

By: Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste
Mike Austerberry, Executive Director for Environment, Highways & Waste

To: Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview Committee – 15
September 2009

Subject: EHW Annual Complaints & Compliments 2009

Classification: Unrestricted

For Decision

1. Introduction

1.1 This report informs this Committee of customer feedback received from complaints and compliments by the Environment, Highways and Waste Directorate during 2007/08 and 2008/09.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members of the EHW POC are asked to:

- a) note the figures for the Directorate
- b) decide what further information the Committee would like to see as part of the evolving process of improved reporting of user feedback.

Background documents: EHW Customer Feedback Reports

Contact:
Toni Easdown
Customer Standards Officer
Telephone: 01622 221169
Email: toni.easdown@kent.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Summarised Customer Feedback:

Complaints

The number of complaints received by EHW in 2007/08 was 660. In 2008/09, this figure decreased to 429 complaints.

These complaints were received as follows:

Method of Contact	2007/08	2008/09
Comment Card	75 (11%)	72 (17%)
Email (including systems)	248 (38%)	129 (30%)
Letter (including fax)	217 (33%)	113 (26%)
Telephone	120 (18%)	115 (27%)
Total	660	429

In 2007/08 616 complaints (93%) were acknowledged within 5 working days and 638 (97%) were responded to in full within 20 working days. In 2008/09 411 (96%) were acknowledged within 5 working days and 416 (97%) were responded to in full within 20 working days.

The reasons for these complaints were as follows:

Reason for complaint	2007/08	2008/09
Claim for Compensation	2	8 (2%)
Contact Problems	15 (2%)	2
Disputed Decision	23 (3%)	28 (6%)
Information/progress update	10 (2%)	17 (4%)
Lack of action/delay	133 (20%)	82 (19%)
Quality of service provided	333 (51%)	131 (31%)
Staff Conduct	25 (4%)	46 (11%)
Other	119 (18%)	115 (27%)
Total	660	429

As our two frontline services, Kent Highway Services (KHS) and Environment and Waste (E&W) received the majority of the complaints. In 2008/09 KHS received 195 complaints (45%), E&W received 231 (54%) and Strategy & Planning received 3 (1%).

Of the 231 complaints received by E&W in 2008/09, the majority came from two main service areas – Country Parks (93 complaints) and the Household Waste Recycling Centres (129 complaints). In 2008/09, there were approximately 1.4 million visitors to the Country Parks and 4 million visitors to the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC), so the level of complaints received in comparison to the number of customer visits is very low.

Within KHS, we received 99480 enquiries (requests for service) in 2008/09 so again the volume of complaints (195) in relation to this figure is comparatively low.

Although complaints volumes overall have decreased in 2008/09 from the previous year, they have provided valuable customer feedback to enable E&W to improve customer service delivery. As such, the following service improvements have been implemented:

- E&W has been more proactive this year in ensuring customer feedback is captured by a number of methods, e.g. Country Park Comment Cards, Explore Kent website and customer surveys. This feedback has then been used to review the customer service experience and implement customer service improvements.
- In E&W, the HWRC opening hours and height barriers were reviewed as these were two areas of concern highlighted as issues in customer satisfaction surveys. Following the review, a number of changes have been implemented, including longer hours on certain days and increasing the height of barriers.
- In Country Parks, regular visitor feedback surveys were held as well as consultations on the improvements being made within the parks, e.g. new and improved visitor facilities such as car parking, toilets and visitor centre improvements.
- Three of the Country Parks (Brockhill, Shorne Woods and Trosley) have retained their Green Flags - the Green Flag scheme sets national standards for green spaces and cover aspects such as safety, access for all, good signage, good management of litter and fouling, involvement of community as well as sustainability and conservation issues.
- As reported last year, E&W gained the Customer Charter Mark in March 2008. This year, E&W successfully passed a health check review of progress. The auditor commented on the vast amount of work which showed the growth of and the progress in, engagement with customers. His own calls to E&W customers proved very positive and showed the Division as helpful, approachable and responsive; his talks with staff showed that they were "passionate and committed" and enjoyed their work.
- KHS launched the Customer Charter in September 2008. This set the standard for dealing with customer requests, e.g. all requests for service will be acknowledged and all call backs to customers will be actioned within 2 working days.
- KHS launched a Dashboard in November 2008 to provide officers with a day to day view of customer requests. All teams now use the dashboard to monitor and manage their customer request workload.
- KHS launched weekly performance reporting in November 2008 which has enabled a two-way flow of feedback leading to customer service delivery improvements. e.g. the most recent external customer tracker survey for 2008 recorded a 30% increase in net satisfaction with the way KHS had dealt with the customer's service requests.
- KHS have implemented several initiatives to enhance the service that the Contact Centre and KHS give to our customers. This has included 'Get it right

first time' launched in June 2009, enhancements made to the data collected from customers when they telephone to make service requests and retraining contact centre agents in a new call handling process.

- KHS have created a Knowledge Hub that provides the Contact Centre with up-to-date information on KHS activities. This has enabled contact centre agents to give improved and up to date information to customers.
- In 2009/10 E&W will be continuing to use customer surveys and other consultation methods to find out what customers think of our services and to make improvements, and specifically will be running Youth Focus Groups to find out what would encourage young people to use our Country Parks.

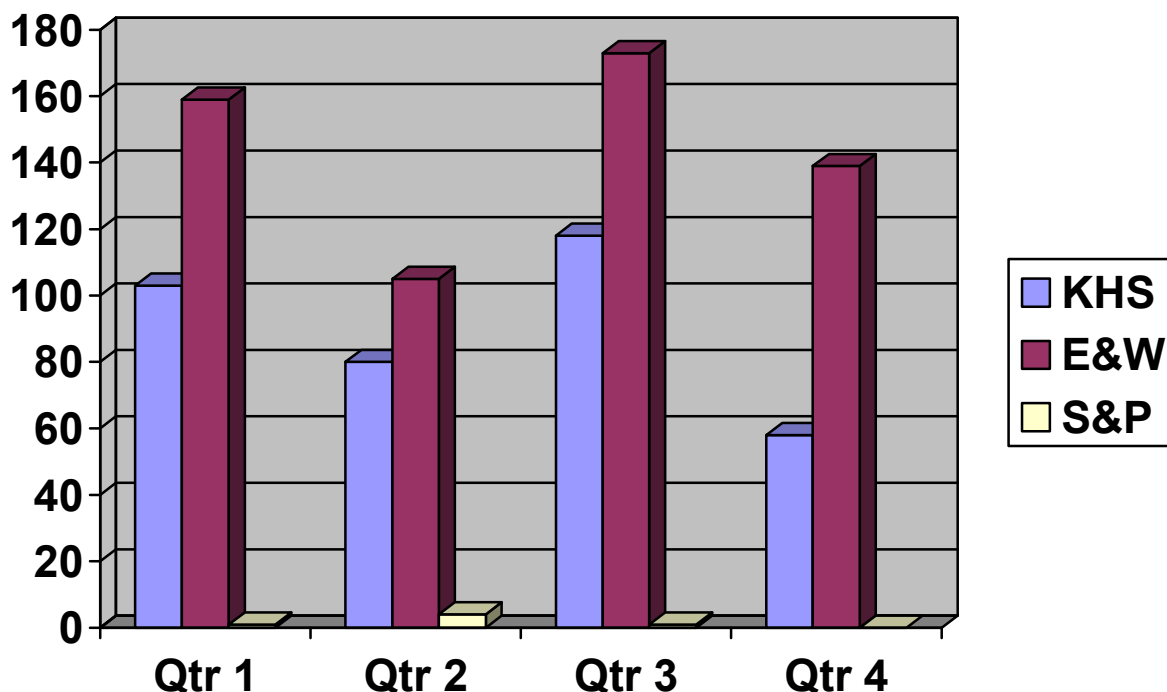
Compliments

In total, 1398 compliments were received between April 2007 & March 2008 and 941 compliments between April 2008 & March 2009. Once again, the majority of these were received by KHS (38%) and E&W (61%).

Although fewer compliments were received between April 2008 & March 2009 than in the previous year, this does not necessarily reflect a change in the level of service provided to our customers. As our standard of customer service has increased (which is reflected by the decrease in the number of complaints received between April 2008 & March 2009 compared to the previous year and in the most recent KHS customer tracker survey results for 2008 which recorded a 30% increase in net satisfaction with the way we dealt with customer's service requests), our customer expectations are likely to have increased as well. This will lead to fewer compliments being received.

Compliments received by EHW Directorate 2008/09

	Kent Highway Services	Environment & Waste	Strategy & Planning
Quarter 1	103	159	1
Quarter 2	80	105	4
Quarter 3	118	173	1
Quarter 4	58	139	0
Total	359	576	6



Compliment Feedback Comments

Thank you for prompt and efficient repair. It is excellent to know that the Council is really listening. (Received by KHS Community Operations)

As usual, I am immensely pleased with Kent County Council's customer care, particularly that handled by Kent Highway Services. (Received by KHS Community Operations)

Bravo! The best job I've seen in years at this location. Thank you for your help in this matter. (Received by KHS Community Operations)

This is to compliment you and your contractors on the splendid job that was done resurfacing Wrotham Hill recently. It was done with speed and with minimum inconvenience to road users. Litter was also collected and left site neat and tidy. We were all impressed. (Received by KHS Countrywide Improvements)

Thank you for your kind assistance. It is very encouraging to deal with a professional such as yourself and you clearly care for your work. (Received by KHS Transport & Development)

My Guardian angel must have been looking after me when I found you. Thank you for being so helpful and giving encouragement to our community group. (Received by E&W Countryside Access)

Beautiful setting with comprehensive facilities. Excellent service and friendly staff. (Received by E&W Brockhill Country Park)

The answer is simple - to have many clones of you to carry on the good work across Kent - all the people I've rung have been very complimentary. (Received by E&W Kent DOWNS AONB)

At our last Parish Council I was asked to write and thank you and your colleagues for all the help given with the Cherry Downs Picnic Site at Lenham. Your advice and enthusiasm with this project have turned the site into a splendid recreation area for the village which we and the visitors will be able to enjoy for many years to come. Once again, many thanks to you all. (Received by E&W Kent DOWNS AONB)

Once again I have to compliment the staff at Sheppey waste disposal depot. On several occasions I have struggled with big bags of garden waste or have had a car boot full of bags. They always come to my aid and are cheerful and polite. (Received by E&W HWRC)

What an absolute pleasure to find somewhere that is such an inspiration! It was a clear example of 'practice what you preach', stylish and fun to boot. (Received by E&W Shorne Wood Country Park)