

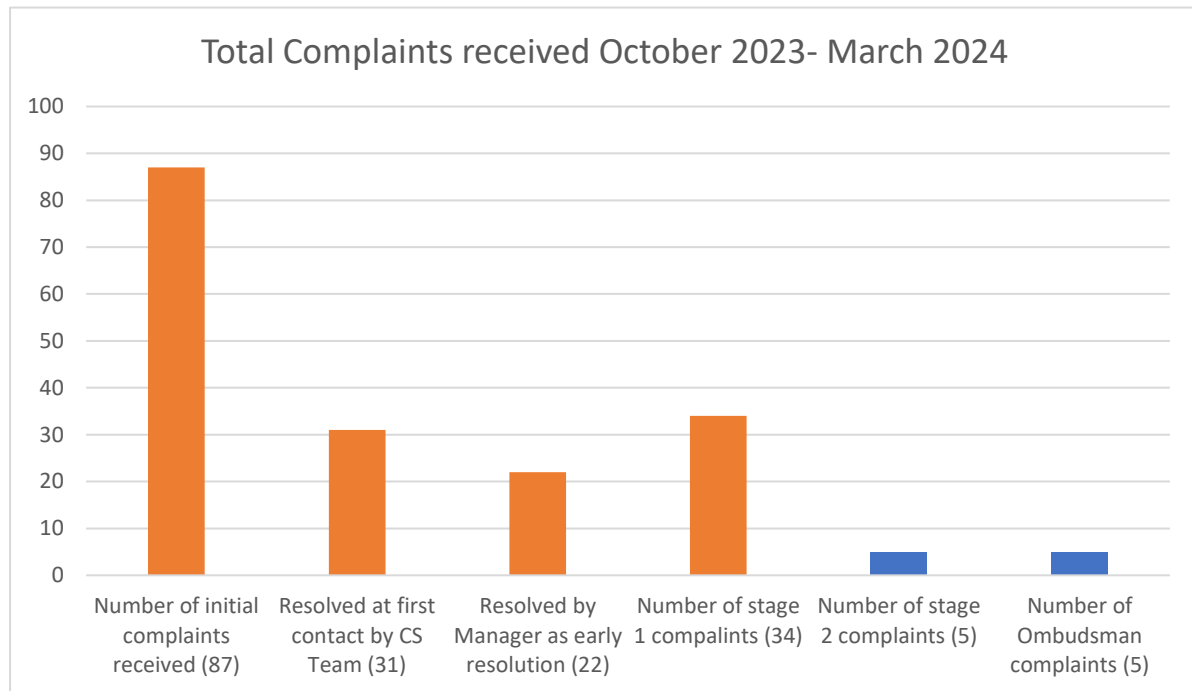
Bi-Annual Complaints Report October 2023 – March 2024

Introduction

The report summarises our complaints performance during the 3rd and 4th quarter of 2023/2024 covering the period from 1st October 2023 to 31st March 2024.

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 complaint's procedure.

The Overall Picture



- The number of initial complaints received between 1st October 2023 to 31st March 2024 was 87 which is a reduction of 17 on the previous 6 month period
- 31 complaints were resolved at first point of contact by the Customer Service team
- 22 complaints were resolved by managers as Early Resolution
- 34 complaints went through the formal complaints process and were investigated as Stage 1 complaints which is 1 more than the previous 6 month period
- 5 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 which is a reduction of 14 on the previous 6 month period
- 5 complaints were received by the Ombudsman

Monthly Breakdown for all complaints

Monthly Stats Oct 23 – Mar 24					
Month	Number Of complaints received	Early Resolution			Stage 1 complaints received
		Resolved By Customer Services	Resolved By Manager	Percentage	
Oct 23	20	5	7	60%	8
Nov 23	16	6	4	63%	6
Dec 23	14	8	3	79%	3
Jan 24	10	6	1	70%	3
Feb 24	13	3	4	58%	6
Mar 24	14	3	3	43%	8
Total	87	31	22	62%	34

The chart above shows the breakdown of how each complaint was handled. Overall, 62% 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 below figures give a breakdown of the early resolution figures and the departments responsible.

Department	Number of complaints that were dealt with as Early resolution
Corporate Assets	3
Waste	4
Licensing	1
Housing	8
Revenues and benefits	6
Total Resolved by Early Resolution	22

The chart below shows the stage 1 complaint comparison from Oct 22 – March 23 last year and the current reporting period Oct 23-Mar 24 this year, to show a more direct comparison between months.

Last Year Oct 22- March 23		This Year Oct 23 – Mar 24	
Month	Stage 1 complaints received	Month	Stage 1 complaints received
Oct 22	6	Oct 23	8
Nov 22	6	Nov 23	6
Dec 22	7	Dec 23	3
Jan 23	6	Jan 24	3
Feb 23	11	Feb 24	6
Mar 23	6	Mar 24	8
Total	42	Total	34

The below chart shows the stage 1 complaint comparison from the previous reporting period Q1 and Q2 (Apr-Sept 23) and the current reporting period Q3 and Q4 Oct 23 - Mar24)

Previous Reporting Period April- Sept 2023		Current Reporting Period Oct 23-Mar 24	
Month	Stage 1 complaints received	Month	Stage 1 complaints received
Apr 23	4	Oct 23	8
May 23	4	Nov 23	6
Jun 23	7	Dec 23	3
July 23	4	Jan 24	3
Aug 23	13	Feb 24	6
Sept 23	1	Mar 24	8
Total	33	Total	34

Stage 1 complaints have remained at a similar level when compared to the previous 6 month reporting period (April-Sept 23).

Stage 1 complaints however show a decline when compared to the same period year on year (Oct 22-March 23 compared to Oct 23 – Mar 24). This is very encouraging as it shows the early resolution approach is now instilled within the Council.

The below chart shows the stage 2 complaint comparison with the previous reporting period Q1 and Q2 (Apr 23-Sept 23) and the current reporting period Q3 and Q4 (Oct 23 to Mar 24).

Previous Reporting Period April 2023 – Sept 2023		Current Reporting Period October 2023-March 2024	
Month	Stage 2 complaints received	Month	Stage 2 complaints received
Apr 23	2	Oct 23	0
May 23	2	Nov 23	2
Jun 23	5	Dec 23	0
July 23	1	Jan 24	0
Aug 23	3	Feb 24	1
Sept 23	6	Mar 24	2
Total	19	Total	5

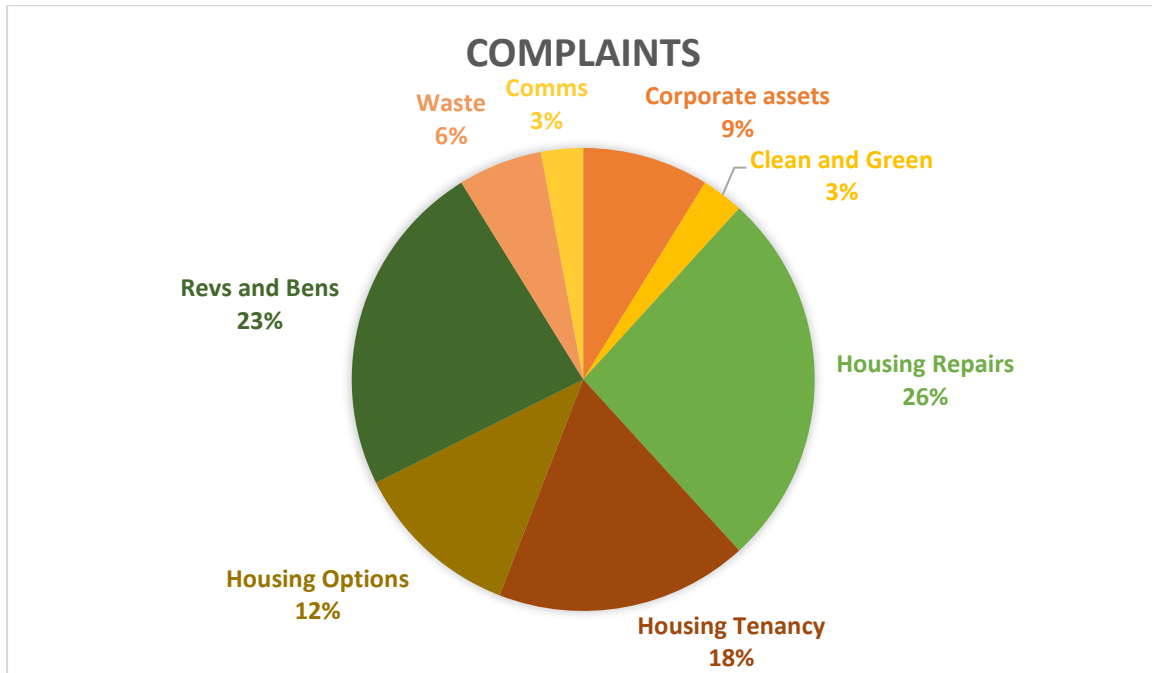
The comparison charts above show a dramatic decrease in stage 2 complaints, which is a vast improvement demonstrating complainants are happy with the response to their stage 1 complaint and the speed with which they receive their response.

There has been an increase in ombudsman complaints, with a total of 5 received. In the previous period there were 2.

Of the 5 received by the ombudsman, they made a decision only to investigate 3 of them, refusing 2.

Departmental Breakdown

The chart below shows all Stage 1 complaints received by each department.



Law and Democracy

Clean and Green

Stage 1 Complaints				
Total Number of Complaints	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
1	1	Lack of path cleaning	Lack of maintenance due to broken sweeper	1x partially Upheld

Corporate Assets

Stage 1 Complaints				
Total Number of Complaints	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
3	2	Car park issues	Alleged inappropriate disabled parking bays	1x Not Upheld
			Lack of lighting in car park	1x Not Upheld
	1			1x Not Upheld

		Cemeteries- Condition of grave	Removal of grave edging	
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Stage 2 Complaints			
Area	Category	Overview	Upheld
Clean and Green	Lack of path cleaning	Unhappy with Level 1 Response	Not Upheld
Corporate Assets	Cemeteries- removal of grave edging	Unhappy with Level 1 Response	Not Upheld

Corporate Assets Manager – Commentary

Lack of path cleaning

Paths are cleaned but at that time of the year an exceptional build-up of detritus can be found due to the location of the paths and in particular the canopy cover from the trees. The complaints perception of cleanliness was subjective – as even after a sweep/tidy he continued to raise issues.

Removal of grave edging

The complainant had had the process explained to him and he had complained a number of years ago when his particular issue had been resolved. The complaint was in fact more about other people’s edgings rather than on their own plot.

Disabled Parking bays

One issue raised about location/size of the disabled parking bay at Brocks Hill. Customer has been reassured they meet guidelines. The other issue was relating to a light and work being carried out by a third party, there was a misunderstanding on what action had been taken, once dates were given the issue was resolved.

Waste

Area: Waste

Stage 1 Complaints				
Total Number of Complaints	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
2	1	Collection Issues	Bins left in wrong place	1x Upheld
	1	Garden waste costs	Complaint against rise in garden waste	1x Not upheld

			fees and reduction in service	
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Stage 2 Complaints			
Area	Category	Overview	Upheld
Waste	Garden waste rise in costs and reduction in service	Unhappy with Stage 1 Response	Not Upheld

Waste Manager – Commentary

Collection Issues We have had several new agency workers on the refuse and recycling rounds. We have held staff briefings regarding the importance of bins being placed correctly, and not being left blocking drives, pathways etc.

Garden Waste Costs Council decision was made to increase charges, this was explained to customer.

Over the winter months, far less garden waste is produced, reducing the service over the winter allows the council to save money.

Built Environment

Housing Options

Stage 1 Complaints				
Total Number Of Complaints	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld
4	2	Staff Attitude	Alleged staff Rudeness	2x Not Upheld
	1	Unhappy with temporary accommodation	Alleged staff rudeness	1x Not Upheld
	1	Request for move	Unhappy with decision	1x Not Upheld

(Continued overleaf)

Repairs

Stage 1 Complaints				
Total Number of Complaints	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld Y/N
9	6	Property Maintenance	Issue with door causing alleged theft of bicycle	1x Not Upheld
			3 x Lack of compensation for lack of heating and hot water	3x Not Upheld
			Lack of hot water and water pressure	1x Not upheld
			Damp and radiator not heating up	1x Not upheld
	3	Contractor issues	No show of contractor	1x Not upheld
			Delay in contractor fixing heating and hot water	1x Not upheld
			Alleged threatening letter from contractor	1x Not upheld

(Continued overleaf)

Tenancy

Stage 1 Complaints				
Total Number Of Complaints	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld
6	3	Staff Attitude	Alleged staff causing homelessness	1x Not Upheld
			Unhappy with end of tenancy information given out	1x Partially Upheld
			Staff member allegedly giving preferential treatment	1x Partially upheld
	1	Missing items in property	Requests for ariel in council property	1x Not Upheld
	2	ASB	2x Reports of ASB not actioned	2x Upheld

Stage 2 Complaints			
Area	Category	Overview	Upheld
Housing Tenancy	ASB reports not being actioned	Unhappy with Level 1 Response	Upheld

Housing Manager - Commentary

All of the complaints received in relation to Housing Options and Repairs were 'not upheld' by the Council.

Some complaints were either upheld or partially upheld in relation to Tenancy. In investigating the complaint that alleged a staff member was giving preferential treatment, upon investigation it was found that whilst there was no clear evidence of any preferential treatment towards a tenant by the Tenancy Officer, it was acknowledged that the officer did go over and above their role but this was with good intentions, with the purpose of preventing further inconvenience which would have impacted on a communal area of a property and a number of tenants.

With regard to the elements of complaints that were upheld regarding end of tenancy information and ASB No there were some learning points in relation to these which have been taken on Board by the team.

Customer Services and Transformation

Area: Revenues and Benefits

Stage 1 Complaints				
Total Number of Complaints	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld
8	3	Recovery	Alleged Lack of Contact / Warning/summons	1x Not Upheld
			Alleged staff unhelpfulness	1x Not Upheld
			Unhappy at HB overpayment	1x Not upheld
	1	Bailiff issue	Alleged abuse from bailiffs	1x Not upheld
	3	Council Tax	2X Disputing money owed	2x Not Upheld
			Staff attitude regarding arrears	1x Not Upheld
	1	Benefits	Unhappy with processing HSF	1x Partially Upheld

Stage 2 Complaints			
Area	Category	Overview	Upheld
Recovery	Bailiff issue	Unhappy with Level 1 response	1 Not Upheld
	Staff rudeness	Unhappy with Level 1 response	1 Not Upheld

Revenues and Benefits Manager - Commentary

Only one of the complaints received was partially upheld, this is because the customer had the right to request a reconsideration of the decision made on the Housing Support Fund (HSF), she had supplied additional information and the HSF decision was revised. The customer was reassured that best practice would be shared and a change had been made as a result of this complaint, this was a satisfactory conclusion for the customer.

The other complaints weren't upheld and a letter explaining the situation was issued.

Communications

Stage 1 Complaints				
Total Number of Complaints	Number	Category	Overview	Upheld
1	1	Our Borough	Complaint against the cost of producing Our Borough	1x Not Upheld

Communications Manager - Commentary

One complaint was received by a resident about us using Council money to produce paper comms (Our Borough). It was explained to the complainant that the costs around Our Borough are offset by the benefits of reaching hard-to-reach individuals. This has always been a fine balance. It was also explained that a member decision has been taken to move Our Borough to primarily digital circulation, effective from this autumn's edition.

Ombudsman Complaints

There has been 5 complaints raised with the Ombudsman. Of the 5, they made a decision only to investigate 3 of them, refusing 2.

Month	Area	Overview	Outcome	Lesson learned
Nov 23	Housing	Complaint about housing services when fleeing DV	Upheld- £750 compensation paid	Additional training provided to Customer Services and housing.
Nov 23	EH/ASB	Alleged lack of response to ASB	Not investigated	N/A
Nov 23	Revenues	Alleged distress caused by bailiffs	Not investigated	N/A
Feb 24	Housing	Alleged lack of response to ASB and improving security in communal block	LGO requested evidence sent 21.03.24	Awaiting outcome
Mar 24	Housing	Original Stage 1 Complaint not dealt with in accordance with our CCC policy-	£250 compensation offered and sent to LGO 22.03.2024	Awaiting outcome

Complaints Monitoring

Every complaint is taken seriously, examining the reasons behind each one, extracting valuable lessons, and making sure we don't repeat the same mistakes. Response times are closely tracked as illustrated in the table below.

Month	Stage 1 Complaints (Target 10 days)	Stage 2 Complaints (Target 20 days)
Oct 23	6	0
Nov 23	5	12
Dec 23	5	0
Jan 24	9	0
Feb 24	10	12
Mar 24	8	18

These response times are very encouraging and will in part be responsible for the reduction in stage 2 complaints. The importance of dealing with complaints in a timely manner now seems to be embedded in the Council.

Complaints Surveys

We have continued to survey our customers that have submitted a complaint. This survey involves a comprehensive set of questions aimed at gauging customer satisfaction levels regarding the resolution of their complaint.

Between October 2023 and March 2024, a total of fifteen customers were surveyed, see the survey results below:

Treated Fairly

100% of customers surveyed said they were treated fairly during their complaint (15/15). This has remained consistent with the previous biannual report.



Handling of their complaint

100% of customers surveyed felt satisfied with the handling of their complaint (15/15). This has remained consistent with the previous biannual report.



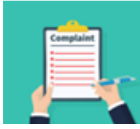
Complaint Outcome

93% customers surveyed were satisfied with the outcome to their complaint (14/15). This has improved from 86% on the previous biannual report.



Ease of complaint process

100% of customers surveyed were satisfied with how easy it was to make a complaint (15/15). This is an increase from 91% on the previous report



Helpful and Polite

100% customers surveyed felt that staff were helpful and polite during their complaint (15/15). This has remained consistent from the previous biannual report.

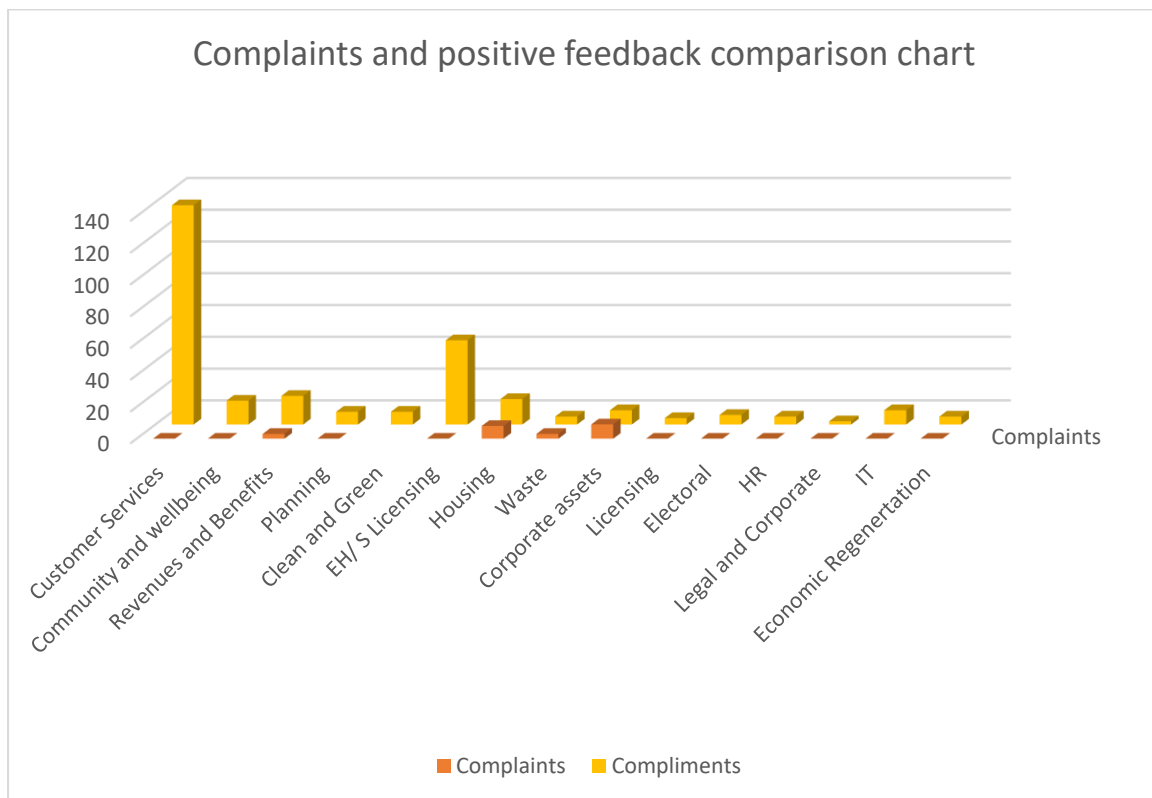


Positive Comments

Between October 2023 and March 2024 there were 301 positive feedback, compliments and comments received.

The Customer Services team (138) and the EH and Selective licensing team (53) received the highest amount of positive feedback due to the frontline nature of their services and their proactive participation in surveying customers.

Whenever we receive positive feedback, it is documented in a register. The below chart shows the positive feedback received in comparison to the number of complaints for each department. It illustrates that our service areas consistently receive a significantly higher amount of positive feedback than complaints.



The following departments received positive feedback and no complaints.

Customer Services	138 Positive feedback comments
Community and Wellbeing	15 Positive feedback comments
Electoral Services	6 Positive feedback comments
Legal and corporate	2 Positive feedback comments
Licensing	4 Positive feedback comment
Planning	8 Positive Comments
EH/ Selective Licensing	53 Positive comments
HR	5 Positive Comments
IT	9 Positive Comments
Economic Regeneration	5 Positive Comments

Examples of positive feedback received.

Planning

Very helpful even though I kept asking questions they replied promptly and with the information I had requested.

Waste

I expect you mostly deal with complaints, so I felt I wanted to complement O&WBC in taking the initiative in arranging to do the additional collection, which was much appreciated and an example of good customer service.

Housing

Really happy with the genuine care that she has received on this call but also on the previous call

IT

Really quick resolution & even sent Teams message to check everything is still OK and offering support if any further problems.
Thank you

Customer Services

"Brilliant service" - said he never received this kind of service from his previous council