



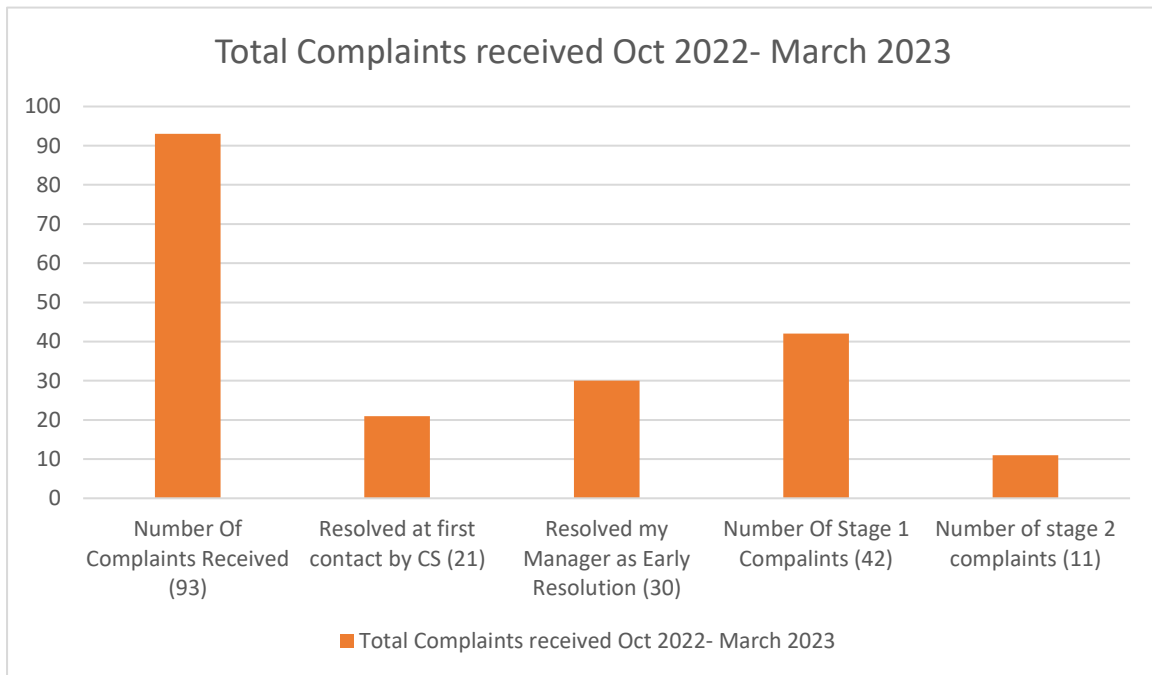
Bi-Annual Complaints Report October 2022 - March 2023

Introduction

The report summarises our complaints performance during the third and fourth quarter of 2022/2023 covering the period from 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023.

The purpose of this report is to review the complaints received by the Council over a six-month period, looking at the statistical data, in order to provide information about complaint themes, trends and the effectiveness of our current complaints procedure.

The Overall Picture



- The total number of complaints received between 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023 was 93
- 21 complaints were resolved at first point of contact by the Customer Service team.
- 30 complaints were resolved by managers as Early Resolution
- 42 complaints went through the formal complaints process and were investigated as Stage 1 complaints.
- 11 complaints were escalated to Stage 2
- 0 complaints were investigated by the Ombudsman

Monthly Breakdown for all complaints

Month	Number of complaints received	Early Resolution			Stage 1 complaints received
		Resolved By Customer Services	Resolved By Manager	Percentage	
Oct 22	13	1	6	54%	6
Nov 22	11	0	5	45%	6
Dec 22	16	6	3	56%	7
Jan 23	19	6	7	68%	6
Feb 23	17	4	2	35%	11
Mar 23	17	4	7	65%	6
Total	93	21	30	55%	42

The chart above shows the breakdown of how each complaint was handled. Overall, 55% of the complaints received were dealt with either by Customers Services or by early resolution without the need for an investigation and formal response. This is a much more effective, efficient and customer-focused method of resolving customer complaints.

The chart below shows the Stage 1 complaint comparison from the last reporting period Q1 and Q2 (Apr 22-Sep 2022) and the current reporting period Q3 and Q4 (Oct 22-Mar 23)

Previous 6 months		Current 6 Months	
Month	Stage 1 complaints received	Month	Stage 1 complaints received
Apr 22	14	Oct 22	6
May 22	12	Nov 22	6
Jun 22	8	Dec 22	7
July 22	5	Jan 23	6
Aug 22	9	Feb 23	11
Sept 22	9	Mar 23	6
Total	57	Total	42

There were fewer Stage 1 complaints in the current reporting period, 42 in total.

The chart below shows the Stage 2 complaint comparison from the last reporting period Q1 & Q2 (Apr 22 – Sept 22) and the current reporting period Q3 & Q4 (Oct 22 – Mar 23)

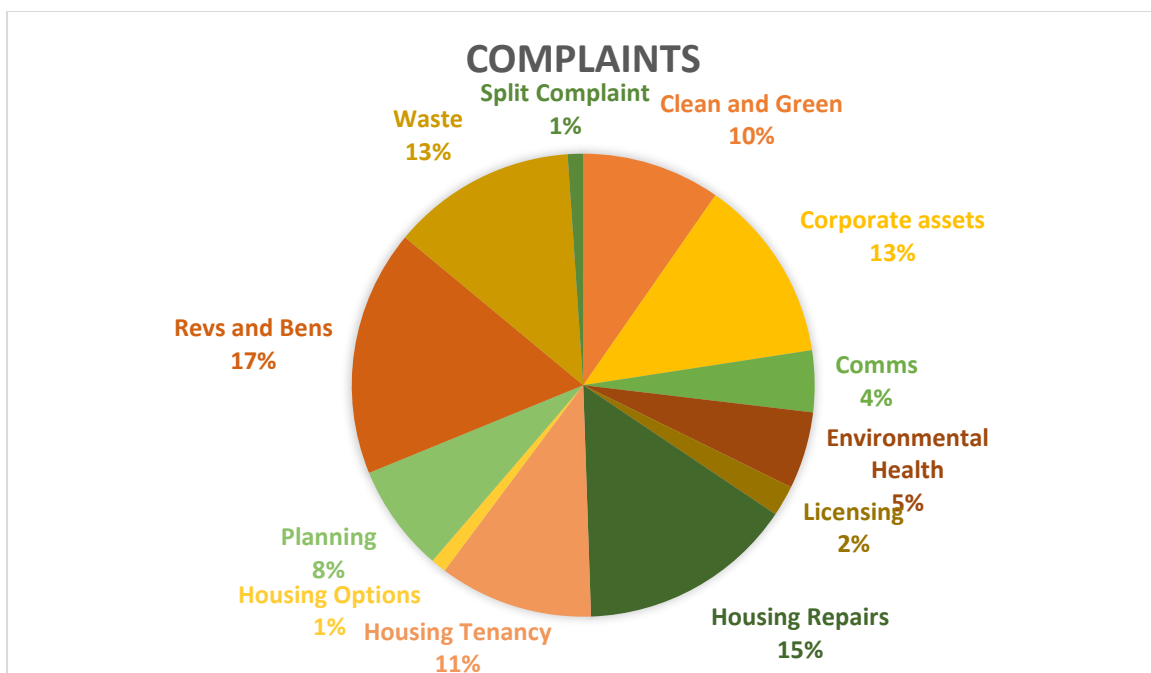
Previous 6 months		Current 6 Months	
Month	Stage 2 complaints received	Month	Stage 2 complaints received
Apr 22	4	Oct 22	2
May 22	2	Nov 22	1
Jun 22	3	Dec 22	2
July 22	0	Jan 23	0
Aug 22	3	Feb 23	3
Sept 22	2	Mar 23	3
Total	14	Total	11

There were fewer Stage 2 complaints in the current reporting period, 11 in total.

Departmental Breakdown

The chart below shows all the complaints received by each department. This includes Stage 1 complaints, complaints resolved at early resolution by managers and complaints resolved at triage point by the Customer Service team.

Lessons can be learnt from all complaints, so we report on all of these.



Please note - There was one complaint which was dealt with via the Housing, Planning and Revenues and Benefits teams as it was a multi-faceted complaint. All other complaints appear in the departmental breakdowns below.

Law and Democracy

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Clean and Green Total 9	8	Lack of action	Repeated request to clean leaves up x2	2 x Upheld
			Repeated request for goalpost holes to be filled x2	2 x Upheld
			Overflowing bin x 2	2 x Upheld
			Trees not cut back	1 Partially Upheld
			Repeated request for park fence to be fixed	1x Upheld
	1	Littering on parks	Unhappy with litter left by football club	1x Upheld

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Corporate Assets Total 12	4	Cemeteries-condition of grave	Damage to headstone x 2	2x Not Upheld
			Mud on grave x 1	1x Not Upheld
		Cemeteries service issue	Grave dug too small	1x Upheld
	2	Allotment issues	Staff behaviour re application	1x Not Upheld
			Request of fence, unhappy with decision	1 x Not Upheld
	6	Car Parks Charges	Unhappiness with car park charges x 2	2x Not Upheld

		Car Park Maintenance	Trip over charging point x 1 Paint damaged belongings x1	1x Not Upheld 1x Not Upheld
		Car Park Machine issues	Machines not user friendly/ out of order x2	2x Upheld

Stage 2 complaints		
Cemeteries	Not happy with Stage 1 response	1x Upheld compensation and bench given
Lights in alleyway	Not happy with Stage 1 response	1x Upheld- Stage 1 handled by Housing, works now completed.

Corporate Assets Manager - Commentary

Clean team operations were partly impacted due to long term sickness of the sweeper operator and machine breakdown too - with staff covering from within the C&G teams. Leaf litter and sweeping being particularly impacted in the autumn/winter, as were bin rounds.

Complaints regarding the trees were ultimately those of a perception of the residents expectations of trees growing in public spaces. Goalpost covers were delayed as a supplier issue.

Park fence was a perception of 'non-standard' fencing not being maintained within the perimeter of the park – trying to prevent a fox! We used an old piece of fence to add in so it matched adjacent old fences. There is no statutory obligation to maintain the fence in situ.

Clubs reminded of their obligation to encourage to keep the area as clear as possible but we are unable to manage random match spectators to take their rubbish away.

Cemeteries - These complaints were all generated from one burial booking – the initial part of the grave being dug to the wrong size. This was initially resolved by an apology and gesture of goodwill, but later resulted in a complaint after raising issues in a survey.

The other related were referred to the funeral directors and came back to ourselves. We were unable to support further on the issues raised.

Allotments - Staff behaviour was a perception of an existing allotment holder suggesting we didn't support a new applicant. We did all we could including an interpreter etc. Complainant actually suggested they weren't particularly bothered about that issue at the end and started enquiring about all our other procedures.

Neighbour wanted a new fence to their specification to separate boundary. Very argumentative but request denied.

Corporate Assets Manager – Commentary continued

Car Parks - General expressions of unhappiness about CP charging

Trip over the charging point was referred back to the installation company as it is part of their installed infrastructure.

Paint on trainers was MoP stepping in a paint spillage with their 'designer' trainers. Suggested they were damaged. Inspection suggested the paint wasn't permanent – referred to insurance (but with a view there shouldn't be a compensation)

Car parking machines do go out of service on occasions. We were without one on East St due to a break-in and that put extra pressure on the other machine.

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Environmental Health	2	Abandoned vehicle complaint	Alleged incorrect action taken by council x1 Service request x1	1x Not Upheld 1x Not Upheld
Total 5	1	Overgrown land complaint	Private Land	1x not Upheld
	1	Noise complaint	Staff attitude/ Behaviour	1x Not Upheld
	1	Rubbish in street	Dispute with neighbour	1x Not Upheld

Stage 2 Complaints		
Noise investigation involving staff attitude allegations	Unhappy with Stage 1 response	Ongoing
Abandoned vehicle	Unhappy with Stage 1 response	1 x Not Upheld

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Licensing	1	Food scores on the doors	Unhappy rating downgraded with no explanation	1x Not Upheld
Total 2	1	Incorrectly issued license	Lack of communication from department	1x Upheld

Regulatory Services Manager Commentary

Regulatory Services is essentially a front-line service which can, on occasions, due to its nature lead to dissatisfaction particularly when asking/requiring/enforcing someone to do something they do not wish to or do not necessarily agree with.

In the last 6 months there have been 7 complaints of which 1 was upheld due to poor communication which has now been addressed. This equates to a small percentage given that the workload is over 250 service requests received for the same period.

Customer Services and Transformation

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Communications Team	3	Funfair on car park	Loss of use of permit purchased.	1x Not Upheld
Total 4			Noise and fumes complaint x2	2x Not Upheld
	1	Incorrect details on website	Out of date details on Google	1x Not Upheld

Stage 2		
Noise and fumes from funfair	Unhappy with Stage 1 response	1x Not Upheld

Communications Manager Commentary

Four complaints were received within the 6-month period. One related to out-of-date information on Google which is beyond the Council's control and the other three related to the fun fair which took place in Sandhurst Street Car Park in February.

The funfair was organised for the benefit of the Oadby community and to give families a new activity to enjoy during the half term break. The fair operated reasonable open hours, closing at 8pm on Friday and Saturday, and 6pm on Sunday to minimise disruption to residents at night. Considerations were made regarding the rides used and their placement on the site to minimise noise impacts, all necessary risk assessments were provided to the Council by the event organisers and several additional checks were carried out by Council officers. Whilst we did get a small number of complaints, we received lots of positive feedback about the event and four compliments were sent into the Council praising us for putting this event on.

One of the three complaints did escalate to Stage 2 of our process, as the customer remained unhappy with our explanation. This was later referred to the Local Government Ombudsman but they refused to investigate stating: "We will not investigate this complaint about the Council giving a temporary event licence for a funfair on a car park near Mr X's home. There is insufficient evidence of fault which would warrant an investigation".

Built Environment

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Housing Options Total 1	1	Garages	Unhappy with waiting list length	1x Not Upheld

Stage 2 Complaints		
Garage waiting list	Unhappy with Stage 1 response	1x Not Upheld

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Housing Repairs Total 14	13	Delays in getting works completed 2 of which also mentioned staff attitude.	Failure in service by contractors x13	13x Upheld
	1	Works not completed	Contractor referred to Council	1x upheld

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Housing Tenancy Total 10	2	Garages	Unhappy with security of garages x2	2x Not Upheld
	5	Lack of action from housing officers	Lack of action with ASB issues x 3 Lack of street lighting on estate ignored x 1 Vicious dog complaint x 1	1x Upheld 1x Not Upheld 1x ongoing 1x Not Upheld 1x Not Upheld
	1	Staff attitude	Alleged Rudeness	1x Upheld
	1	Delay in actioning request	Repeated request for name change	1x Upheld

	1	Lack of communication	Blocked stairwell issue	1x Upheld
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Stage 2 complaints		
Lack of action re ASB	Unhappy with Stage 1 response	1 x Not Upheld
Fence dispute on council property	Unhappy with Stage 1 response	1x Not Upheld

Housing Manager - Commentary

A total of 25 Stage 1 complaints have been made to the Housing Department in the past 6 months. It is unsurprising that the Repairs Team have received the most complaints in the period. The Autumn/Winter period generates a high demand for service in terms of central heating breakdowns and reports of damp, mould, and condensation in homes. The primary reason for a complaint has been because of contractors not attending in the time that they have stipulated. There was an exceptionally cold period where there was a high demand for heating engineers, and this resulted in delayed attendance to repair which in turn generated several complaints.

The tenancy team have received 10 complaints. Most of these complaints are requests for updates on reports of antisocial behaviour (ASB). Complainants are not satisfied that there appears to be little, or no action being taken against perpetrators of ASB. A learning point from these complaints is for the team to better communicate from the start of an antisocial behaviour complaint that they will not be informed of what action is being taken against a perpetrator due to data protection issues, but we will support complainants throughout their ASB complaint.

There have been three complaints in which it is alleged that members of the team have been rude. These complaints have been investigated by the Housing Manager. There is no supporting evidence to suggest the complaints should be upheld. However, the complaints will remain on file and should there be similar complaints made in the future this may result in action being taken.

Three complainants have not been satisfied with the Stage 1 response and requested that their complaint be escalated to Stage 2. Following a review of the original complaint and the response all three complaints were not upheld.

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Planning	2	Enforcement	Lack of communication on breach of planning x 2	1x Upheld 1x Not Upheld
Total- 7	3	Planning applications	Lack of communication x1 Disagree with conditions x1 Disagree with decision x1	1x cancelled complaint. 1x Not Upheld 1x Not Upheld
	2	Tree Officer	Lack of communication x 2	2x Upheld

Planning Policy and Development Manager – Commentary

Given the nature of the Planning profession, complaints will be received when applicants are aggrieved with the outcomes and decisions that are being made by the Council, however, in the main, complaints are limited to the Development Control side of the Planning Department.

Since October 2022 a total of seven complaints have been received, however since the turn of the year, the frequency of complaints has declined noticeably.

In the main, the complaints related to planning applications, specifically applicants disagreeing with decision outcomes. Two other complaints related to Planning Enforcement, again customers disagreeing with enforcement investigation outcomes. With the two remaining relating to arboricultural issues, and a lack of communication with the customers.

The Planning department attempts to deal with all complaints as early as possible and has improved the number of early resolutions, however there will inevitably be some customer concerns that take longer to deal with.

Finance

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Revenues and Benefits	6	Recovery	Staff attitude x1	1x Upheld
Total 16			Unhappy with bailiffs actions x3	1x Upheld 2x Not Upheld 1x Upheld

			Lack of support from recovery team x 1	1x Not Upheld
			Alleged lack of recovery letters sent x1	
	8	Revenues	Staff attitude x2	2x Upheld
			Insensitive demands to deceased x 2	2x Upheld
			Staff billing errors x 3	2x Upheld 1x Not Upheld
			Direct Debit taken incorrectly x 1	1x Not Upheld
	1	Business Rates	Unhappy relief was withdrawn	1x Not Upheld
	1	Benefits	Incorrect information on where to drop proofs on webpage	1x Upheld

Stage 2 Complaints		
Business relief backdate request	Unhappy with Stage 1 response	1x Not Upheld
Rudeness of staff member	Unhappy with Stage 1 response	1x Upheld- additional staff training given.

Revenues and Benefits Manager - Commentary

With around 24,000 Council Tax bills sent out in the six months leading up to April 2023 the time around annual billing is the busiest period in Revenues and Benefits, which sees an increase in calls and written/electronic correspondence.

The majority of complaints during this period were upheld, demonstrating our commitment to deliver the right service for our customers and to learn from our mistakes and improve. The most common complaint was about the attitude of staff in the Council Tax and Recovery teams. Both staff in question were employed on temporary contracts that have not been extended, and the corporate values have been reiterated to all remaining officers.

All team leaders are encouraged to contact complainants early in the process in line with the complaints handling training, with the aim being an increase in early resolution for customers. I review each escalated complaint with the officer that completed the initial response to look for things that could be addressed differently to avoid that escalation.

Waste

Initial Complaints				
Area	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
Waste Total 12	2	Garden waste	Wrong collection days on website x1	1x Not Upheld
			Lack of communication re Xmas tree collection x1	1x Upheld
	10	Collection issues	Genuine missed collections x 4	4 x Upheld
			Missed bin – not out x1	1x Not Upheld
			Bins not returned to collection point x 1	1x Upheld
			Crews leaving waste in street after collection x2	1x Upheld 1x Not Upheld
			Staff attitude x 2	1x Upheld 1x Not Upheld

Stage 2 Complaint		
Crew member attitude	Not happy with Stage 1 complaint	1 Not upheld

Waste Manager – Commentary

The Waste team carry out weekly collections for household and recycling waste for just over 24,000 domestic properties in the borough. They also collect garden waste and carry our bulky item collections as a chargeable service. Due to the wide-ranging nature of this service, complaints are inevitable.

The vast majority of complaints received related to collections issues; all were resolved by early resolution. Where the complaint was upheld, an apology was given, the situation was rectified quickly, and the customer was happy with the outcome meaning the complaint did not need to progress to Stage 1. There was one Stage 2 complaint received relating to a Stage 1 complaint in September 22, where a customer was unhappy that their extra bags would not be taken. The investigation showed that the staff member was not at fault, so the complaint was not upheld.

Complaints Review Meetings

The Customer Service Improvement team together with the Compliance and Policy Officer review data on a monthly basis to establish themes and trends. They hold monthly Complaints Review Meetings with the Service Area Managers who have had complaints to deal with in the previous month.

Each complaint is analysed to establish why the complaint has been made, what can be learnt from it and how we can ensure the same mistakes are not repeatedly made. Lessons learnt are recorded and best practice is shared to improve the customer experience.

The response times to complaints are closely monitored and can be seen in the below table.

Response Times for complaints handling		
Month	Stage 1 Complaints (Target 10 days)	Stage 2 Complaints (Target 20 days)
Oct 22	8	21.5
Nov 22	9	22
Dec 22	10	10
Jan 23	12.5	(No Stage 2's)
Feb 23	TBD (1 Outstanding currently 11 days)	16
Mar 23	9	TBD (1 Outstanding currently 14.5 days)

There are several response times that are in breach of our targets for this six-monthly period which is disappointing. The reasons for this are varied and range from very complex time-consuming complaints to those where managers have not prioritised their response.

The Chief Executive is now attending the complaint monthly review meetings to ensure the correct focus is given to complaints handling and to help drive response times down.

We continue to closely monitor the early resolution percentage rate and hope to see an improvement in this moving forward.

Complaints Surveys

In 2021 we made the decision to survey complainants who give permission for the Customer Service Improvement Officer to contact them to gather further feedback. The customers are asked a series of questions to establish their level of satisfaction at how we have handled their complaint. We ask if they feel they were treated fairly, how easy it was to make a complaint and for any suggestions for improvement that they may have.

Between October 2022 and March 2023 a total of 25 customer were surveyed, see the survey results below:

Handling of their complaint



96% of customers surveyed felt satisfied with the handling of their complaint (24/25). This has remained the same as the previous results

Treated Fairly



100% of customers surveyed said they were treated fairly during their complaint (25/25). This has improved from 91% on the previous biannual report.

Complaint Outcome



80% of customers surveyed were satisfied with the outcome to their complaint (20/25). This has improved from 74% on the previous biannual report.

Helpful & Polite

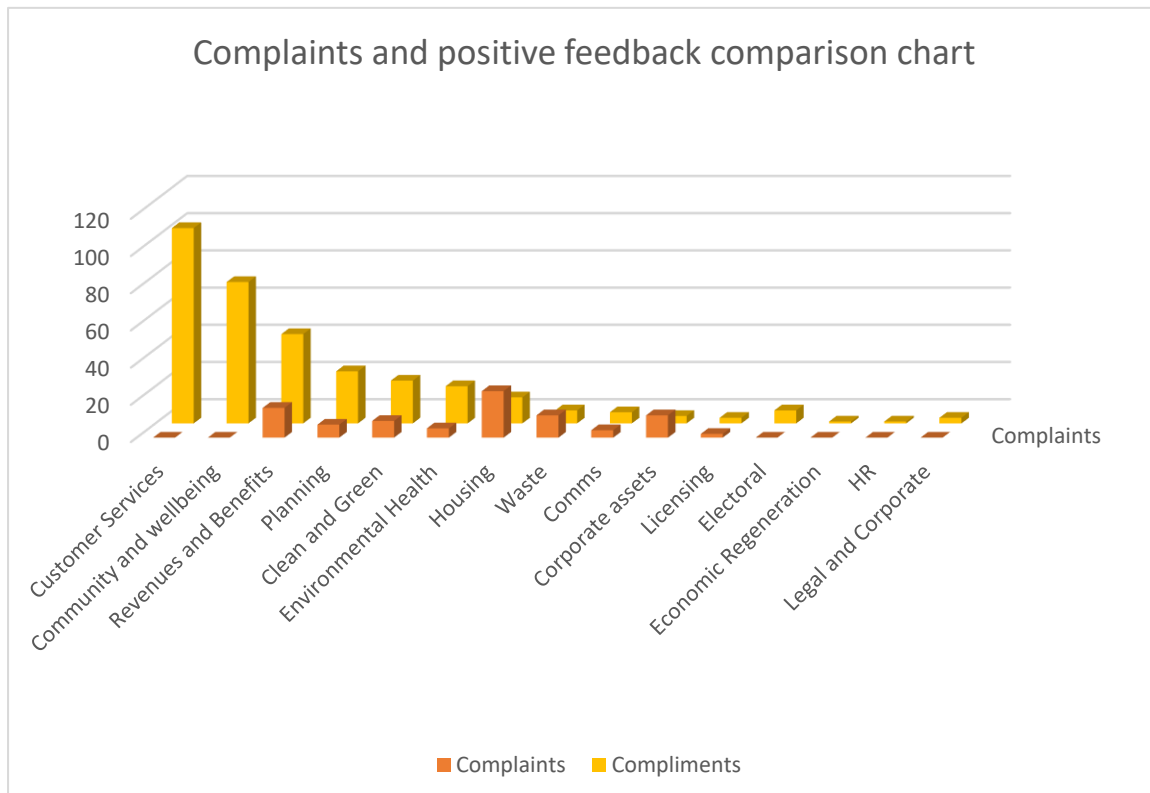


100% customers surveyed felt that staff were helpful and polite during their complaint (25/25). This has improved from 96% on the previous biannual report.

Positive Comments

Between October 2022 and March 2023 there were 346 positive feedbacks, compliments and comments received. This is an increase from 338 in the previous reporting period. The Customer Services team (105) and Community & Wellbeing teams (76) received the highest amount of positive feedback due to the frontline nature of their services and their proactive participation in surveying customers.

The chart below highlights the positive feedback against the number of complaints received for each department, and highlights how generally the amount of good feedback far outweighs the volume of complaints received.



Examples of positive feedback received.

Housing Options

Knowledgeable, helpful, professional and friendly. She has really helped us and we're very grateful to her.

Planning

Very approachable & kept you informed also very knowledgeable and gave good advice.

Environmental Health

Helped us and put our minds at rest and acted very quickly. Great service



Revenues and Benefits

I wish I could give a score of 11/10. He was so amazing. He explained everything in a clear way. Very impressed!

Waste

The new bin was delivered yesterday, and I thank you for the prompt and efficient treatment I received.