

Summary of Comments, Complaints and Compliments received between 1 April 2016 and 30 June 2016

1. The Council's Comments, Complaints and Compliments procedure enables customers to contact the service involved to explain their concerns or to offer praise or suggestions. If the comment is a complaint, the officer assigned to the complaint will seek to explain and, if required, address any issues. This is called a stage 1 complaint. If the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome, the complaint is escalated to Stage 2, and the Head of Service will investigate and reply. In the unlikely event that the customer remains dissatisfied with earlier responses, the complaint moves to Stage 3 and the Chief Executive will arrange for an investigation to be carried out and an independent view will be taken.
2. If all the stages of our complaints procedure have been exhausted and the customer feels their complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, then the customer can refer the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, who will carry out an independent investigation.
3. During the first quarter of 2016/17, we received 637 complaints of which 407 (64%) were justified and 230 (36%) unjustified. A summary showing this information for each service area can be found in Table 1 below. The table shows that 82% of justified complaints (333) for this period related to Direct Services with the majority regarding Domestic Waste, Recycling or Repairs. Financial Services were the next highest reporting service with 35 (8.6%) justified complaints during this period. To give some context, these services generate between them over 70% of the customer contact centre and customer service centre enquiries.

Table1: Summary of Complaints, Comments and Compliments

Quarter 1 2016/17

Service Area	Complaints not upheld	Complaints held	Stage 1 Settled Complaints	Stage 2 Settled Complaints	Comments	Compliments
Business Improvement	3	23	23	0	21	8
Planning & Regulatory	2	9	9	0	6	5
Direct Services	196	333	333	0	315	280
Financial Services	20	35	34	1	19	5
Housing & Property	1	5	5	0	6	6
Law & Governance	1	0	0	0	5	0
Community Services	7	2	2	0	28	7
Totals	230	407	406	1	400	311

N.B. The figures exclude reporting of missed bins.

The main complaint trends identified are as follows:

- **Direct Services** - The main trends recognised during this period were noted as tenants complaining about the lack of communication regarding the status of work updates when jobs come up to their target dates, particularly on the 90 day priority work such as external work or plastering. To address this in the short term Direct Services are issuing letters to properties who are coming up to their target dates to apologise that they have yet to attend and re-assure them that they will be in touch soon with an appointment date. This is part of a wider project to improve communication with customers and reduce the number of enquiries by informing people better in the first place. Officers are currently examining the end to end processing of responsive repairs and planned maintenance calls between Direct Services and the Customer Services Team to identify where improvements can be made.
- **Financial Services** - The main trends recognised during this period were noted as e-billing/connection issues experienced throughout the annual billing cycle and after our system migration where council tax and business rate payers were unable to see bills on-line and on-line accounts could not be accessed. These issues have since been addressed by ICT. There were also a few complaints about delays in written correspondence being dealt with which was found to be due to staff vacancies. These posts have now been filled.
- **The Contact Centre** – The main trends recognised during this period were noted as Customer Service Officers either not following the correct processes or giving out incorrect information. These have all been addressed by Team Managers who have taken action to address the issues and have provided re-training or coaching where necessary.

Table 2 below shows the number of complaints that reached Stage 3 (14 in the first quarter, 11 of which were unjustified) is small when compared to the total number of complaints received. This suggests that most matters are resolved satisfactorily at the earlier stages.

Table 2: Stage 3 Complaints Quarter 1 2016/17			
Stage 3		Upheld Complaints(wholly or in part)	Decision Outstanding
Quarter 1		2	1
Quarter 1 Breakdown			
By Service Area/Team		Upheld complaints (wholly or in part)	Decision Outstanding
Housing & Property/Landlord Services		1	
Business Improvement/Digital Development		1	
Finance/Revenues & Benefits			1

Table 3 below shows the eight cases investigated by the Local Government and Housing Ombudsmen in the first quarter of the year. Compared to quarter one last year there has been an increase of four Local Government cases, although this is still low in comparison with the overall volume of enquiries and a testament to the robustness of the Council's complaints procedure. The case that resulted in a finding of Maladministration and Injustice by the Local Government Ombudsman related mainly to a delay in replacing a garage door. Compensation of £750 was agreed (the same amount that had been offered when the matter was considered as a Stage 3 complaint). The complaint upheld in part by the Housing Ombudsman was in respect of delays in completing repairs and dealing with the tenant's complaints to the Council. Compensation of £150 was agreed (an increase of £50 from the amount offered by the Council).

Table 3: Ombudsman Cases Decisions Quarter 1 2016/17			
Quarter	Local Government Ombudsman		Housing Ombudsman
Quarter 1	6		2
Quarter 1 Decisions			
Local Government Ombudsman Cases			
Finance	2	Team: Revenues & Benefits	Out of Jurisdiction
Direct Services	1	Team: Responsive Repairs	Maladministration and Injustice
Planning & Regulation	1	Team: Development Control	Premature
Planning & Regulation	1	Team: Environmental Health	Closed after Initial Enquiries
Planning & Regulation/Law & Governance	1	Team: HMO/Litigation	No Maladministration
Housing Ombudsman Cases			
Housing & Property/Direct Services	1	Team: Property Services/Responsive Repairs	No Maladministration
Direct Services	1	Team: Responsive Repairs	Evidence of Some Service Failure

NB Ombudsmen Decisions Glossary

- Out of Jurisdiction – Complainant has other recourse (to pursue the complaint) or is out of time
- Premature – Case referred back to the Council because the Council's complaints procedure has not been exhausted
- No Maladministration – No finding of maladministration
- Maladministration and Injustice – Maladministration that has resulted in injustice
- Evidence of Some Service Failure – Partial service failure

All compliments are passed to the relevant staff member or service. Compliments are important feedback and can be used to evidence great customer service. Direct Services clearly had the most compliments and the main themes were:

- satisfaction with the high quality of work carried out;
- politeness and friendliness of staff;
- professional attitude.

Comments trends that have been identified are as follows.

- Direct Services – Similar to complaints, customers commented on not getting updates on work requests.
- Financial Services – Again, comments were similar to complaints around the e-billing connection issues.
- Contact Centre – Not any real trends but a few comments regarding the hold music and routing of calls in the Contact Centre