaints in general, and also in proportion to the level of requests for services and enquiries that CET receives each year.

4.1.2 There were some particular changes in services which caused the increase for 2018/19. The following provides descriptions of these areas and the number of complaints they accounted for in 2018/19:

- Customers unhappy with the new policy on grass cutting frequency (11).
- Customer dissatisfaction and issues around the implementation of a new system by NSL for parking, also resulting in an increase in telephone calls (9).
- Complex drainage issues and assessment processes, coupled with poor communications (8).
- Issues around introducing changes to bus services for Transport Services (8).

4.1.3 The highest number of complaints was regarding policy, a trend which remains year on year. These complaints are where we have to explain difficult decisions to the public, often driven by tough choices around spending diminishing resources, and where the customer’s personal involvement in those concerns are more likely to make them dissatisfied with a decision they don’t agree with. These types of complaints are not upheld. Based on the volumes of our customer contacts, however, the overall number of complaints would suggest that customers have been largely satisfied with the responses and explanations provided in relation to our policies which guide the delivery of our services.

4.1.4 For 2018/19, there has been an increase in complaints regarding quality. These complaints related to the areas listed in 4.1.2. However, they still remain in low numbers and should be considered relative to the number of enquiries received by our services.

4.2 Action taken to improve the service

4.2.1 There were 34 fully or partly upheld complaints out of 99 (34%) for 2018/19, which is more (in both absolute and percentage terms) than the previous year with 12 complaints fully or partly upheld (27%). There were more fully or partly upheld complaints regarding quality and communications in 2018/19. The following provides details about these complaints and what actions were taken to make

improvements. These also provide a brief summary of some themes and trends that were drawn out during the year and improvements that were made:

- Complaints were fully or partly upheld when customers were not given information, information was unclear, they were not kept informed (including where the issue was resolved), or there was a lack of response. These showed how important it is to customers to be kept informed at all stages of their contact with the Council. Staff were reminded in Q1 and Q2 of our commitment to the Customer Promise, drawing attention to the importance and benefits of good communications.
- Similarly, customers made complaints which were upheld when there were complex cases in Highways which involved several teams and assessment stages, resulting in delays and poor communications. There was a commitment to improve the issues and discussions involved all levels of management and relevant teams in Highways on how to improve internal communications and escalate potentially complex issues. New procedures were put into place in the Highways Contact Centre to monitor, recognise, and escalate potential issues, and also to keep customers informed during assessments and planning stages, where sometimes contact can 'go quiet'.
- Some customers were unhappy with having to use the new online parking system as well as experiencing some technical issues with it. This created a spike in calls to NSL's helpline and customers were finding it difficult to get through on the telephone number. NSL worked quickly to correct some of the major issues with the online system. NSL have brought in additional staff resources to deal with the increase in calls.

4.3 Compliments

4.3.1 There were 690 compliments recorded for CET in 2018/19, these have decreased from 964 in 2017/18. There was a spike in compliments received in 2017/18 due to Highways improving how they captured their compliments, for example by social media, phone calls, and comments made by the public to staff working out on the network. Also, another contributing factor was the public showing their appreciation for the gritting of roads during the snowfall and freezing temperatures in the winter months in 2017/18. Numbers of compliments in service areas within CET continue to be similar to those in previous years, excluding the spike in Highways in 2017/18.

4.3.2 Compliment numbers overall continue to be high, which indicates that teams continue to deliver high quality services and show their commitment to customers. Compliments for CET services fall into six main categories:

- Work and repairs carried out: customers appreciated quick and effective works and repairs. They appreciated the quality of the work, commitment from staff, and how work that was carried out improves their accessibility and experience of their activities.
- Appreciation of staff helping on a specific query, issue or concern. This includes taking the time to help with and answer queries; providing thoughtful and considered responses; doing that extra bit to help; helping in difficult situations or circumstances; listening; and finding a resolution for issues or concerns.
- Staff keeping the customer informed and up-to-date with the progress of their enquiries.
- Fast responses to customers' enquiries and actions taken.
- Quality of service and staff in general
- Facilities or activities offered.

4.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

4.4.1 The table below sets out the LGSCO findings for complaints about CET:

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2018/19	2	1	8	-	3	14
2017/18	1	2	6	1	0	10

4.4.2 Three (21%) of the 14 complaints were investigated and two were upheld. One upheld complaint was due to misinformation to the public regarding a consultation; it concluded maladministration but no injustice caused, and no remedy recommended. The other upheld complaint was due to maladministration and injustice caused, recommending financial redress. The financial redress was carried out and a series of initiatives were put in place to improve the processes for agreeing work, which were particular complex and involved multiple teams and the contractor. In addition, further customer service training was carried out to provide a more unified process (and voice) when communicating with customers.

5. Orbis (ESCC only)

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
Number of complaints received	6	22	↓72.7%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	3	14	↓78.6%
Number of compliments	1	42	N/A

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 The number of complaints received for Orbis (ESCC only) has reduced by 72.7% and the percentage of upheld and partially upheld has decreased by 78.6%. These complaints have greatly reduced due to work carried out to make improvements by ASC and Accounts Receivable Team to invoicing and charges in relation to ASC care costs, as explained in section 2.2.8.

5.2 Compliments

5.3.1 There have been no compliments (bar one) logged this year for Orbis (ESCC only). There has been a breakdown in the process that should be in place to log compliments received. An investigation will take place to identify this issue and resolve it urgently in order to report on compliments for 2019/20.

5.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

5.4.1 There were no LGO complaints made about services in this department in 2017/18.

6. Governance Services

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
Number of complaints received	0	4	-
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	0	0	-
Number of compliments	0	0	-

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 There were no complaints for Governance Services in 2018/19.

6.2 Action taken to improve the service

6.2.1 As there were no complaints logged no actions have been noted.

6.3 Compliments

6.3.1 No compliments were recorded in 2018/19.

6.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

6.4.1 There were no LGO complaints made about services in this department in 2018/19.

7. Chief Executive's Office

7.1 Complaints are often addressed to the Chief Executive (CE) or Leader, and so are received through the CE Office. However, the complaints are about issues with services provided by departments rather than the CE Office itself, so these are recorded by the relevant department and form part of their figures and analysis.

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24 July 2019

By email

Becky Shaw
Chief Executive
East Sussex County Council

Dear Ms Shaw

Annual Review letter 2019

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about your authority for the year ending 31 March 2019. The enclosed tables present the number of complaints and enquiries received about your authority, the decisions we made, and your authority's compliance with recommendations during the period. I hope this information will prove helpful in assessing your authority's performance in handling complaints.

Complaint statistics

As ever, I would stress that the number of complaints, taken alone, is not necessarily a reliable indicator of an authority's performance. The volume of complaints should be considered alongside the uphold rate (how often we found fault when we investigated a complaint), and alongside statistics that indicate your authority's willingness to accept fault and put things right when they go wrong. We also provide a figure for the number of cases where your authority provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached us, and new statistics about your authority's compliance with recommendations we have made; both of which offer a more comprehensive and insightful view of your authority's approach to complaint handling.

The new statistics on compliance are the result of a series of changes we have made to how we make and monitor our recommendations to remedy the fault we find. Our recommendations are specific and often include a time-frame for completion, allowing us to follow up with authorities and seek evidence that recommendations have been implemented. These changes mean we can provide these new statistics about your authority's compliance with our recommendations.

I want to emphasise the statistics in this letter reflect the data we hold and may not necessarily align with the data your authority holds. For example, our numbers include

enquiries from people we signpost back to your authority, some of whom may never contact you.

In line with usual practice, we are publishing our annual data for all authorities on our website, alongside our annual review of local government complaints. For the first time, this includes data on authorities' compliance with our recommendations. This collated data further aids the scrutiny of local services and we encourage you to share learning from the report, which highlights key cases we have investigated during the year.

This year, we issued one public report about your Council. A young girl's mother said the Council had failed to take account of allegations that her daughter was being bullied as an explanation for her repeated absences from school. It also failed to keep useful records of meetings between officers about her absence. The Council accepted most of our recommendations at an early stage. We asked the Council to apologise for the insensitive way in which it handled the case, however, it refused to acknowledge an apology was necessary until we reached the stage where we decided to issue a public report. The Council has since apologised to the complainant and her daughter. I welcome the Council's reflection on this matter and am pleased that it did then agree to carry out this important recommendation.

New interactive data map

In recent years we have been taking steps to move away from a simplistic focus on complaint volumes and instead focus on the lessons learned and the wider improvements we can achieve through our recommendations to improve services for the many. Our ambition is outlined in our [corporate strategy 2018-21](#) and commits us to publishing the outcomes of our investigations and the occasions our recommendations result in improvements for local services.

The result of this work is the launch of an interactive map of council performance on our website later this month. [Your Council's Performance](#) shows annual performance data for all councils in England, with links to our published decision statements, public interest reports, annual letters and information about service improvements that have been agreed by each council. It also highlights those instances where your authority offered a suitable remedy to resolve a complaint before the matter came to us, and your authority's compliance with the recommendations we have made to remedy complaints.

The intention of this new tool is to place a focus on your authority's compliance with investigations. It is a useful snapshot of the service improvement recommendations your authority has agreed to. It also highlights the wider outcomes of our investigations to the public, advocacy and advice organisations, and others who have a role in holding local councils to account.

I hope you, and colleagues, find the map a useful addition to the data we publish. We are the first UK public sector ombudsman scheme to provide compliance data in such a way and believe the launch of this innovative work will lead to improved scrutiny of councils as well as providing increased recognition to the improvements councils have agreed to make following our interventions.

Complaint handling training

We have a well-established and successful training programme supporting local authorities and independent care providers to help improve local complaint handling. In 2018-19 we delivered 71 courses, training more than 900 people, including our first 'open courses' in Effective Complaint Handling for local authorities. Due to their popularity we are running six more open courses for local authorities in 2019-20, in York, Manchester, Coventry and London. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Finally, I am conscious of the resource pressures that many authorities are working within, and which are often the context for the problems that we investigate. In response to that situation we have published a significant piece of research this year looking at some of the common issues we are finding as a result of change and budget constraints. Called, [Under Pressure](#), this report provides a contribution to the debate about how local government can navigate the unprecedented changes affecting the sector. I commend this to you, along with our revised guidance on [Good Administrative Practice](#). I hope that together these are a timely reminder of the value of getting the basics right at a time of great change.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M King', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael King
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Local Authority Report: East Sussex County Council
For the Period Ending: 31/03/2019

For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our [website](#)

Complaints and enquiries received

Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
36	0	2	34	4	11	0	0	0	87

Decisions made

Decisions made				Detailed Investigations			
Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed After Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Uphold Rate (%)	Total
8	0	22	18	14	28	67	90

Note: The uphold rate shows how often we found evidence of fault. It is expressed as a percentage of the total number of detailed investigations we completed.

Satisfactory remedy provided by authority

Upheld cases where the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman	% of upheld cases
0	0

Note: These are the cases in which we decided that, while the authority did get things wrong, it offered a satisfactory way to resolve it before the complaint came to us.

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations

Complaints where compliance with the recommended remedy was recorded during the year*	Complaints where the authority complied with our recommendations on-time	Complaints where the authority complied with our recommendations late	Complaints where the authority has not complied with our recommendations	
22	22	0	0	Number
	100%		-	Compliance rate**
<p>Notes: * This is the number of complaints where we have recorded a response (or failure to respond) to our recommendation for a remedy during the reporting year. This includes complaints that may have been decided in the preceding year but where the data for compliance falls within the current reporting year. ** The compliance rate is based on the number of complaints where the authority has provided evidence of their compliance with our recommendations to remedy a fault. This includes instances where an authority has accepted and implemented our recommendation but provided late evidence of that.</p>				

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Report to:	Governance Committee
Date of meeting:	20 September 2019
By:	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Title:	Amendment to Constitution – Scheme of Delegation to Officers
Purpose:	To seek approval to add to and amend the Scheme of Delegation in relation to functions delegated to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport that are concerned with Local Plans.

RECOMMENDATION: The Governance Committee is recommended to recommend the County Council to agree to amend the Scheme of Delegation to Officers as set out in Section 2 of the report.

1 Background Information

1.1 The County Council's Scheme of Delegation provides the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport with authority to perform a number of functions and make certain decisions across the range of services that make up the directorate. Some of these functions concern the work that the County Council undertakes in producing and reviewing a Waste and Minerals Local Plan for the county. Some of the functions also concern the input that the County Council provides, particularly through our statutory planning consultee roles, in the development and review of Local Plans produced by other planning authorities (particularly the District and Borough Council's in the county).

1.2 Over recent years, the Government has made it clear that they are concerned with the time it takes for Local Plans to be produced. Various measures have been introduced to attempt to address this concern, one of which has been the requirement for planning authorities to prepare Statements of Common Ground with other parties, which are seen as a way of addressing cross-boundary strategic planning matters and demonstrating compliance with the Duty to Co-operate. This requirement has been set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹.

1.3 The County Council will be expected to secure Statements of Common Ground in support of our own Waste and Minerals Local Plan. We will also be asked to agree Statements of Common Ground that support plans prepared by other planning authorities. These instances will generally relate to the County Council's roles as Highway Authority, Lead Local Flood Authority and/or a neighbouring County Planning Authority. It is anticipated that other authorities will often request the County Council's agreement to a Statement of Common Ground at relatively short notice, particularly when responding to matters raised by a Planning Inspector for a Local Plan Examination. It should be noted that Statements of Common Ground will not be setting policies for Local Plans. Instead, they will be articulating factual evidence and/or previously stated position(s) on the Local Plan in question. An example of a Statement of Common Ground was the recently agreed statement between East Sussex County Council (as Minerals Planning Authority), Kent County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority on the matter of planning for the supply of soft sand in this region. The County Council agreed this Statement following a report to the Lead Member for Transport & Environment in May 2019. Appendix 1 includes this Statement in order to provide an example of how they could be set out and the type of content they could contain.

1.4 To allow for Statements of Common Ground to be agreed and signed by the County Council in a timely manner, it is proposed to introduce a further delegated power into the Scheme of Delegation (as detailed in the next section of this report). Some further minor changes are also proposed to the Scheme of Delegation, which are also detailed in the following section.

¹ See paragraphs 24 to 27 of the NPPF;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

2 Proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation

2.1 In light of the above, it is proposed to add the following paragraph to Table 6 of Part 3 of the County Council's Scheme of Delegation. This will follow on from the current paragraph 38, which is within the sub-section entitled "*Development Plans and Consultation*".

"39. To consider, agree and sign Statements of Common Ground that are prepared in support of Development Plans by both the County Council and other planning authorities."

2.2 Paragraph 40 of the Scheme of Delegation provides delegated authority to respond to consultations from government departments and other statutory and non-statutory organisations. However, this is only within the context of the County Council's role as County Planning Authority. There have been and will be times when the County Council, within its statutory planning consultee roles, also wishes to respond to such consultations (e.g. updates to the National Planning Policy Statement, consultations issued by the likes of the Environment Agency, etc). More often than not, these consultation periods are only for around 6 weeks, meaning that it is often not possible to submit a response to the consultation that has been formally approved by a Lead Member decision. In light of this it is proposed to amend paragraph 40 as follows (additional text underlined).

"40. To respond on behalf of the Council as County Planning Authority, Highway Authority and/or Lead Local Flood Authority to consultations from government departments and other statutory and non-statutory organisations."

2.3 Paragraph 21 of the Scheme of Delegation concerns applications for Prior Approval, which may in some instances be required in order for certain developments/works to exercise their Permitted Development rights. An application for Prior Approval has a limited scope for the matters that the planning authority can consider. To date, few such applications have been received by the County Planning Authority. At present, the Scheme of Delegation makes specific reference to certain parts of the legislation that could result in an application for Prior Approval. However, this is not exhaustive and therefore to ensure that all such applications are captured in the Scheme of Delegation, it is proposed to replace paragraph 21 with the wording set out below, which is consistent with the criteria that determines whether a planning application is referred to the Planning Committee, or not.

"21 a) To determine whether an application for prior approval is required under Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.

b) To determine, where there are less than two objections relating to matters that can be considered by the County Planning Authority under Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, applications for prior approval under the aforementioned legislation.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 It is considered that the additions and amendments proposed to the the Scheme of Delegation, are necessary in order for the County Council to effectively respond to legislative and policy changes and do not undermine the democratic accountability of the Council. Some of the amendments will aid in the ability for decisions to be taken in an efficient and timely manner, which is considered particularly important where deadlines need to be met for certain actions to be undertaken.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Edward Sheath

Tel. No. 01273 481632

Email: edward.sheath@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

ALL

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

Appendix 1 – An example of a Statement of Common Ground.

Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) on Soft Sand between Kent County Council, West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority

April 2019

1.0 Background and Parties Involved

1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that: “Local planning authorities and county councils (in two-tier areas) are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries.” And “Strategic policy-making authorities should collaborate to identify the relevant strategic matters which they need to address in their plans.”

1.2 NPPF expects that Local Plans will include ‘non-strategic’ and ‘strategic’ policies, and explains that strategic policies should “.....set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:.....infrastructure” and this includes “for... provision of minerals”.

1.3 Kent County Council (KCC), East Sussex County Council (ESCC), West Sussex County Council (WSSCC), the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) (collectively described as the Authorities) are Mineral Planning Authorities (MPAs) in close proximity, responsible for preparing minerals planning policies concerned with the development of minerals supply facilities in their areas (See Figure 1).

1.4 KCC adopted its Minerals and Waste Local Plan in July 2016 and is preparing a subsequent Minerals Sites Plan. The quantum of need for soft sand set out in the adopted Plan is based solely on the average of the previous 10-year sales of the mineral from sites in Kent.

1.5 WSSCC and the SDNPA adopted a Joint Minerals Local Plan (JMLP) in July 2018. Policy M2 of the JMLP requires the Authorities to undertake a single issue Soft Sand Review (SSR) that addresses the shortfall in soft sand to the end of the Plan period (to 2033).

1.6 ESCC, BHCC and the SDNPA adopted a joint Waste and Minerals Plan in 2013, that includes strategic and development management policies. The plan’s Local Strategy Statement: Provision and Use of Aggregates ~~plan~~ recognises that the provision of soft sand is a larger than local issue, and states that the SDNPA is working with ESCC, Hampshire County Council and West Sussex County Council to find an acceptable solution across the ‘wider area’.

1.7 ESCC, BHCC and the SDNPA adopted a joint Waste and Minerals Sites Plan in 2017 for the plan area to 2026 but this plan does not identify mineral site allocations as no requirement was identified in the 2013 Waste and Minerals Plan. ESCC, BHCC and the SDNPA are currently undertaking a review of the adopted Waste and Minerals Local Plan. The review is focusing on the provision of aggregates and Mineral Resources and Infrastructure Safeguarding.

1.8 National Policy states: “In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, strategic policy-making authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these.”

1.9 This document represents a Statement of Common Ground (the ‘Statement’) between KCC, WSSCC, ESCC, B&HCC and the SDNPA and so covers the Plan Areas of

- Kent;
- West Sussex and South Downs; and
- East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove.

1.10 It is specifically related to the issue of making provision for soft sand in line with national planning policy requirements to ensure that a steady and adequate supply can be maintained.

1.11 The South East England Aggregates Working Party (SEEAWP) is a technical advisory group of mineral planning authorities and other relevant organisations covering the South East and is responsible for producing comprehensive data on aggregate demand and supply in the south east. In line with Planning Guidance, SEEAWP is treated as an additional signatory to this SoCG.

2.0 Geology and Strategic Geography

2.1 Soft sand (also known as building sand) is an important aggregate mineral that, for certain end uses, cannot be substituted by other materials. Soft sand is used specifically in building mortar and asphalt by the construction industry.

2.2 The soft sand resource within the Authority areas is contained within the Folkestone Formation. This formation extends westwards from the north west of Lewes in East Sussex, across West Sussex and into Hampshire to Petersfield, where it swings around to the north east and then continues east across Surrey and Kent, meeting the coast at Folkestone.

2.3 In Kent, soft sand is extracted from quarries situated on the Folkestone Beds between Charing and Sevenoaks. Most of these sand quarries produce a combination of soft sand and silica sand (a specialist sand). The resource is located within and adjacent to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (See Figure 1) and this affects the ability to exploit it.

2.4 The soft sand resource in the East Sussex Plan area is not extensive. The area of potential soft sand is entirely located within the South Downs National Park. There is one extraction site (Stanton's Farm Quarry) that has not been active for at least 5 years; supply has been entirely met with imports over this time. The ability to identify additional further resources in the East Sussex Plan area could be affected by its limited extent and the National Park designation.

2.5 In West Sussex, the Folkestone Formation runs east-west through the County and is, again, mainly located within the South Downs National Park. There are a small number of active extraction sites in the west and central parts of the county, which are largely within the National Park. The material within the Folkestone Formation East of Steyning is not known to contain any soft sand that is considered viable for extraction. This is evidenced through a lack of sites being worked historically, coupled with a lack of sites being proposed by the industry in the eastern extent of the resource in Sussex.

2.6 Whilst both Kent and West Sussex contain active extraction sites with permitted reserves of soft sand, there is only one sandpit in the East Sussex Plan area which lies wholly within the SDNP, and has not reported extraction for a number of years. East Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and the SDNPA recognise that their plan area has historically been more reliant upon on soft sand supply from other areas. National Policy requires that authorities plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregate by considering previous sales, taking account of other relevant local information. The sales data collected annually by authorities does not consider the final destination of soft sand, therefore when planning for minerals in Kent or West Sussex, these Authorities are taking account of materials that may have been used in East Sussex and other areas during any specific year within their LAAs. Therefore, in theory predictions of future requirements incorporate amounts for those areas accordingly.

2.7 Figure 1 shows there are good road connections in the South East, in particular the M20, M26, M25, M23 and A24. Railheads exist in Kent, East Sussex, and West Sussex which are used for the transport of aggregates. There are also a number of wharves located on the Kent, East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex coast which receive (or potentially could receive) soft sand, whether from land or sea borne sources. There is a history of cross boundary movement of aggregate between these areas (and the wider

south east) as evidenced by monitoring. The movement of aggregates is affected by the availability of aggregate supplies, market demand, and has no regard to the administrative boundaries of the parties to this SoCG.

3.0 The Strategic Issue: Soft Sand Resource, Movement and Supply

National Policy

3.1 National planning policy requires MPAs to plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates, and to make provision for the maintenance of landbanks for sand and gravel of at least seven years as calculated by Local Aggregate Assessments (LAAs). LAAs should consider other relevant local information, when calculating demand based on a rolling average of 10 years sales data (NPPF Para 207(a)). National planning guidance says that other relevant local information may include levels of planned construction and housebuilding.

3.2 National policy also states that local authorities should calculate and maintain separate landbanks for aggregate minerals of a specific type or quality which have a distinct and separate market. For aggregate described as soft sand, the landbank to be maintained is seven years (NPPF Para 207(f)).

3.3 Provision for land-won extraction should be made in MPA's mineral local plans, taking the form of specific sites, preferred areas and/or areas of search and locational criteria as appropriate (NPPF Para 207(c)). However, Planning Practice Guidance states that National Park Authorities are not expected to designate Preferred Areas or Areas of Search given their overarching responsibilities for managing National Parks (para 008).

3.4 Paragraph 205 of the NPPF states that as far as is practical, MPAs should provide for the maintenance of non-energy mineral landbanks from outside National Parks, the Broads, AONBs, World Heritage sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation areas.

3.5 Paragraph 172 of the NPPF states that planning permission should be refused for major development in national parks other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Footnote 55 of the NPPF says that the question of whether a development proposal is 'major' in a national park is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined. In any event mineral extraction is considered to be 'major development' as defined in the glossary of the NPPF and the Town and County Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

3.6 Paragraph 172 of the NPPF relates primarily to the determination of planning applications. However, to ensure that all local plan allocations are deliverable, it is also necessary to consider the issue of major development at the plan making stage. All potential allocations for soft sand in the National Park are considered to be 'major development' and so will need to address paragraph 172 of the NPPF .

Soft Sand Shortfalls in Kent

3.7 The latest KCC LAA was published in late 2018 and included data for the year 2017.

3.8 The Kent 2018 LAA forecasts a 2.5 million tonnes shortfall during its plan period to 2030 and this to be addressed through the allocation of reserves in the Minerals Sites Plan. The need for soft sand is calculated solely on the basis of the 10-year average sales.

3.9 The calculation of Kent requirements takes account of past sales and so reflects any historical sales that in all probability have been involved in providing supplies to East Sussex. In other words, Kent is planning to supply soft sand at a level which would be sufficient to meet demands to East Sussex if they

were to remain the same. This approach is consistent with that used to inform requirements for soft sand set out in the adopted Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Soft Sand Shortfalls in West Sussex (including the South Downs)

3.10 The latest WSCC LAA was published in January 2019 and includes data for the year 2017.

3.11 The West Sussex 2018 LAA forecasts a shortfall of between 1.65 and 2.83 million tonnes during the plan period to 2033. This The shortfall (ranged between 1.65 and 2.83 million tonnes) will be addressed through the Soft Sand Single Issue Review (SSR) of the Joint Minerals Local Plan.

3.12 The SSR is currently at Issues and Options Stage (Regulation 18). The Authorities are reviewing the extent of the soft sand resource, the availability of material outside and inside designated areas and the potential impact on the South Downs National Park.

Soft Sand Shortfalls in East Sussex (including Brighton & Hove and the South Downs)

3.13 The latest ESCC LAA was published in early 2019 and includes data for the year 2017.

3.14 The adopted East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan seeks to maintain a 7-year landbank for the extraction of sand and gravel. The Plan area is treated as a special case, recognising the particular circumstances of low production; remote reserves; and a high dependence on marine landings. For this reason, the landbank comprises a combined soft sand and sharp sand amount.

3.15 The East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove 2018 LAA reported that permitted soft sand reserves amounted to 0.35 million tonnes. With the lack of any sales data for the last 5 years, and confidential and null returns prior to this a 10 or 3-year average cannot be calculated. As referred to previously, the mineral planning authorities are currently undertaking a review of their Waste and Minerals Local Plan.

3.16 Part of the evidence gathering for the Review includes a study of the supply chain for construction aggregates in the Plan area. From the evidence available so far, a proportion of aggregates produced or received in Kent, West Sussex and Surrey are imported to serve the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove market.

Distribution of Supply

3.17 The location of the soft sand resource within protected landscapes (that is, National Parks and AONBs) is making it increasingly difficult to maintain land-won supplies at historic levels from resources not affected by these designations. The South East England Mineral Planning Authorities are agreeing a Joint Position Statement on Soft Sand that sets out the overall supply position within the South East and is designed to underpin statements of common ground between authorities in the South East, such as in this statement.

Kent

3.18 The soft sand resource in Kent follows the Kent Downs AONB. One site has however been identified in the proposed submission draft of the Minerals Sites Plan outside of the AONB that is considered suitable for allocation (Chapel Farm West, Lenham). The yield of this site is 3.2mt. The provision from this site would help meet the calculated shortfall in Kent, as set out in paragraph 3.8 of the Kent Pre-submission Mineral Sites Plan 2019-30 and provide a surplus of 0.7mt of soft sand, available to contribute to the wider regional need.

West Sussex

3.19 The West Sussex Single Issue Soft Sand Review – Issues & Options Consultation (Reg.18) shortlists nine sites with potential for allocation but notes that identification of the potential sites “does not imply that the Authorities consider that they are suitable for development, either now or in the future”. Of the nine sites identified, only two sites are outside of the SDNP, with a combined potential yield of 1.725mt. If the assessments of the sites conclude that they are suitable for allocation, and the authorities were to proceed to allocate those sites, there would still be a further shortfall in West Sussex of just over 1mt of sand. This would likely require an allocation from within the SDNP to meet the shortfalls to 2033. A more detailed technical assessment will inform the final selection of sites for inclusion in the proposed submission document.

3.20 The Authorities (WSCC and SDNPA) have identified the following five ‘reasonable alternatives’ to meet the demand for soft sand:

- Option A: Supply from sites within West Sussex but outside of the National Park;
- Option B: Supply from sites within West Sussex, including within the National Park;
- Option C: Supply from areas outside West Sussex;
- Option D: Supply from alternative sources including marine-dredged material; and,
- Option E: A combination of the above options.

3.21 Following consultation on the Issues and Options, WSCC and SDNPA will develop a preferred strategy and anticipate agreeing this for publication for representations (in accordance with Regulation 19) later in 2019.

East Sussex

3.22 The limited extent of the soft sand resource in the East Sussex Plan area and its location within protected landscapes (that is the SDNP) means that East Sussex (and Brighton & Hove) has been heavily reliant on supplies from other areas.

3.23 Currently Policy WMP2 of the Waste and Minerals Plan addresses potential minerals (and waste) development affecting that part of the SDNP area within East Sussex. Soft sand is specifically referenced in part c). This refers to proposals to extend existing soft sand sites or new quarry proposals within the national park area to conform to a test b) as well as demonstrate that the need could not be practically achieved by extraction in adjoining Counties. Criterion b) of the policy has a negative presumption, in that major development in the national park should not take place except in exceptional circumstances, considering:

- i. The need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations and*
- ii. The impact of permitting or refusing the development upon the local economy; and*
- iii. The cost of and scope for developing outside the designated area or meeting the need in another way; and*
- iv. Any detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and/or recreational opportunities and the extent to which it could be satisfactorily mitigated.*

Development will only be in the public interest if the outcomes of i-iv above gives sufficient reason/s to override the potential damage to the national beauty, cultural heritage, wildlife or quiet enjoyment of the National park.

3.24 The review of the adopted Waste and Minerals Local Plan will examine the options for soft sand provision to meet the needs for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. This may, or may not, identify sites within the SDNP after a full analysis of the available resources and their deliverability against all relevant material planning considerations. As part of this assessment the mineral planning authorities will be looking to secure supply from existing sources, and with likely growing demand for soft sand.

Soft Sand Reserve Life

3.25 Permitted reserves (as of the end of 2017) across the area of the Authorities can be grouped together into three component parts, given the existing joint working arrangements, as follows:

- West Sussex County Council and South Downs National Park Authority 2.745 million tonnes;
- East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove and South Downs National Park Authority 0.350 million tonnes, and;
- Kent County Council 8.848 million tonnes.

3.26 Based on the available average sales data for 2017, West Sussex County Council and South Downs National Park Authority group will exhaust the reserves by 2026, East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove and South Downs National Park Authority will continue to maintain reserves due to a lack of sales activity and Kent County Council by 2034. Therefore, it can be concluded that available reserves in the two authority areas where there is an active extraction industry will last into the medium to long term.

3.27 West Sussex County Council is planning to meet needs until 2033, and thus will have a 7-year shortfall to address. While Kent County Council is planning until 2030 (plus 7) so will have a 3-year shortfall to address. Therefore, in order to maintain a steady and adequate supply of soft sand there is no immediate need for further soft sand reserves at this time, though clearly the matter of supply in each MPA area for the entire relevant local plan period is to be understood and planned for in a cooperative manner.

4.0 Agreed Position between the Parties

1. The Parties agree that their planned provision for soft sand will be based on their LAAs where appropriate.
2. The parties agree that, in line with paragraph 205 of NPPF, as far as is practical, provision for the maintenance of landbanks of soft sand should be made outside of National Parks and AONBs.
3. The parties agree that the soft sand resource within their areas may be worked to contribute to the needs of other areas.
4. KCC will plan to meet the identified shortfall within the latest Kent LAA (2.5 million tonnes). The allocation of one site (Chapel Farm (West)) will provide 3.2 million tonnes, which will result in a surplus of 0.7 million tonnes which may contribute to the wider regional need.
5. Any surplus in Kent (established in the Pre-Submission Minerals Sites Plan as 0.7mt) is acknowledged as having potential to meet a wider need in the South East, including that in West Sussex resulting from the constraint on supply from the South Downs National Park. As East Sussex relies on imports from both West Sussex and Kent (and other areas), additional reserves in the market could help meet a steady and adequate supply for the three Authorities in the future, In light of the proximity of Kent to the Plan areas of East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority, Kent County Council recognise that it is entirely possible that the proposed surplus of 0.7 million tonnes (see 4 above) could make a significant contribution towards meeting the needs for soft sand supply identified by these other mineral planning authorities.
6. WSCC/SDNPA will plan to meet the identified shortfall (between 1.65 – 2.83mt) that is set out in the West Sussex LAA, taking account of the planned surplus in Kent.
7. ESCC, B&HCC and the SDNPA will plan together to ensure the need for materials in their Plan Area can be adequately planned for.
8. The Authorities will continue to cooperate to ensure that an effective monitoring framework, to account for the surplus sand, is put in place as the Kent Mineral Sites Plan, the West Sussex and South Downs Soft Sand Review, and the East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove City Council Waste and Minerals Plan Review progress.
9. The Parties will seek to ensure that the matters in the Statement are reflected in the minerals local plans that they prepare.
10. The parties will identify any soft sand resource in their area for safeguarding in their Local Plans
11. The parties will safeguard potential and existing minerals infrastructure, including railheads and wharves, which are or could be used to import and transport soft sand in their Local Plans

5.0 Additional Strategic Matters

5.1 This SoCG should be considered alongside the wider Position Statement concerning the supply of soft sand in the south east, which KCC, WSCC, ESCC, B&HCC and SDNPA are party to.

South East England Aggregate Working Party

Paragraph: 025 Reference ID: 61-025-20190315 of the PPG advises that for minerals plans, aggregate working parties are also expected to be treated as additional signatories in statements of common ground. This SoCG is therefore presented to the South East England Aggregate Working Party (SEEAWP) for their consideration as an advisory body.

6.0 Monitoring and Governance

6.1 The parties to this Statement have worked together in an ongoing and constructive manner. Appropriate officers of each Party to this Statement will liaise formally through correspondence and meetings as and when required.

6.2 The parties will review this SoCG at least every 12 months and establish whether this SoCG requires updating. Specific matters likely to prompt updates of this SoCG include the following:

- Preparation of the preferred strategy for soft sand supply in West Sussex by WSCC and SDNPA (anticipated in July/August 2019);
- Modifications to the Kent Minerals Sites Plan resulting from the independent examination (anticipated in the Autumn of 2019);
- Preparation of the preferred strategy for soft sand supply in the East Sussex Plan area as part of the Review of the WMLP (anticipated in XXXX);
- Evidence set out within the Authorities LAAs, which monitor the supply situation for soft sand, specifically related to the maintenance of seven-year landbanks, reserves, and sales for soft sand;
- The outcomes of SEEAWP meetings.

Signatories

XXXX [insert position], East Sussex County Council

XXXX [insert position], Brighton and Hove City Council

XXXX, [insert position], West Sussex County Council

XXXX, [insert position], South Downs National Park Authority

Sharon Thompson, [Head of Planning Applications], Kent County Council

Additional signatories:

SEEAWP considered this Statement of Common Ground between Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority at its meeting on the 9th April 2019 at the Winchester offices of Hampshire County Council. Notes of the discussion are included as Appendix 1.

Tony Cook, Chair, South East England Aggregates Working Party

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Report to: Governance Committee

Date of meeting: 20 September 2019

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: Proposed amendments to the Travel on County Council Business Policy

Purpose: To seek the Committee's approval of proposed amendments to the Travel on County Council Business Policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Governance Committee is recommended to approve the following two key changes to the Travel on County Council Business Policy:

- the removal of the 20p per mile rate used for journeys to and from training; and
 - a shift in policy approach to determining eligible distance for reimbursement as set out in the report.
-

1. Background

- 1.1. Following an internal audit in 2018 of the processing of travel and expenses claims, several recommendations for improvement were made. Subsequently, the HR, Audit and Payroll teams have worked together to review the relevant policy and a revised version featuring a range of additional guidance is now proposed for implementation.
- 1.2. There are two key policy changes in the revised policy which the Committee is requested to approve.

2. Supporting information

- 2.1. The revised policy has been extensively reworded to improve the accessibility and to add guidance on a range of related matters that were previously not included, such as:

- a summary of responsibilities of claimants and approvers
- use of and payment for train tickets hotels, flights and similar
- the use of season tickets.

The policy position in relation to these areas of added content represents no change from current practice. Rather, the opportunity has been taken to formalise current arrangements with the aim of creating a single point of reference for all travel-related matters.

- 2.2. In addition there are two key proposals which constitute change:

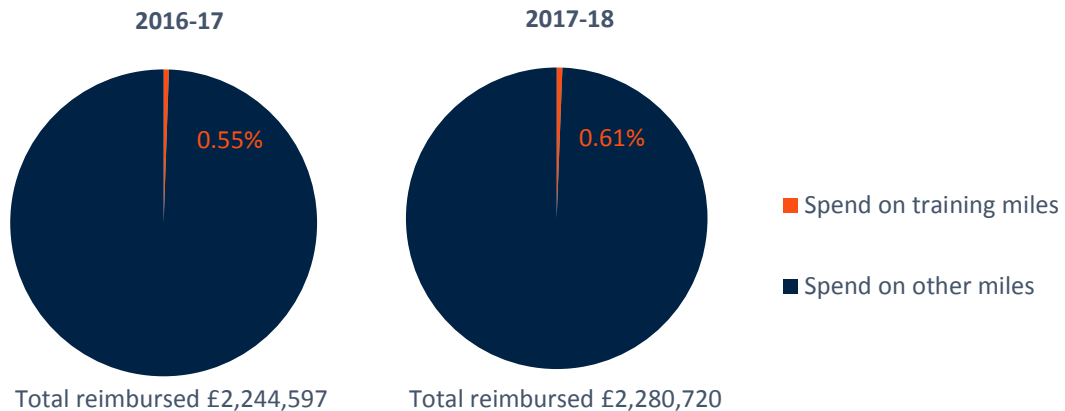
- the removal of the 20p mileage rate used for journeys to and from training
- a shift in policy approach around using the shortest or quickest route.

Training mileage rate

- 2.3. The audit report highlighted a lack of awareness among claimants and approvers as to when this rate should be used and highlighted several frailties in its application:

- If an employee travelled from Lewes to Eastbourne to attend training and a meeting on the same day, it is unclear which mileage rate should apply, and
- If an employee travelled from Lewes to Eastbourne by public transport, no distinction would be made in relation to the purpose of the journey and they would be reimbursed the full cost.

2.4. The training rate is used very little relative to the other rates:



2.5. Given the points above and that attending training is a business purpose, the justification for a lower rate is arguably flawed. Accordingly, in the interests of simplification of processes, it is proposed to remove the 20p training mileage rate.

Defining eligible journey route

- 2.6. The current policy position is that staff are eligible to be reimbursed for the shortest viable distance between two locations, as verifiable by the AA Route Planner. However, several service areas have identified that in some cases the overriding service delivery consideration is for staff to travel the quickest route, which may not always be the shortest route. This rigid policy position means that in some instances, staff are not able to claim the actual mileage driven in the fulfilment of their duties.
- 2.7. In recognising the diverse range of services and operating models across the Council, it is proposed that we move to a less prescriptive policy position which would allow managers the flexibility to use their judgement to balance the distance travelled against the time it will take. Managers would provide guidance to their staff about the way in which they should travel before they undertake any journeys.

3. Conclusion and recommendations

The Committee is recommended to agree the following:

- agree the removal of the 20p per mile training rate.
- approve the shift in policy regarding eligible distance for claiming mileage.

KEVIN FOSTER, Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officers:

Sarah Mainwaring, Head of HR&OD 01273 482060 sarah.mainwaring@eastsussex.gov.uk

Patrick Galpin, HR Consultant 01273 482276 patrick.galpin@eastsussex.gov.uk

Report to: Governance Committee

Date of meeting: 20 September 2019

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: Re-engagement of Previously Redundant Employees

Purpose: To consider changes to the Council's Managing Change Policy and Voluntary Severance Scheme regarding the circumstances under which redundant employees can later be re-engaged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Governance Committee is recommended to approve the changes to the Council's Managing Change Policy and Voluntary Severance Scheme as set out in the report.

1 Background

1.1 As part of the Council's employment policies, we have in place a Managing Change Policy, setting out the agreed approach to managing organisational changes, including compulsory redundancies.

1.2 The Council also operates a Voluntary Severance Scheme (VSS). This is open on an ongoing basis, and allows employees to apply for redundancy, subject to there being a sound supporting business case which meets set criteria.

1.3 Both the Managing Change Policy and the VSS are periodically reviewed to ensure that they still meet the organisational needs of the Council. While both policies are generally fit for purpose, it is proposed that the wording around re-engagement of redundant employees is updated, to better reflect the scale and pace of change facing the organisation.

2. Proposed changes

2.1 Both the Managing Change Policy and the VSS work on the explicitly stated presumption that redundant employees will not later be re-engaged. This presumption against re-engagement helps ensure that the Council does not make a redundancy payment to an individual only to later re-engage them, thereby ensuring Council funds are used appropriately, as well as protecting the organisation from potential reputational damage.

2.2 However, given the level of organisational change over recent years and the continuing financial challenges, the scale of reductions may mean that there are occasions where an individual has been appropriately made redundant and that some months/years later, a role for which the previous employee has the necessary knowledge, skills and experience is advertised and the previous employee is the best candidate.

2.3 At present therefore, the Managing Change Policy and VSS provide scope to re-engage employees who have been made redundant, subject to the following conditions:

- the re-engagement should be for a fixed term, not exceeding one year (in exceptional circumstances this may be extended);
- the rate of pay applied to the work undertaken by the re-engaged employee should be that appropriate to the work to be done and not the grade which applied to the employee in the employment that they were made redundant from; and,
- the arrangement must provide financial/operational advantage to the County Council and must be approved by the appropriate Chief Officer.

2.4 The restriction around individuals who have previously been made redundant to be re-engaged on a fixed term basis for one year has, on occasion, limited the Council's ability to appoint the best person to the post. In order not to restrict or limit the Council's options in relation to filling roles, it is proposed that this requirement is removed. This will give greater flexibility to re-engage previously redundant employees where there is a sound business reason to do so and will also ensure that talented and experienced previous employees who have been made redundant are not unfairly precluded from returning to work for us.

2.5 In order to ensure that the decision to re-engage is made close to the area of business activity, whilst retaining an appropriate level of scrutiny, it is proposed to update the level of authorisation for re-engagement to be in line with other policies so that the decision to re-engage must be approved by the appropriate Assistant Director in conjunction with the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, rather than by the Chief Officer, as present.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The Governance Committee is recommended to approve the amendments to the Managing Change Policy and VSS so that:

3.1.1 the current restriction around individuals who have previously been made redundant to be re-engaged on a fixed term basis for one year is removed, and

3.1.2 approval for any decision to re-engage a previously redundant individual is made by the appropriate Assistant Director in conjunction with the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

KEVIN FOSTER
Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officers: Sarah Mainwaring, Head of HR/OD
Tel. No. 01273 482060
Email: sarah.mainwaring@eastsussex.gov.uk

Nicholas Earley, HR Consultant
Tel No: 01273 335061
Email: nicholas.earley@eastsussex.gov.uk

Report to: Governance Committee

Date of meeting: 20 September 2019

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: Proposed amendments to the Employee Loans Policy and the Scheme of Delegation to Officers

Purpose: To seek the Committee's approval for the introduction of an additional loan scheme for employees and related amendments to the scheme of delegation to officers

Recommendations

The Governance Committee is recommended to:

1. approve the scope of the employee loans policy being extended to provide for funding a rental deposit and associated costs for employees of the County Council; and
 2. recommend the County Council to agree to amend the Scheme of Delegation to Officers as set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report
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1. Background

- 1.1. The County Council has a range of schemes under which employees can request a loan:
 - bicycle purchase
 - public transport season ticket
 - car purchase
 - learning to drive.
- 1.2. Following a recent round of recruitment of social workers, some Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) reported difficulty in funding a rental deposit when looking to accept roles with the Council. As a result of discussions between HR & OD and social work managers, it is proposed to introduce an additional purpose for employee loans to support with this, available to all staff (not just NQSWs).

2. Supporting information

Additional loan purpose

- 2.1. The additional purpose for loans to employees would be for paying a rental deposit and associated costs such as referencing. The Council is permitted to use its funds for these purposes and there would be no costs to the organisation beyond administration of the loans.
- 2.2. The terms and conditions of the scheme would mirror those of the other existing schemes. Notably, a loan would be offered at 0% interest (of the current schemes, only vehicle loans – which tend to be of higher value – attract any interest). As with all other employee loans, evidence such as a receipt would be required from the employee that they have used the money for the intended purpose.

- 2.3. While the issue which has prompted these proposals relates to NQSWs, it is recommended that the scheme is made available to all staff. Whilst recognising that there are well documented national social worker recruitment and retention issues, this will also be a tool which could support recruitment and retention of staff in a range of scenarios, such as:
- those who have recently left full-time education with significant debts
 - those looking to leave the parental home for the first time to move geographically closer to their place of work
 - those dealing with the breakdown of a family unit such as a divorce.

Scheme of Delegation to Officers

- 2.4. The current Scheme of Delegation to Officers contains the following delegation:

In accordance with the policy of the County Council to authorise...

e) an employee to use his/her private vehicle on official business and, in consultation with the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport and Chief Operating Officer, to grant applications for loans under the County Council's Assisted Car Purchase Scheme.

- 2.5. The Assisted Car Purchase Scheme has been replaced by the opportunity to apply for a loan to purchase a car under the employee loan policy. In practice, there is no involvement for the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport or the Chief Operating Officer in the approval of employee car loans. It is therefore proposed to amend the Scheme of Delegation to Chief Officers as set out below

Current	Proposed
8. In accordance with the policy of the County Council to authorise... e) an employee to use his/her private vehicle on official business and, in consultation with the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport and Chief Operating Officer, to grant applications for loans under the County Council's Assisted Car Purchase Scheme	8. In accordance with the policy of the County Council to authorise... e) an employee to use their private vehicle on official business f) approval of applications for loans to employees in accordance with the Employee Loans Policy

3. Conclusions and recommendations

- 3.1. Introducing the additional purpose for loans would serve to support the recruitment and retention of employees across a range of scenarios. It would mirror an existing set of business processes and as such requires no additional resourcing.

Kevin Foster
Chief Operating Officer, Business Services

Contact Officers:

Sarah Mainwaring, Head of HR&OD 01273 482060 sarah.mainwaring@eastsussex.gov.uk
 Patrick Galpin, HR Consultant 01273 482276 patrick.galpin@eastsussex.gov.uk