

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 20TH OCTOBER, 2022

REFERENCE FROM GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:
27TH SEPTEMBER, 2022

“271 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 (DCR) –

The Director of Corporate Resources presented the report, which outlined that the Council had adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. Complainants who remained unsatisfied after Stages 1 and 2 of the Policy were able to refer their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

In May 2021 the PSOW confirmed that the Council's policy conformed with its model policy.

All Corporate Complaints and Compliments during the reporting period were recorded on Oracle CRM and feed into the Complaints and Compliments Dashboards. These excluded Social Services complaints which were resolved via a different procedure and were reported separately.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act (2021) required the Governance and Audit Committee to review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. These provisions were included in Part 6 of the legislation relating to the Performance and Governance of Principal Councils and Duty of Principal Council to keep its performance under review.

The purpose of the policy was to ensure that complainants experienced a consistent and fair response. Recording and monitoring of complaints allowed the Council to:

- Gain insight into citizens' satisfaction with services provided;
- Understand how satisfied customers were with how the Council investigated complaints;
- Monitor responsiveness to statutory guidance and customer expectations regarding how quickly the Council completed complaints investigations.
- Identify potential for improving service by analysing what had been learned from complaints.

Analysis of complaints information for 2022/23 indicated that the number of complaints received (358) were in line with the long-term trend, averaging 377. Overall:

- Complainants were satisfied with how complaints were investigated;
- Responsiveness, in terms of adherence to deadlines, continued to decline;

- Complaint handling was meeting the requirements of statutory bodies;
- An increased focus on learning from complaints was required.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) received 61 complaints relating to the Council during the period. This represented a significant increase compared to the 38 received in 2020/21 and was above the longer-term average. 2 complaints were taken into investigation, 1 of which was upheld 1 partially upheld. 7 (4) complaints were resolved through Early Resolution and 25 (10) were considered to be Premature. 8 (9) were out of jurisdiction and 19 (14) were other cases closed after initial consideration.

The annual report detailed complaint performance for Directorates for 2021/22 and included performance trends since 2014/15.

In April 2022 the Council implemented the Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies. The new Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens had not been applied to any citizen since its adoption. The previous Unreasonable Complainants Policy was applied on 4 occasions between October 2013 and April 2021.

Since its adoption only 3 people had been blocked or muted on a social media channel under the Social Media Policy.

Councillor M. Hooper stated that there was a new complaints management system being introduced, so were there any risks that the Committee should be aware of. The Director advised that a new system had been procured from a company called Granicus, which was being rolled out for use in the Contact Centre. The Complaints and Compliments element of that system was near the back end of the implementation process, so that roll out appeared to be somewhat seamless as the referral process was straightforward. The new system would offer opportunity to improve how referrals would be handled, provide better and more timely reporting and provided better functionality for the user.

Mr. M. Evans commented that it was good that the report captured actions to be taken following complaints, but he would have liked to have seen more context in relation to the likelihood of those actions being achieved. In reply, the Director stated that a number of actions that were being progressed, including increasing the visibility of the report to ensure that the knowledge would be shared on a wider and more regular basis. This also included quarterly reports to the Council's Strategic Leadership Team, so that there could be challenge of whether the causes of those complaints were being accurately recorded, and effectively building that into the new system whilst also removing the option of no learning.

The Chair, Mr. G. Chapman, then raised a series of points:

- What did it actually mean when complainants indicated that they were completely satisfied with how complaints were investigated.
- Whether complaints made to Councillors were registered or captured anywhere.

- Did every complainant receive feedback as to how their complaint had been dealt with as well as the actions that the Council take as a result of the complaint.
- Would Directorates learn lessons particularly if they were receiving a high number of complaints relating to the same issue.
- Who would monitor the lessons learnt process to ensure that the issues raised were taken forward.
- Social Services and Schools, both had separate complaint procedures, so could these be looked at in overall view as to how these were being handled, to ensure there were appropriate processes in place.
- Did the PSOW produce an annual report which would be considered by the Committee.

In reply to the above, the Director advised:

- In terms of satisfaction of complaints, this would be measured by the resolution rate at Stage 1 of the process. 90% of complaints were resolved at Stage 1 and did not progress to Stage 2.
- If a Councillor raised a formal complaint on behalf of a resident through the Contact Centre, then that would be captured and registered as a complaint through the complaint's process. It was important to recognise that there was a differentiation between the types of issues raised, for example, the missing of a refuse bin collection would not be regarded as a formal complaint, but the persistent missing of a collection would be.
- With regard to feedback, yes, both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the process required the Council to write to the complainant explaining the conclusions made and setting out the reasons why those conclusions had been reached. Complainants would also be advised of any further course of action open to them under the complaints policy. This also included information about making a complaint to the PSOW.
- In relation to how the complaints and compliments data was used, there were quarterly reports produced for each Directorate's Management Team. These were in conjunction with the quarterly performance reports, which provided greater context and better understanding of the overall position. This enabled the management teams to reflect on issues. There was a need to better record outcomes which had been identified in the Annual report.
- The report did include some headline figures relating to Social Services, which came under a separate process, but it was considered useful to include in the Annual report for context purposes.
- With regard to schools, each would have a complaints procedure that would be overseen by the governing body.
- In terms of the PSOW, they no longer produced an annual report, and moved to producing an annual letter for each local authority, as shown in Appendix B. There was an onus on the Council to indicate how it would have taken forward the learning, with that to be fed back to the PSOW via the Committee and Cabinet.

The Chair queried whether complainants would be totally satisfied if their complaint was resolved at Stage 1 and was there any further assessment of satisfaction

carried out. In reply, the Director commented that if a person had made a complaint which was not upheld at Stage 1, then if they were not satisfied then there would be a likelihood that they would progress the complaint to Stage 2. As 9 in 10 complaints were resolved at Stage 1, then that was a fair reflection on satisfaction. The Director added that there was an opportunity to carry out more feedback work in regard to the process and handling.

There being no further comments or queries, the Committee

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the contents of the report and Appendix A (Annual Complaints and Compliments Report) be noted.

(2) T H A T the Governance and Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to Corporate Complaints and Compliments.

(3) T H A T the Annual Letter from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (Appendix B) in the context of the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report, be noted.

(4) T H A T the report and the comments of the Governance and Audit Committee be referred to Cabinet for their consideration.

Reasons for decisions

(1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(4) To allow Cabinet to consider the report and the comments of the Governance and Audit Committee.”

Attached as Appendix – Report to Governance and Audit Committee:
27th September, 2022

Meeting of:	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 27 September 2022
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021/22
Purpose of Report:	To allow consideration of corporate complaints received from customers and the Public Service Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the corresponding period
Report Owner:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	There are no matters in this report which relate to an individual ward
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. Complainants who remain unsatisfied after Stages 1 and 2 of the Policy are able to refer their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). • In May 2021 the PSOW confirmed that the Council's policy conformed with its model policy. • All Corporate Complaints and Compliments during the reporting period were recorded on Oracle CRM and feed into the Complaints and Compliments Dashboards. These exclude Social Services complaints which are resolved via a different procedure and are reported separately. • The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act (2021) requires the Governance and Audit Committee to review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. These provisions are included in Part 6 of the legislation relating to the Performance and Governance of Principal Councils and Duty of Principal Council to keep its performance under review. • The purpose of the policy is to ensure that complainants experience a consistent and fair response. Recording and monitoring of complaints allows the council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gain insight into citizens' satisfaction with services provided. ○ Understand how satisfied customers are with how we investigate complaints. 	

- Monitor responsiveness to statutory guidance and customer expectations regarding how quickly we complete complaints investigations.
- Identify potential for improving service by analysing what has been learned from complaints.
- Analysis of complaints information for 2022/23 indicates that the number of complaints received (358) were in line with the long-term trend, averaging 377. Overall:
 - Complainants are satisfied with how complaints are investigated
 - Responsiveness, in terms of adherence to deadlines, continues to decline
 - Complaint handling is meeting the requirements of statutory bodies
 - An increased focus on learning from complaints is required
- The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) received 61 complaints relating to the council during the period. This represents a significant increase compared to the 38 received in 2020/21 and is above the longer-term average. 2 complaints were taken into investigation, 1 of which was upheld 1 partially upheld. 7 (4) complaints were resolved through Early Resolution and 25 (10) were considered to be Premature. 8 (9) were out of jurisdiction and 19 (14) were other cases closed after initial consideration.
- The annual report details complaint performance for directorates for 2021/222 and includes performance trends since 2014/15
- In April 2022 the Council implemented the Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies. The new Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens has not been applied to any citizen since its adoption. The previous Unreasonable Complainants Policy was applied on 4 occasions between October 2013 and April 2021.
- Since its adoption only 3 people have been blocked or muted on a social media channel under the Social Media Policy.

Recommendations

1. That Governance and Audit Committee note the contents of the report and Appendix A (Annual Complaints & Compliments Report).
2. That Governance and Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to Corporate Complaints and Compliments.
3. That Governance and Audit Committee consider the Annual Letter from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (Appendix B) in the context of the Annual Complaints & Compliments Report).
4. That Governance and Audit Committee refer this report and the comments of the Committee on the above matters to Cabinet for their consideration.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. & 2 To ensure effective monitoring of corporate complaints as an indicator of citizen satisfaction with service provided.
- 3 & 4. In order that Cabinet can be apprised of the report and the comments made by Governance and Audit Committee and reply to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council operates a two-stage process for handling complaints from residents. Should the complainant remain unsatisfied at the end of this process they are advised to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).
- 1.2 The contents of this report are generated from data entered on to Oracle Customer Relationship Management system by Customer Relations and service based staff.
- 1.3 Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee receives quarterly updates on local performance indicators relating to complaint handling, including those escalated to the PSOW.
- 1.4 Operational Managers have been provided with a real time dashboard to enable them to better monitor and manage complaints relating to their own services.
- 1.5 An annual complaints and compliments report has been produced for the eight financial years since 2014/15. Appendix A provides Committee with the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2021/22, including detailed performance information.
- 1.6 Following a recommendation from Corporate Resources and Performance Scrutiny Committee (14 April 2021) the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report also includes information relating to the application of the Unreasonable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The total number of complaints received during 2021/22 increased by 20 compared to the previous year from 338 to 358. However, this remains below the 8-year average of 377.
- 2.2** The Council continued to operate under unusual circumstances during the reporting period with the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic still being felt. This makes the drawing of conclusions about longer term trends in causes of complaints and complainant satisfaction more difficult.
- 2.3** One key indicator of complainant satisfaction with the quality of complaint investigation and the fairness of outcomes is the percentage of complaints escalated past Stage 1. During 2021/22 only 10% of complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the procedure, in line with the previous year's performance of 9.8% and consistent with the long-term average of 9.97%. This represents a clear indication that corporate complaints continue to be investigated well and effectively across the Council.
- 2.4** In a continuation of previous years, distribution of complaints reflects the high number of direct citizen interactions delivered by the Environment and Housing Directorate which accounted for 76.5% of all complaints (274). This is a reduction of 3.5 percentage points in share on previous year although a slight increase on the 270 complaints raised during 2020/21.
- 2.5** With 3 complaints raised Learning and Skills received the fewest number of complaints and is static compared to 2020/21. The Managing Director and Resources directorate received 68 Stage 1 complaints and 13 Stage 2 complaints during the period, an increase of 25% on the previous year.
- 2.6** Waste Management continues to account for the highest number of complaints received by a single service at 147, although this is a reduction of 39 on the previous year. Of the 147 complaints received 145 were resolved at Stage 1.
- 2.7** As of the date of this report 11.7% of complaints recorded during 2021/22 had not reached a conclusion. 45.3% of complaints were upheld in full or in part, an increase of 7.4 percentage point increase on 2020/21.
- 2.8** Performance in relation to responsiveness to complaints is now reported on a quarterly basis to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Compliance Standards authority. Overall, the Council performance in resolving complaints within target timescales continues to decline with only 61% resolved within target (2020/21 64.2%). This compares to the best performance in 2016/17 of 75.1%. It should be noted that only 1 complaint has been received from a resident regarding the time taken to resolve a complaint during the year.
- 2.9** 58% of Environment and Housing complaints were resolved within target, Managing Director and Resources achieved 69.1% with Learning and Skills achieving 100%.

- 2.10** During 2022/23 the complaints process will be moved from Oracle CRM to the GovService platform. The new platform will allow for automated, timed notifications to be sent to complaint owners when time scales are about to be breached. In addition, where investigations cannot be processed because information is required from the complainant the process will be able to be placed “on hold” to ensure that a better the time taken to investigate the complaint can be better reflected. It is anticipated that this will help the Council to achieve improved performance in this area going forward.
- 2.11** Learning from complaints continues to be a key area for improvement as it provides the opportunity for services to manage customer expectations and to make improvements in service delivery where possible.
- 2.12** 67.7% did not have a cause of complaint recorded, a further decline on 2020/21 performance of 61.4%. For those complaints where a cause has been recorded ‘Service Standards Not Met’ accounted for 16.4%, ‘Policy and Process Not Followed’ 6.5% and ‘Staff Behaviour’ 6.5%.
- 2.13** ‘No Learning’ was recorded against 88.5% of complaints, with ‘Staff Training’ recorded against 5.6%, ‘Review and Revise Information/Communication’ accounting for 2.2%.
- 2.14** In April 2022 Cabinet (ref C904) approved the introduction of new Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies. The policies recognise that opportunities for interaction with the Council and its officers have multiplied with increasing popularity of social media platforms. Communication is quick and easy but could quickly become intrusive and difficult to manage on both professional and private profiles.
- 2.15** The Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens defines actions of individuals who are angry, demanding or persistent to the extent that they result in unreasonable demands on the Council or unacceptable behaviour towards Council staff. It sets expectations and provides guidance on how to communicate with clients and options/remedies along with a defined process to progress actions/response where there were transgressions. The Policy sets out the internal process for managing the Policy and reviewing its application, including guidance for Chief Officers.
- 2.16** Since its adoption in April 2022 no applications have been made by officers to apply the policy to any citizen.
- 2.17** The previous Unreasonable Complainants Policy had been applied 4 times between October 2013 and April 2021, twice to the same citizen and most recently on 08 April 2021. The Policy is currently being applied to one citizen. On average this policy has been applied for 13.7 months, with the longest period being 19 months and shortest 6 months.
- 2.18** Only 3 citizens have been blocked or muted on social media platforms under the Social Media Policy since its adoption.
- 2.19** Appendix B provides Committee with a copy of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter regarding the complaints received and dealt with by that

organisation. Committee are requested to consider the content and provide any comments to Cabinet regarding the same.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 Listening to and understanding complaints is a key source of the "voice of the customer", what they need from us and involving them in decisions about how we deliver services.
- 3.2 Learning from complaints is an important way in which the council can develop services that meet the changing needs of residents and are sustainable. Similarly, services can be improved to prevent complaints occurring in the future and improve access to and delivery of services.
- 3.3 The Council's Corporate Plan (and Annual Delivery Plan) include commitments to improving customer service and engagement with our communities. Learning from and effectively handling complaints is a key element of this work.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1 There are no matters in this report relating to climate change and nature.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.
- 5.2 The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales has powers to require the council to compensate complainants financially should it be found guilty of maladministration. Effective investigation and management of complaints will minimise the risk of this happening.

Employment

- 5.3 There are no matters in this report relating to employment matters

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.4 There is no statutory requirement to adopt the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance for Public Service providers in Wales. However, the Welsh Government and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales have commended its adoption.

- 5.5** The Council's complaints process is promoted online and via leaflets at reception points. Complaints can be registered on the website, using the mobile app, by post and by telephone. This ensures that all residents are aware of and have access to the complaints process irrespective of age, gender, belief or disability.

6. Background Papers

None.



Vale of Glamorgan Council

**Annual Complaints
&
Compliments Report
2021/22**

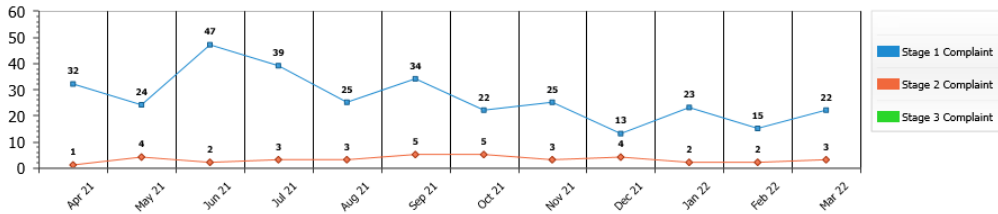
Corporate Complaints – Summary 2021 / 22

ANNUAL DIRECTORATE TOTALS

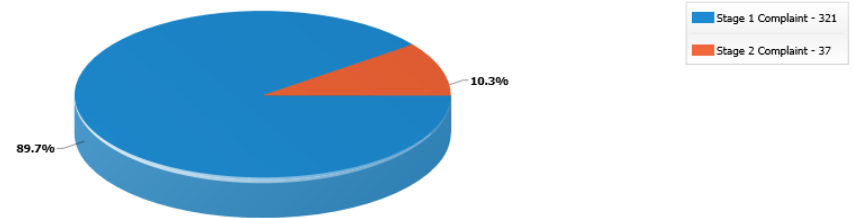
Environment & Housing: 274 (270)
 Managing Director & Resources: 81 (65)

Learning & Skills: 3 (3)
 Total: 358 (338)

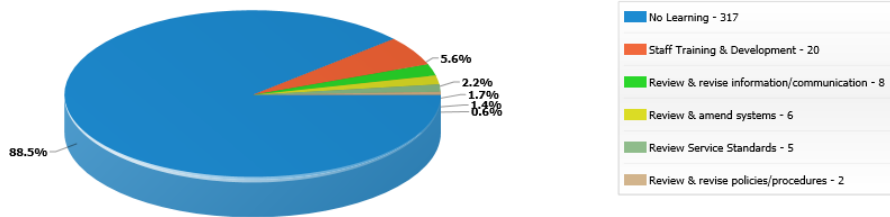
Monthly Complaints



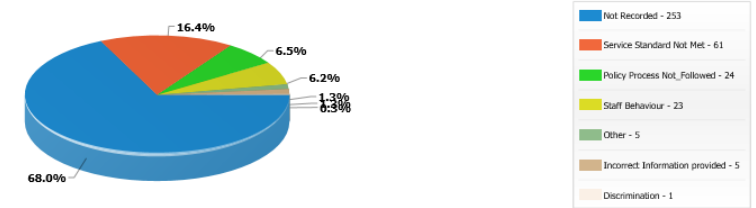
Complaint Resolution Stage



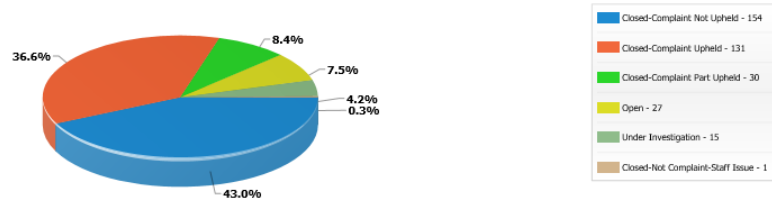
Key Learning Points



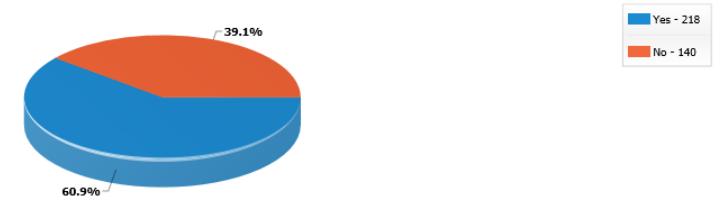
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome



On Target



Vale of Glamorgan Council – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2021/22

Executive Summary

This is the eighth annual report on Corporate Complaints and Compliments under the current Policy. This Report details all formal complaints recorded on the Oracle CRM system for the Council (this excludes Social Services as complaints for that Directorate follow a different policy) that were handled through the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy during the financial year 2021/22. Complaints Dashboard information for 2021/22 is also included for each Directorate in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. The figures for 2020/21 are indicated in brackets throughout the report for comparison. Complaints handled through alternative statutory, processes are excluded from this Report.

As with 2020/21, this reporting period was impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic and the total number of complaints received remained fairly consistent increasing only slightly from 338 to 358. Both of the most recent reporting periods show a significant reduction on the most recent pre-pandemic year (2019/20: 559) and are closer to the 8 year average of 377.

A summary of Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) complaints, complaints received from the Welsh Language Commissioner and Social Services complaints is provided for completeness (page 6).

The number of compliments received and recorded during 2021/22 (**excluding Social Services**) is also set out in the Report.

The analysis of the data for 2021/22 shows that:

- The number of complaints received is a **very small proportion of the Council's total interactions** with residents and other service users.
- **Complainants are satisfied** with how their complaints are investigated – 90% were resolved at Stage 1.
- **Responsiveness is decreasing** – percentage of investigations completed within target continued the longer-term downward trend. The number of complaints resolved within target peaked in 2016/17 at 75.1%, compared to 61% in 2021/22 (64.2%)
- **Complaint volumes increased** – but only slightly, underlying complaint volumes rose to 358 from 338 (2020/21).
- **Complaints are meeting requirements of statutory bodies** – Only 61 complaints were received by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (17% of total complaints), only 2 were investigated (0.6%). The Welsh Language Commissioner received and investigated only 1 against the council during the year.
- **The long term under reporting of the causes of and learning from complaints continues** – only 32% (38.8%) of complaints have a cause recorded and only 11.5% (14.2%) of complaints have a learning outcome recorded. This continues ongoing poor performance in these areas.

Improvement activities still need to continue to focus on:

- Percentage of complaints received with target time scale
- Identifying causes of complaints
- Identifying learning outcomes from complaints

The Council received **321 Stage 1** and **37 Stage 2 Corporate Complaints** during 2021/22. This is a total of **358** (338 in 2020/21), which is an increase of **20** complaints on the previous year. The total number of complaints received over eight years is **3020**, an average of 377 per year.

Analysis indicates that corporate complaints continue to be investigated well and effectively by the Council with **89.7%** (90.2% in 2020/21) of complaints being resolved at Stage 1. While this is a slight reduction on 2020/21 it is in line with **the long-term average of 90.03%**.

60.9% (64.2% in 2020/21) of Stages 1 and 2 complaint investigations were **completed within target** response timescales. This continues a decreasing performance trend in this area.

Since September 2016 it has been possible for services to monitor their own complaint performance using real time information from the Complaints Dashboard. The performance of replying to complaints within the target time has decreased slightly by **3.3%** in the last year.

This performance area is coming under increased scrutiny as the PSOW Compliance Standards Authority requires all local authorities to regularly report on whether they have met speed of response guidelines. A quarterly report is submitted providing a breakdown of departmental complaints. This report includes the response times and the number of open complaints from the previous reporting period.

Of the 358 corporate complaints in **2021/22, 274 or 76.5%** (270 or 80% in 2020/21) were received by the **Environment and Housing** directorate. **Waste Management** generated **145** (178) Stage 1 and 2 (8) Stage 2 complaints i.e. a **total of 147** (a total of 186 in 2020/21) during the period representing **53.6%** (68.8% in 2020/21) of the directorate total and **41%** (55% in 2020/21) of the Council total. Waste Management complaints do not include one-off reports of waste collections being missed.

It should be noted that this directorate undertakes an extremely high volume of interactions with residents and while complaint volumes have increased slightly they still represent a small proportion of the total number of interactions.

Compared to 2020/21 the **Waste Management** service has received 39 fewer complaints. The highest number of complaints for this service were received during the months of April 2021 and July 2021 (18 and 21 respectively). This coincides with the introduction of significant changes to the collection service.

The Waste Management service's compliance to replying within the target time for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints is better than the Council as a whole at **81.6%** (77.4% in 2020/21) on target compared to **60.9%**. Performance has improved by **4.2%** compared to 2020/21.

Learning and Skills received the fewest number of complaints, **totalling 3** (2 Stage 1 and 1 Stage 2) in 2021/22 (3 in 2020/21) or **0.83%** (0.88% in 2020/21) of the total.

Managing Director & Resources received **68** Stage 1 Complaints and **13** Stage 2 complaints (this compares to 59 Stage 1 and 6 Stage 2 in 2020/21). Customer Relations accounted for 17 Stage 1 complaints with Financial Services receiving 23 Stage 1 complaints and 3 Stage 2 complaints. For the directorate as a whole **69.1%** were responded to within target; compared to the Corporate figure of **60.9%**. The Directorate's performance has improved on the previous year when 56.9% of complaints were responded to within target.

45.3% (37.9% in 2020/21) of all recorded corporate complaints were fully or partly upheld, while **43%** (34.9% in 2020/21) were not upheld.

In total **67.7%** (**61.4% in 2020/21**) of complaints did not have the cause of the complaint recorded. This figure is **6.3% points** higher than in 2020/21. 'Service Standards not met' accounted for **16.4%**, Policy and Process not followed **6.5%**, **6.5%** Staff Behaviour and 'other' accounted for **1.3%** of the causes of complaints. (In 2020/21 the top two causes were 'Service Standards not met' at 18.3% and Policy and Process not followed at 8.1%). Discrimination, as a cause of complaint, started to be monitored in January 2017. There was 1 recorded during 2021/22, and 1 was recorded in 2020/21.

'No learning' was recorded against **88.5%** (85.8% in 2020/21) of complaints. The main key learning point categories were Staff Training – **5.6%** and Review and Revise Information/Communication – **2.2%**. (In 2020/21 the top two learning points recorded were Staff Training 5.3% and Review and Revise Information/Communication – 4.1%).

Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies

On 11 April 2022 Cabinet (Ref C904) approved the introduction of new Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social media Policies.

The new policies, building on the previous Unreasonable Complainants Policy, recognise that opportunities for interaction with the Council and its officers have multiplied with increasing popularity of social media platforms. Communication is quick and easy but could quickly become intrusive and difficult to manage on both professional and private profiles.

The Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens defines actions of individuals who are angry, demanding or persistent to the extent that they result in unreasonable demands on the Council or unacceptable behaviour towards Council staff. It sets expectations and provides guidance on how to communicate with clients and options/remedies along with a defined process to progress actions/response where there were transgressions. The Policy sets out the internal process for managing the Policy and reviewing its application, including guidance for Chief Officers.

Since its adoption in April 2022 no applications have been made by officers to apply the policy to any citizen.

The Unreasonable Complainants Policy had been applied 4 times between October 2013 and April 2021, twice to the same citizen and most recently on 08 April 2021. The Policy is currently being applied to one citizen, with a review due in October 2022.

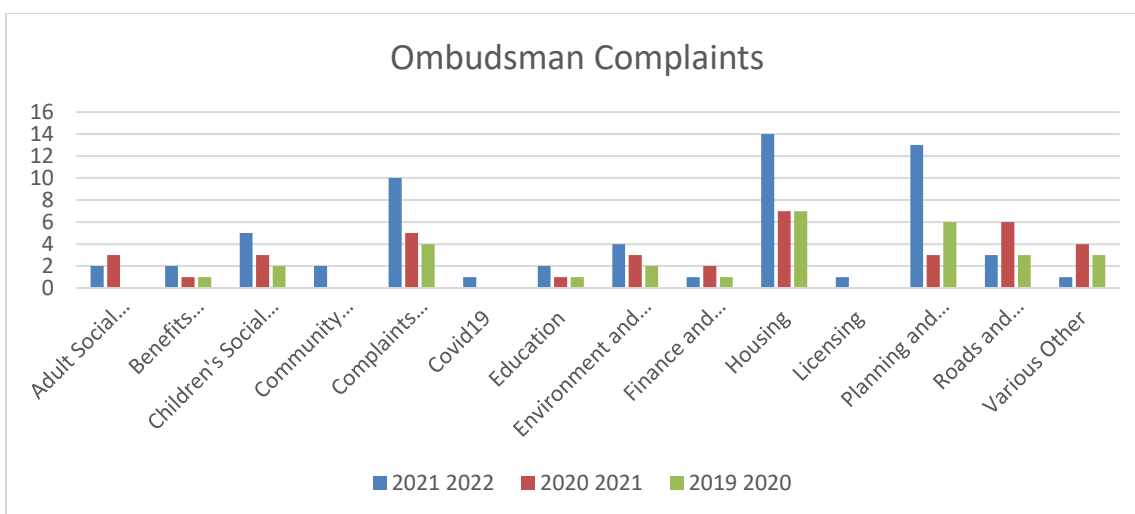
On average the Policy has been applied for 13.7 months, with the longest period being 19 months and shortest 6 months.

Only 3 people have been blocked or muted on social media platforms under the Social Media Policy since its adoption.

Public Services Ombudsman Complaints, Welsh Language Complaints and Social Services Complaints

Public Services Ombudsman Complaints

61 (38 in 2020/21) complaints in respect of the Council were received by the PSOW during 2021/22, which is an increase of **23** on the previous year. **7** complaints were resolved through **Early Resolution** and **25** were considered to be **Premature**. **8** were out of jurisdiction and **18** were other cases closed after initial consideration. **2** complaints were taken into investigation during 2021/22, these involved School Transport which was partly upheld and Social Services which was upheld. **1** complaint was recorded where a decision was reported in the previous year.



Ombudsman Complaints	2021/ 2022	2020/ 2021	2019/ 2020
Adult Social Services	2	3	0
Benefits Administration	2	1	1
Children's Social Services	5	3	2
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	2	0	0
Complaints Handling	10	5	4
Covid19	1	0	0
Education	2	1	1
Environment and Environmental Health	4	3	2
Finance and Taxation	1	2	1
Housing	14	7	7
Licensing	1	0	0
Planning and Building Control	13	3	6
Roads and Transport	3	6	3
Various Other	1	4	3
Total	61	38	30

Welsh Language Complaints

A single complaint was received via the Welsh Language Commissioner during the period April 2021 to March 2022. This related to links on the Welsh language website directing to English language sites and forms, as well as errors with Welsh language grammar and syntax on third-party web pages and forms. Although actions were taken immediately to resolve issues in March 2022, the Welsh Language Commissioner's formal response received by the Council on 08 August 2022 indicates that the Council is not fully compliant with Standard 52

"You must ensure that –

- (a) the text of each page of your website is available in Welsh,
- (b) every Welsh language page on your website is fully functional, and
- (c) the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language on your website"

The actions arising from this investigation, which must be delivered with 3 months, are:

- 1, The Council must review the links on the recycling website and ensure that each one directs the user to a fully functional Welsh language page.
2. The Council must review its procedures for dealing with third parties responsible for its webpages. The Council must ensure that the third party is aware of the Council's duty to comply with Welsh language standards and put arrangements in place to ensure that the Council checks all new pages to make sure that they are fully functional in Welsh before they are published.
3. The Council must contact Zipporah to inform them of this determination and reinforce the Council's position in terms of the requirement to comply with Welsh language standards with regard to third party websites.
4. The Council must review its internal guidance to include a section emphasising the fact that the Council is responsible for ensuring that third party websites operated on behalf on the Council comply with Welsh language standards.
5. The Council must re-check the page Baw Anifeiliaid, Anifeiliaid dy Marw, Binau Gorlifo, neu Baraffernalia Cyffuriau - Adroddiad Cychwynnol - 10/12 Cyflwyniad - Cyngor Bro Morgannwg (achieveservice.com) and ensure that there are no linguistic errors.
6. The Council must ensure that relevant members of staff are made aware of the revised internal guidance explaining how to comply fully with standard 52.
7. The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement steps 1-6 have been completed. Timetable: Within 3 months of issuing the final determination.

We received the Commissioner's decisions on the two complaints made during 2020/21. The commissioner gave recommendations regarding the Council's street naming policy and confirmed no further action was taken regarding the complaint about a sign painted on the highway.

These complaints are not recorded on Oracle CRM so it is not reflected in the total of 358.

Social Services Complaints

Social Service representations and complaints are dealt with under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

As at 31 March 2022, 50 complaints were received which is slightly higher than in the previous year where a total of 43 were received. Out of the 50 complaints received, 20 were for Adult Services, 28 were for Children and Young People Services and 2 related to the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division. Out of the 50 Complaints, 1 was investigated directly as a Stage 2 Investigation after the investigation through the Stage 1 process did not yield a satisfactory outcome for the complainant. 46% of these complaints were resolved within the designated timescales. During this period 7 complaints were referred onto the Ombudsman but only 1 was actually investigated by the Ombudsman with 5 being withdrawn through approaching the Ombudsman prematurely and 1 being outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

The table shown below provides a full breakdown of all enquiries and complaints received during 2021/2022:

Service Division	Enquiries	Complaints Stage 1	Complaints Stage 2	PSOW	Responded to in Timescales	Total Complaints and Enquiries Received
Adult Services	26	20	0	0	13	46
Children and Young People Services	61	28	1	1	9	89
Resource Management & Safeguarding	3	2	0	0	1	5

During 2021/2022 the highest number of Stage 1 complaints received by type of complaint were jointly in relation to the quality/level of service and staff complaints (13 each), followed by other complaints (10), unhappy with the care provided (9), communication (4) and finally charges for service (1). The table below provides a breakdown of the nature of complaints by Division.

Type of Complaint	Adult Services	Children and Young People Services	Resource Management and Safeguarding	Total Complaints by Nature of Complaint
Charges for services	1	0	0	1
Lack of response	0	0	0	0
Quality/level of service	8	5	0	13
Staff complaint	3	10	0	13
Unhappy with care provided	5	4	0	9
Communication	0	4	0	4
Other	3	6	1	10

During 2021/2022 a summary of Social Services key lessons learnt include:

In terms of the main lessons learned over the 2021/2022 period, I would summarise them into the following main five points:

- 1) The importance of maintaining regular, clear and ongoing contact with services users and families to ensure they are always kept fully abreast of the situation and any developments
- 2) The importance of setting clear expectations of the levels of services that services users can expect including clear outlines of costs, timescales and what level of service can be provided in these challenging times
- 3) The importance of recording more specific data about complaints and enquiries that are received through the Social Services Complaints Officer to give a more detailed picture of areas for improvement within Social Services
- 4) To remind staff of the importance of responding swiftly and appropriately whenever errors, complaints or concerns are raised – to delay responding to these issues or to ignore them

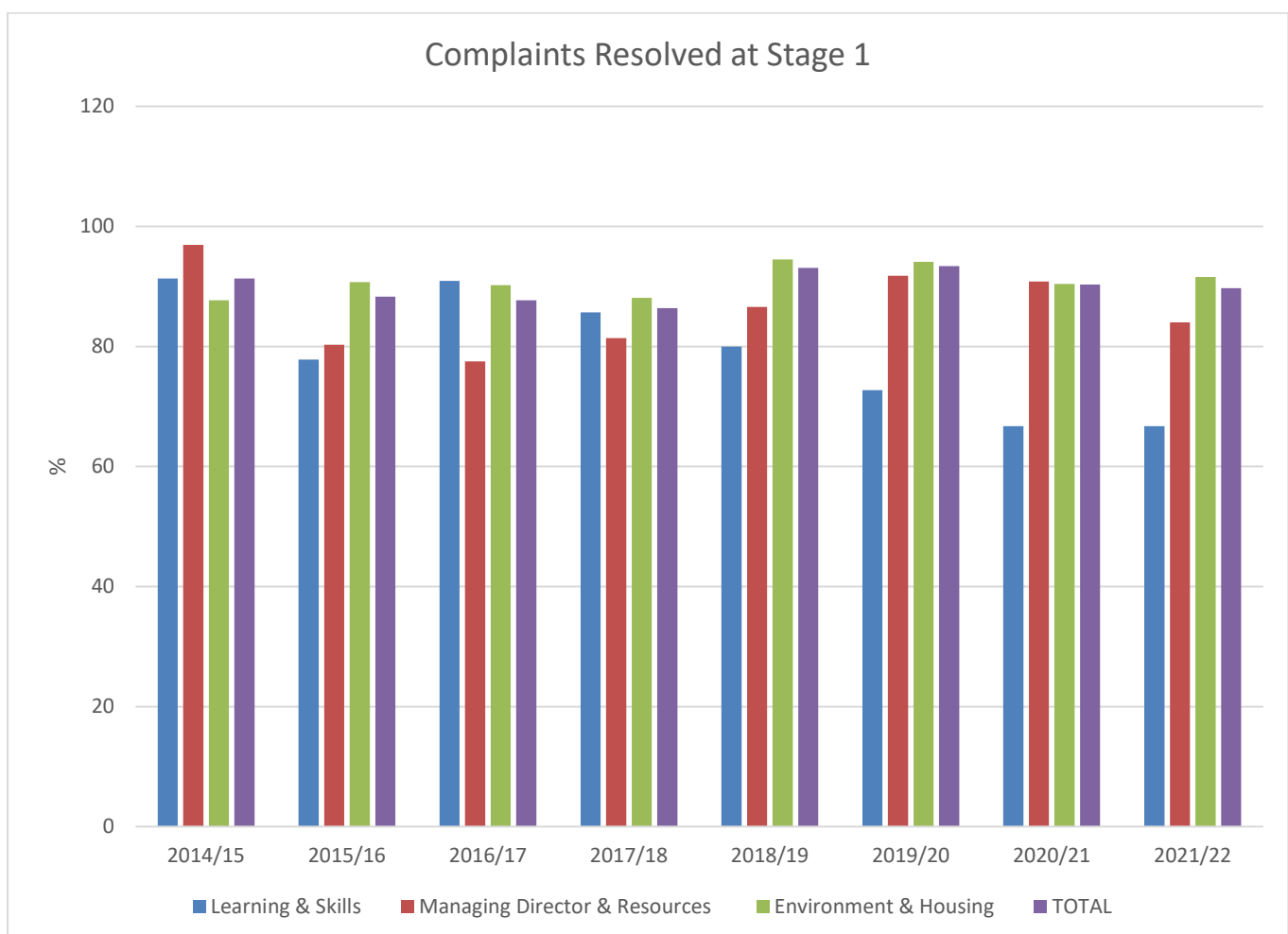
is likely to make the situation worse in the long run and deliver a poorer service to service users

- 5) To make the reporting of compliments as well as complaints easier and to encourage all those with positive stories and examples to share them with Social Services as too many good news stories are not being identified and highlighted

Performance Commentary

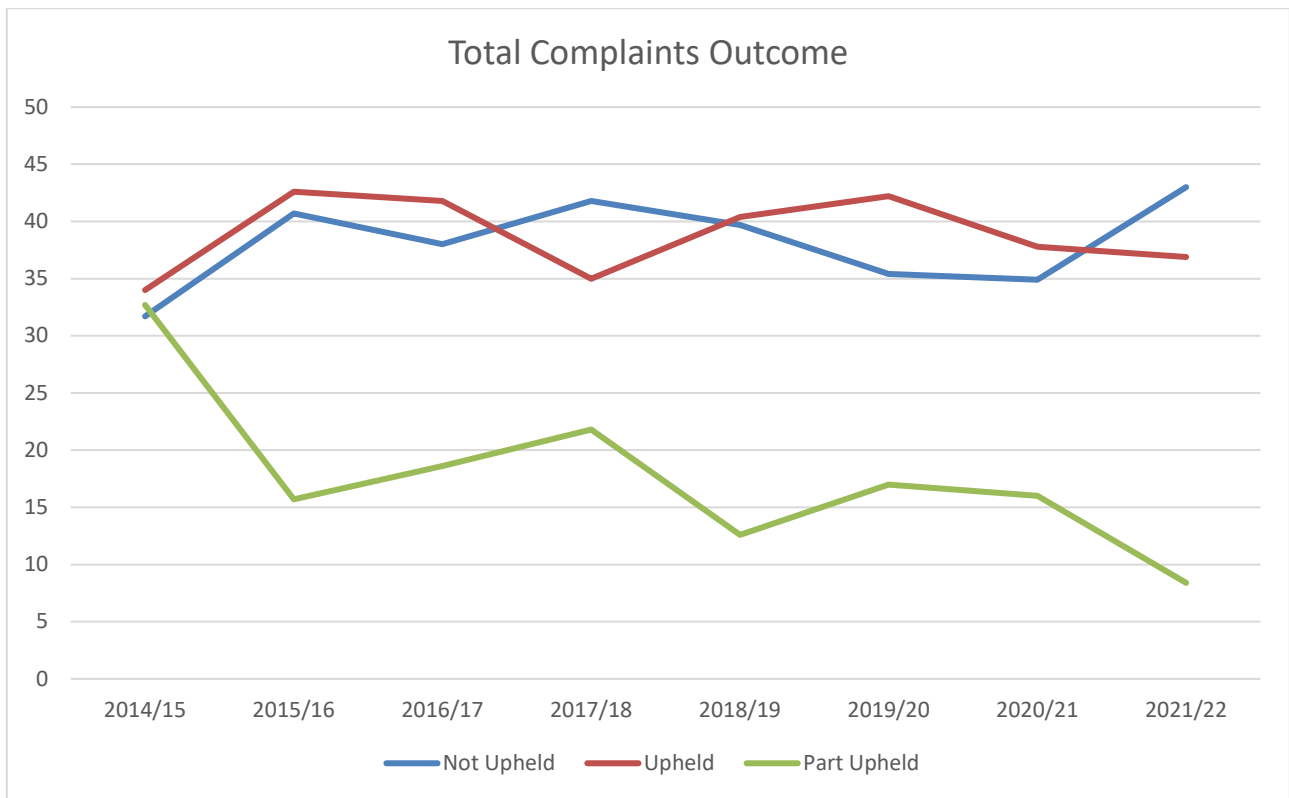
The average number of corporate complaints received per month is **30** (28 in 2020/21), which represents a reduction of 2 complaints against the long-term average of 32. June 2021 had the highest number of complaints made in a single month with 49 complaints. December 2021 and February 2022 showed the lowest number of complaints received, at 17 for each month. With regards to Stage 2 complaints – there is an average of **3 per month**. This compares with an average of 3 per month in 2020/21.

Learning and Skills resolved the lowest number of complaints at Stage 1 at **66.7%**. However, this is based on receiving only 2 Stage 1 complaints. Managing Director & Resources resolved **84%** complaints at Stage 1. Environment and Housing resolved **91.6%** of complaints at Stage 1 in 2020/21. This compares to 90.4% in 2020/21.



Directorate	Percentage (%) Resolved at Stage 1							
	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Learning & Skills	66.7	66.7	72.7	80	85.7	90.9	77.8	91.3
Managing Director & Resources	84	90.8	91.8	86.6	81.4	77.5	80.3	96.9
Environment & Housing	91.6	90.4	94.1	94.5	88.1	90.2	90.7	87.7
TOTAL	89.7	90.2	93.4	93.1	86.4	87.7	88.3	91.3

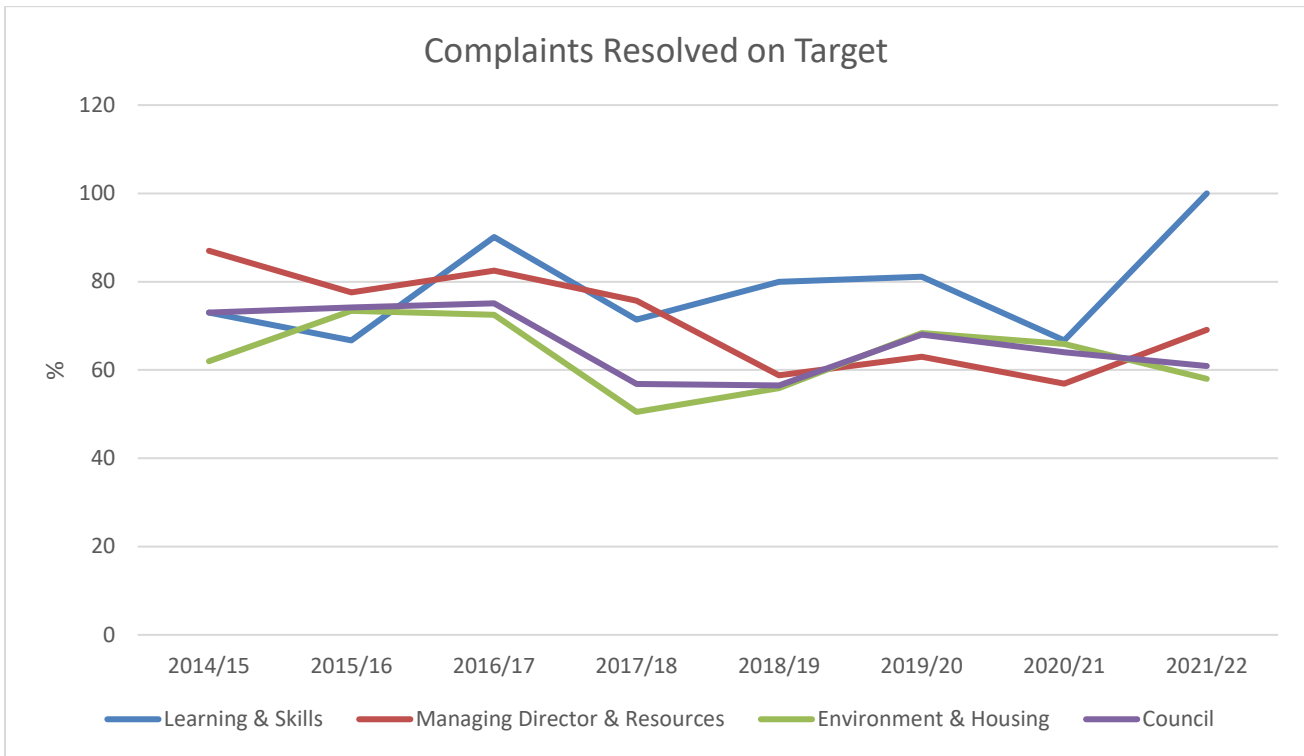
Environment and Housing had the highest percentage of complaints upheld in full or part at **46%**. Managing Director and Resources had the second highest percentage at **43.2%**. Learning and skills had the lowest percentage at **33.3%** this is due to the small number of complaints, 3 in total.



At the time of this report some complaints received during 2021/22 have not yet been resolved.

The percentage of complaints resolved within target time scales for the Council stands at **60.9%** (64.2%). This is a 3.3% point decrease in performance, compared to the previous year.

Directorate	Not Upheld (%)	Upheld (%)	Part Upheld (%)
Learning & Skills			
2021/22	66.7	0	33.3
2020/21	66.7	0	33.3
2019/20	18.2	54.4	27.3
2018/19	60	0	40
2017/18	28.6	35.7	35.7
2016/17	54.5	27.3	18.2
2015/16	0	44.4	55.6
2014/15	31.7	34	32.7
Managing Director & Resources			
2021/2022	44.4	34.6	8.6
2020/21	32.3	38.5	15.4
2019/20	30.1	42.5	19.2
2018/19	57.4	22.1	11.8
2017/18	51.4	30	18.6
2016/17	56.3	26.3	17.5
2015/16	53.9	18.4	27.6
2014/15	23.7	15.3	61.1
Environment & Housing			
2021/22	42.7	38	8
2020/21	35.2	38.1	15.6
2019/20	36.6	41.9	16.4
2018/19	36.0	44.7	12.4
2017/18	39.5	36.7	21.9
2016/17	32.7	46.7	18.6
2015/16	38.3	49	11.4
2014/15	37.4	49.7	9.8
	Not Upheld (%)	Upheld (%)	Part Upheld (%)
Total (excluding Social Services)			
2021/22	43.3	36.9	8.4
2020/21	34.9	37.9	16
2019/20	35.4	42.2	17.0
2018/19	39.7	40.4	12.6
2017/18	41.8	35	21.8
2016/17	38	41.8	18.6
2015/16	40.7	42.6	15.7
2014/15	31.7	34	32.7



Directorate	Resolved within target (%)							
	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Learning & Skills	100	66.7	81.8	80	71.4	90.1	66.7	73
Managing Director & Resources	69.1	56.9	63	58.8	75.7	82.5	77.6	87
Environment & Housing	58	65.9	68.4	55.9	50.5	72.5	73.4	62
Council	60.9	64.2	68	56.5	56.8	75.1	74.2	73

Learning and Skills performance was **100%**, a 33.3%point increase based on 2020/21. Managing Director and Resources achieved the second highest percentage of complaints resolved within target at **69.1%**; this is an increase of 12.2%points on the previous year. The corporate average is **60.9%**.

What were the causes of complaints?

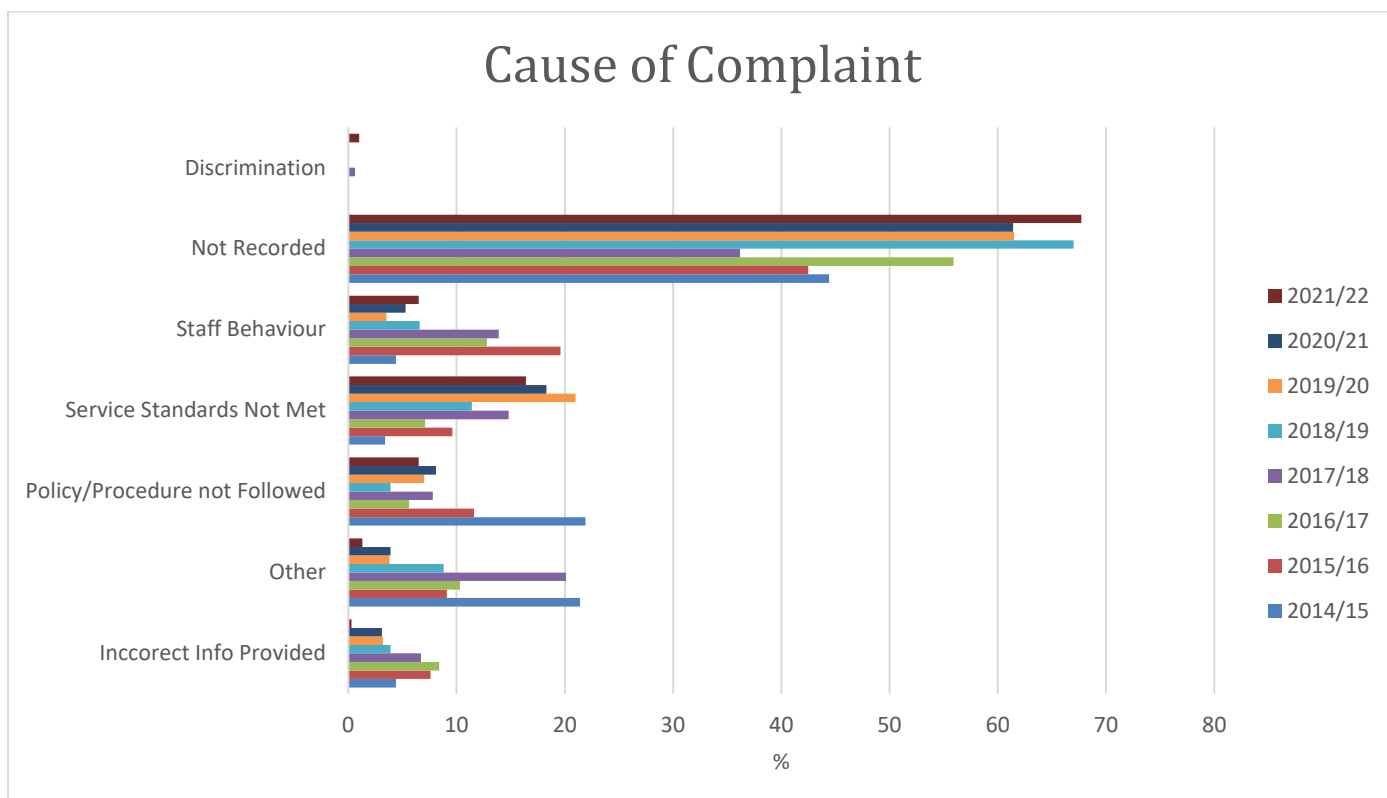
There may be more than one cause of a complaint. The Oracle CRM system is set up to reflect this. In total, the cause of complaint was recorded in only **32.3%** (38.8% in 2020/21) of cases. This is an decrease of **6.5%** compared to 2020/21. **67.7%** were not recorded and represents an area for improvement going forward. More information of this type being recorded will provide a greater insight into what customers want from our services and how we might be able to improve to reduce the number of complaints being received in the future.

Reasons for the generation of complaints are categorised as:

- Incorrect Information provided
- Other
- Policy / Procedure Not Followed
- Service Standards Not Met
- Staff Behaviour
- Discrimination (since January 2017)

Where recorded (**67.7% were not recorded**) the highest reason for the cause of complaints at council level is Service Standards Not Met at **16.4%**. Staff Behaviour was up to **6.5%** from 5.3% in 2020/21. The least frequent cause was Incorrect Information provided at **1.3%** (3.1% in 2020/21).

Where recorded the most frequent cause of complaint in Environment and Housing was Service Standards Not Met at **19.7%** (in 2020/21 the most frequent cause was Service Standards Not Met at 20.8%). In Learning and Skills **33.3%** was caused by Policy and Process not followed (in 2020/21 they did not have the cause of complaint recorded). In Managing Director & Resources the most frequent cause related to Policy and Process Not Followed and Staff Behaviour both at **7.1%** (in 2020/21 – it was Service Standards not met and Staff Behaviour both at 9.7%).



Area	Year	Incorrect Info provided (%)	Other (%)	Policy / Procedure not Followed (%)	Service Standards not met (%)	Staff Behaviour (%)	Not recorded (%)	Discrimination (%)
Learning & Skills	2021/22	0	0	33.3	0	0	66.7	0
	2020/21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2019/20	8.3	0	0	0	8.3	83.3	0
	2018/19	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
	2017/18	13.6	0	13.6	18.2	18.2	36.4	0
	2016/17	17.6	11.8	11.8	5.9	29.4	23.5	-
	2015/16	12.5	0	18.8	18.8	12.5	37.5	-
	2014/15	0	0	100	0	0	0	-
Managing Director & Resources	2021/22	2.4	0	7.1	5.9	7.1	77.6	0
	2020/21	2.8	2.8	5.6	9.7	9.7	69.4	0
	2019/20	6.4	6.4	9	10.3	7.7	60.3	0
	2018/19	1.3	14.5	9.2	18.4	9.2	47.4	0
	2017/18	12	12	13	20.7	18.5	22.8	1.1
	2016/17	17.2	14.7	12.1	10.3	25.9	19.8	-
	2015/16	10.6	11.7	9.6	12.8	16	39.4	-
	2014/15	2	35.8	37.3	2.9	3.9	18.1	-
Environment & Housing	2021/22	1	1.8	6	19.7	6.3	64.8	0.4
	2020/21	3.2	4.2	8.8	20.8	4.2	58.8	0
	2019/20	2.5	3.5	6.9	23.1	2.7	61.2	0
	2018/19	2.9	7.7	6.1	10.1	6.1	70.4	0
	2017/18	4	24.9	5.3	12.2	11.8	41.2	0.4
	2016/17	4.8	8.7	3	6	7.5	70.1	-
	2015/16	6.5	8.6	11.8	8.3	21	43.8	-
	2014/15	7.5	5.2	2.9	4	5.2	75.1	-
Total	2021/22	1.3	1.3	6.5	16.4	6.5	67.7	0.3
	2020/21	3.1	3.9	8.1	18.4	5.3	61.3	0
	2019/20	3.2	3.8	7	21	3.5	61.5	0
	2018/19	3.9	8.8	3.9	11.4	6.6	67	0
	2017/18	6.7	20.1	7.8	14.8	13.9	36.2	0.6
	2016/17	8.4	10.3	5.6	7.1	12.8	55.9	-
	2015/16	7.6	9.1	11.6	9.6	19.6	42.5	-
	2014/15	4.4	21.4	21.9	3.4	4.4	44.4	-

What was learnt from the complaints?

Actions taken as a result of complaints broadly reflect the causes. Key Learning Points are categorised as:

- Review & Amend Systems
- Review & Revise Information / Communication
- Review & Revise Policies / Procedures
- Review Service Standards
- Staff Training & Development
- No Learning (previously Not Applicable)

A total of **88.5%** (85.8% in 2020/21) of complaints had no learning point recorded. This is 2.7% higher than in 2020/21. These responses are mostly associated with complaints that were upheld/part upheld (162 complaints). The remaining figures were 155 not upheld and 41 open or under investigation. While there is sufficient data (11.5%) on which to analyse the corporate response to complaints, more information would provide for a higher level of confidence in drawing conclusions from this data.

Environment and Housing had the largest percentage of complaints with no learning at **92%** (it was Learning and Skills with 100% in 2020/21), whereas the lowest figure was Learning and Skills at **66.7%**.

Where there was learning from complaints (in **14.5%** of complaints) the information at a Council level shows 2 main areas, namely Staff Training and Development at **5.6%** (5.3% in 2020/21) and Review and Revise Information at **2.2%** (4.1% in 2020/21). Comparing the performance in 2020/21 to 2021/22 there was an increase in the Staff Training and Development of **0.3%** and a decrease in Review and Revise Information of **1.9%**. The others at Council level in 2021/22 varied between **1.7%** (Review and Amend Systems), **1.4%** (Review Service Standards) and (Review and Revise Policies and Procedures) **0.6%**.

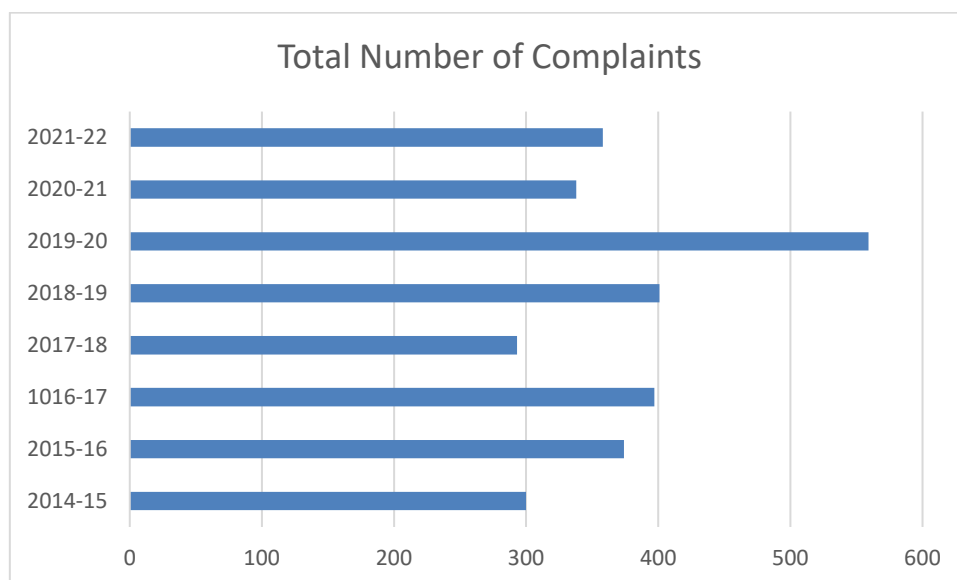
Review and Revise Information was the highest figure in Learning and Skills at **33.3%**. Please note the small number of complaints received in the areas which shows a higher percentage. Managing Director and Resources showed the second highest for Staff Training at **16%** followed by Environment and Housing showing **2.6%** for Review and Revise Information. However, as there is limited information on the learning outcomes this may not be a true reflection of learning from complaints.

Area	Year	No Learning (%)	Review Systems (%)	Review Information (%)	Review procedures (%)	Review Service Standards (%)	Staff Training (%)
Learning & Skills	2021/22	66.7	0	33.3	0	0	0
	2020/21	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2019/20	27.3	18.2	18.2	0	9.1	27.3
	2018/19	60	40	0	0	0	0
	2017/18	42.9	7.1	14.3	14.3	0	21.4
	2016/17	54.5	9.1	27.3	9.1	0	0
	2015/16	66.7	11.1	11.1	0	0	11.1
	2014/15	66.7	0	16.7	0	0	16.7
Managing Director & Resources	2021/22	77.8	3.7	0	1.2	1.2	16
	2020/21	67.7	3.1	4.6	1.5	3.1	20
	2019/20	56.2	4.1	4.1	1.4	11	23.3
	2018/19	73.5	0	2.9	1.5	10.3	11.8
	2017/18	45.7	0	12.9	2.9	1.4	37.1
	2016/17	60	6.3	12.5	5	2.5	13.8
	2015/16	64.5	6.6	5.3	1.3	0	22.4
	2014/15	33.6	2.3	55	2.3	0	6.9
Environment & Housing	2021/22	92	1.1	2.6	0.2	1.5	2.6
	2020/21	90	1.9	4.1	0	2.2	1.9
	2019/20	88.8	0	0.4	0.4	4.8	5.5
	2018/19	64	2	3.5	0.3	19	11.2
	2017/18	65.7	1	10	4.3	3.3	15.7
	2016/17	42.2	2.9	7.2	2	25.8	19.9
	2015/16	41	5.5	4.1	6.2	1.4	41.7
	2014/15	39.3	8.6	10.4	2.5	1.2	38
Council	2021/22	88.5	1.7	2.2	0.6	1.4	5.6
	2020/21	85.8	2.1	4.1	0.3	2.4	5.3
	2019/20	83.4	0.9	1.3	0.5	5.7	8.2
	2018/19	65.6	2.1	3.3	0.5	17.3	11.2
	2017/18	59.9	1	10.9	4.4	2.7	21.1
	2016/17	46.1	3.8	8.8	2.8	20.4	18.1
	2015/16	46.5	5.9	4.5	5.1	1.1	37
	2014/15	37.3	5.7	30	2.3	0.7	24

Lessons Learned

For the Council as a whole, the highest response to customer complaints was to provide 'staff training', with the second highest action being to 'review and revise information'.

Conclusion



Year	Number of Complaints
2014/15	300
2015/16	374
2016/17	397
2017/18	293
2018/19	401
2019/20	559
2020/21	338
2021/22	358

It is likely that changes to service provision and customer expectations as a result of the impact of the Corona Virus pandemic continued to influence the volume of complaints received during the year under review and on the Council's response performance.

The number of recorded Corporate complaints has increased by **20** since 2020/21. The 2021/22 figure of **358** complaints have been recorded on Oracle CRM.

Customer satisfaction with the way complaints are investigated appears to continue to be high with over 89.7% not escalating past Stage 1 of the policy, following the long-term trend.

Declining trends in the percentage of complaints that are resolved against target time scales and in the percentage of complaints where a cause and learning outcome are recorded have been continued.

Equality Survey

An online Equality Survey is available for members of the public to complete following the submission of the online complaints form. As of the date of this report **51** responses have been received (**22** in 2020/21).

It is not possible to draw any conclusions regarding the accessibility of the complaints process based on this very small sample size.

Of those who provided data, there 47% were male, 41% were female and 8% preferred not to say. The following age range completed the online form (2 people did not provide the information):

Under 18 - 1 person

26 to 35 - 3 people

36 to 45 - 6 people

46 to 55 - 7 people

56 to 65 years – 10 people

66 to 75 – 17 people

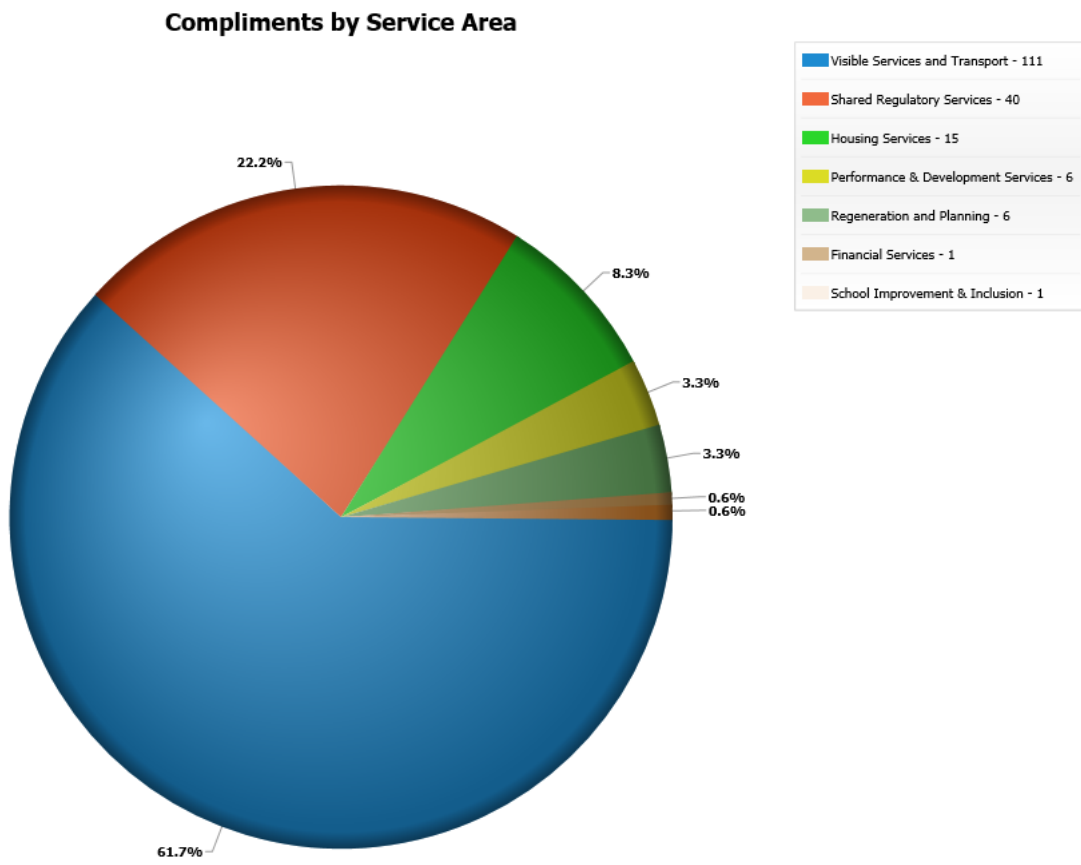
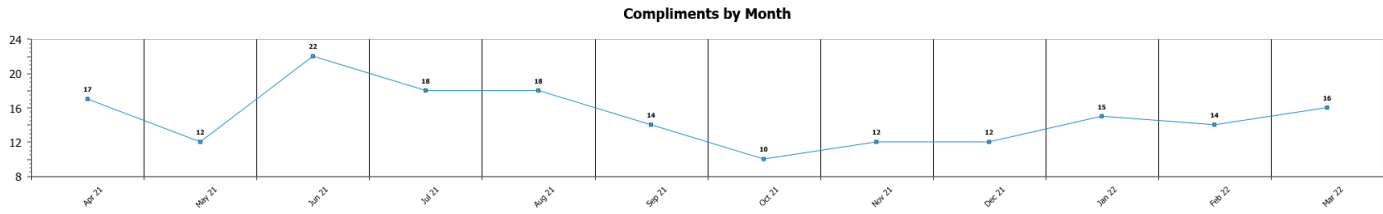
75+ - 4 people

75% of the complainants were aged 46 or over. Only 1 complaint was received from a customer under 18, despite the ability to record Corporate Complaints online. **35%** of the complaints were from customers whose day-to-day activities were limited by some form of disability. Further promotional work will be undertaken in 2022/23 to ensure that under-represented groups, and in particular younger citizens, are aware of the complaints process and how it can be accessed.

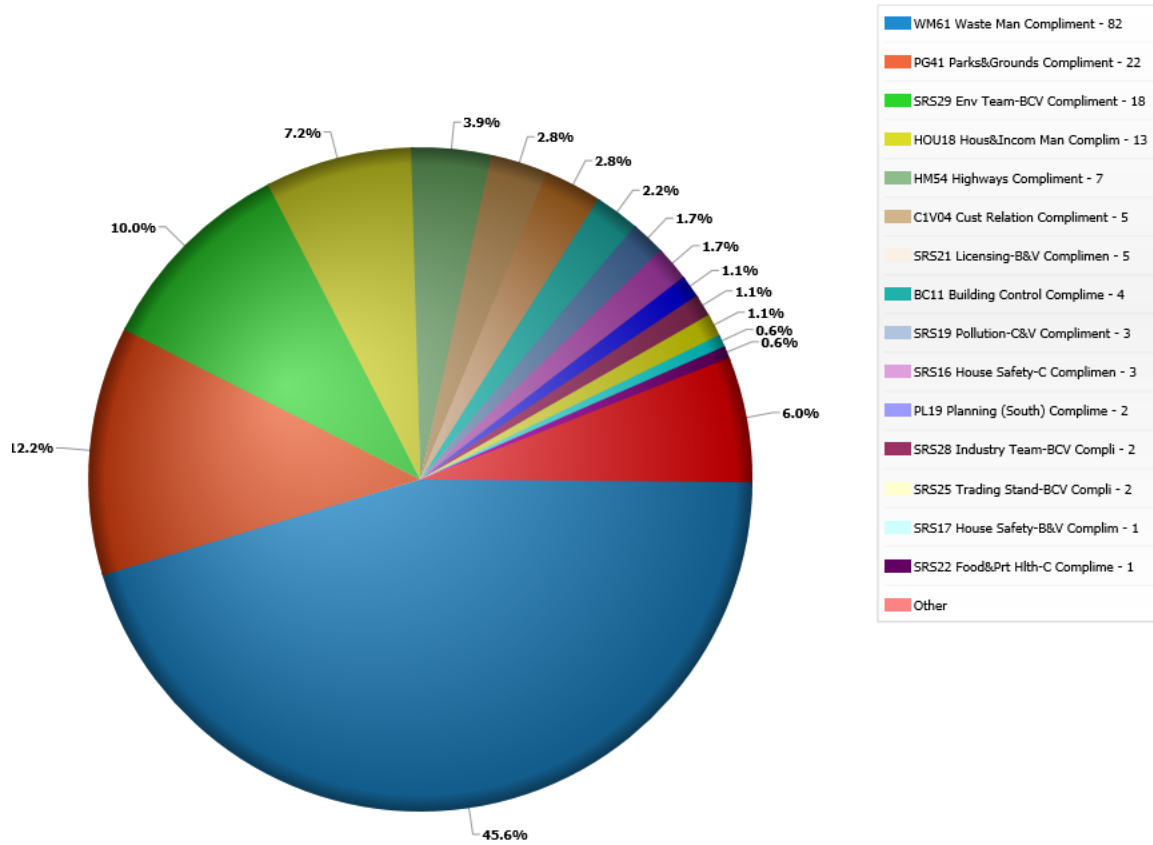
Compliments

Compliments can be recorded using Oracle CRM. The compliments received from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 are set out below by Service Request Type and Service Area. During 2021/22 a total of **180** (158 in 2020/21) compliments were received and recorded. The Service Areas that had the top 3 number of compliments are listed, namely Environment and Housing received **126** compliments, which was 70% of the total. Shared Regulatory Services received **40**, Performance and Development received **6** and Regeneration and Planning received **6**.

The top 3 Service Request Types, in respect of the number of compliments received during 2021/22 were **82** for Waste Management; this is 45.5% of the total recorded. SRS received **35** and Parks and Grounds received **22** compliments.



Compliments by SR Type



Areas for future work

As previously stated in this report the key focus of performance improvement are:

- Percentage of complaints received with target time scale
- Identifying causes of complaints
- Identifying learning outcomes from complaints

In addition to these, effort is required to increase the amount of equalities data collected to ensure that all sections of our community are able to access and utilise the complaints procedure.

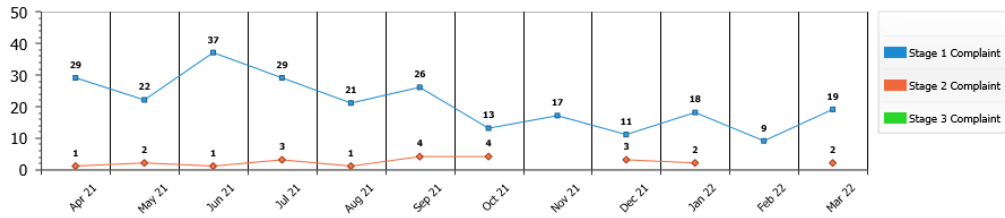
It is anticipated that Complaints will begin to be recorded on the Council's new Digital Customer Experience Platform – GovService during Quarter 2 2022/23. The new platform will provide additional functionality which can be harnessed to improve performance in the area's highlighted.

- Email notifications to complaint owners and managers based on resolution deadlines
- Ability to “stop the clock” on complaints when waiting for information from the customer to progress
- Allowing residents to record and track progress of their own complaints via a customer portal
- Ensuring that the cause of complaints must be recorded prior to a complaint being closed
- Ensuring that the cause of complaints must be recorded prior to a complaint being closed
- Providing managers with real time reports on complaints
- Automatic email to complainants on resolution with a link to an equalities form to improve the volume and quality of data received.

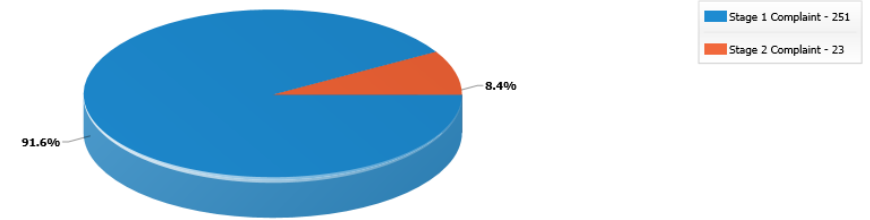
This additional functionality will support improvements in performance and data collection.

APPENDIX 1 - Environment and Housing 2021-22

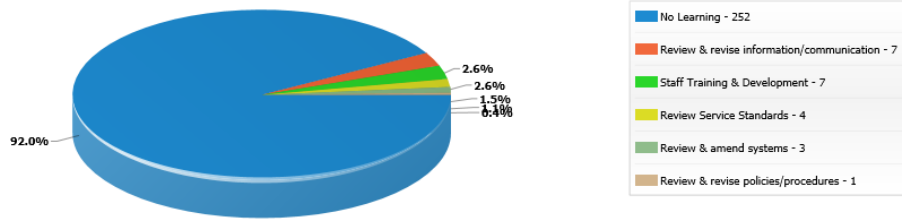
Monthly Complaints



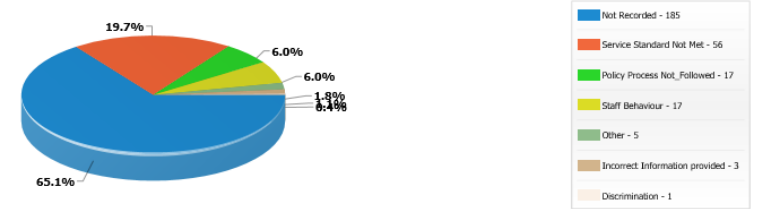
Complaint Resolution Stage



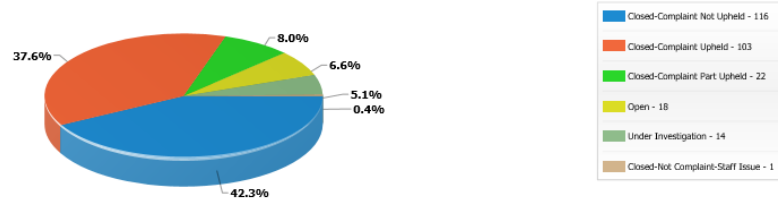
Key Learning Points



Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome

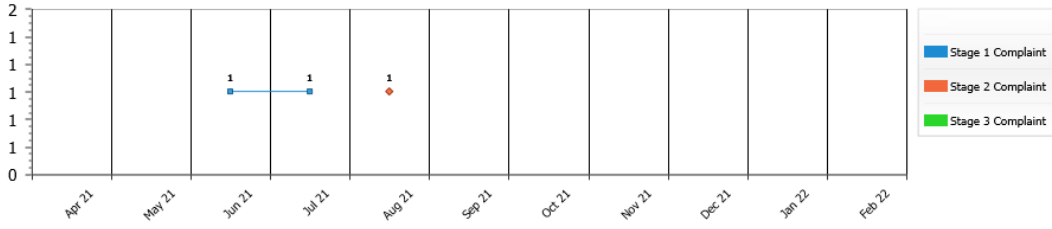


On Target

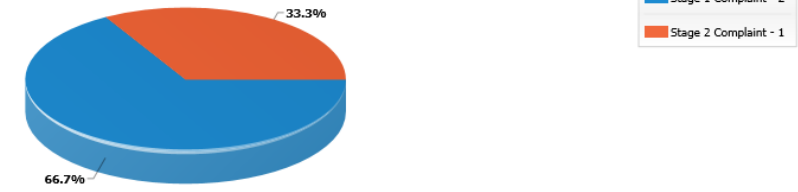


APPENDIX 2 - Learning and Skills 2021-22

Monthly Complaints



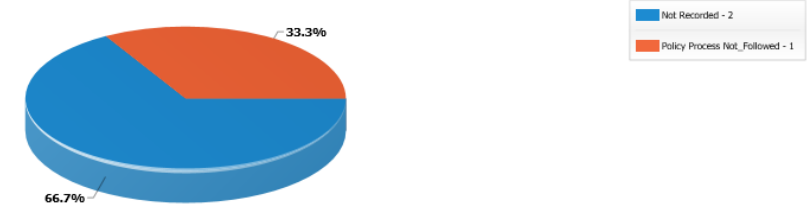
Complaint Resolution Stage



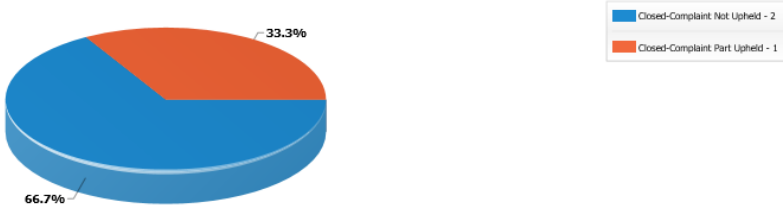
Key Learning Points



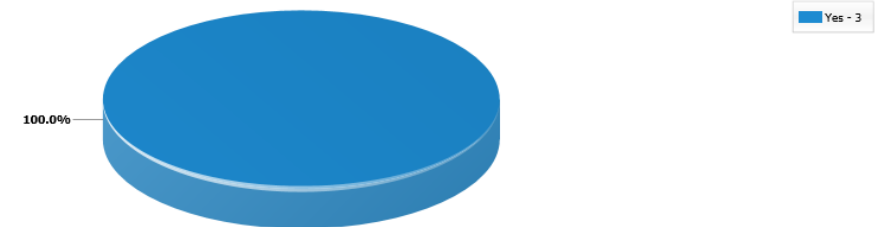
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome

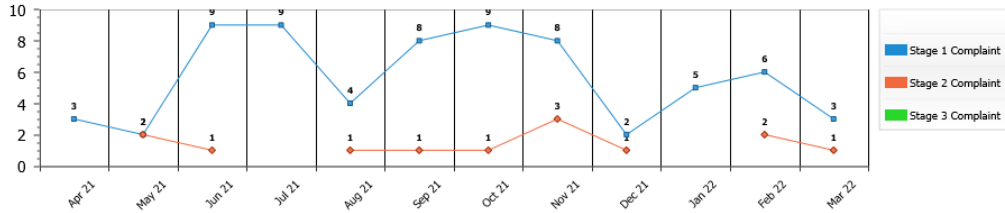


On Target

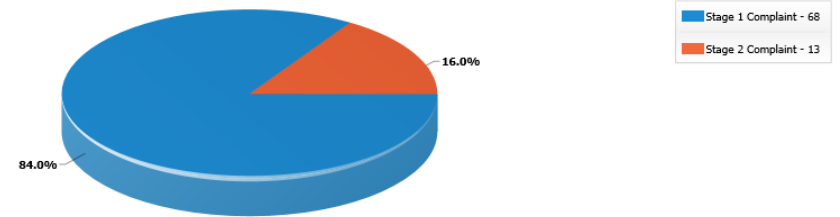


APPENDIX 3 - Managing Director & Resources 2021-22

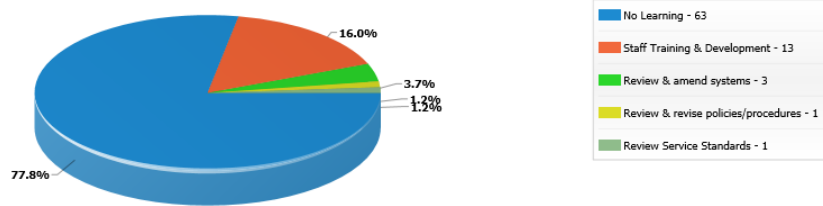
Monthly Complaints



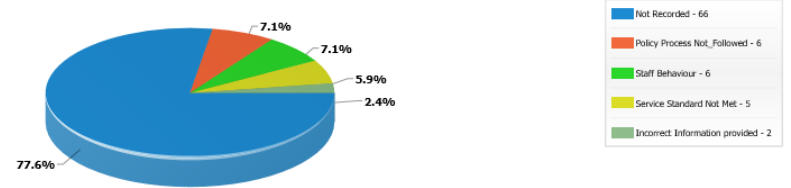
Complaint Resolution Stage



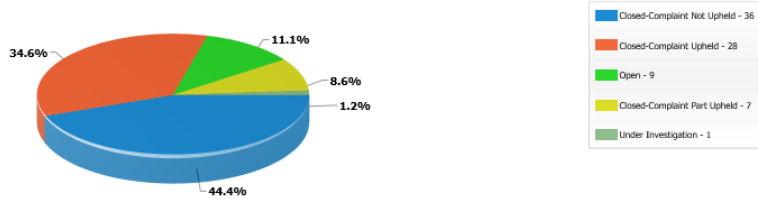
Key Learning Points



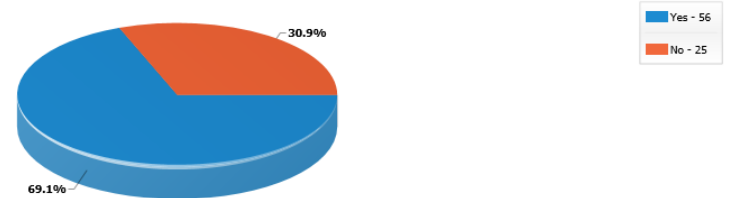
Cause Of Complaint




Complaints by Outcome




On Target



Ask for: Communications

 01656 641150

Date: August 2022

 communications@ombudsman.wales

Cllr. Lis Burnett
Vale of Glamorgan Council
By Email only: lburnett@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Annual Letter 2021/22

Dear Councillor Burnett

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2021/22) for Vale of Glamorgan Council which deals with complaints relating to maladministration and service failure, complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and the actions being taken to improve public services

This is my first annual letter since taking up the role of Public Services Ombudsman in April 2022, and I appreciate that the effects of the pandemic are still being felt by all public bodies in Wales. Our office has not been immune from this, with records numbers of cases being referred to us over the last two years. The strong working relationships between my Office and local authorities continues to deliver improvements in how we are dealing with complaints and ensuring that, when things go wrong, we are learning from that and building stronger public services.

Complaints relating to Maladministration & Service Failure

Last year the number of complaints referred to us regarding Local Authorities increased by 47% (compared to 20/21 figures) and are now well above pre-pandemic levels. It is likely that complaints to my office, and public services in general, were suppressed during the pandemic, and we are now starting to see the expected 'rebound' effect.

During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) a similar proportion of complaints about public bodies, 18%, when compared with recent years. Intervention rates (where we have investigated complaints) for Local Authorities also remained at a similar level – 14% compared to 13% in recent years.

Complaints relating to the Code of Conduct for Councillors

We also received a high number of Code of Conduct complaints last year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils. A record number (20) were referred to either the Adjudication Panel for Wales or local standards committees, due to evidence of a breach of the Code.

Supporting improvement of public services

In addition to managing record levels of complaints, we also continued our work using our proactive powers in the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. Specifically undertaking our first Own Initiative Investigation and continuing our work on the Complaints Standards Authority.

October 2021 saw the publication of the first own initiative investigation in Wales: [Homelessness Reviewed](#). The investigation featured three Local Authorities and sought to scrutinise the way Homelessness assessments were conducted. The report made specific recommendations to the investigated authorities, as well as suggestions to all other Local Authorities in Wales and Welsh Government. Some of these recommendations will bring about immediate change – updating factsheets and letter and assessment templates to ensure that key equality and human rights considerations are routinely embedded into processes for example – all the recommendations were designed to bring about tangible change to people using homelessness services in Wales.

The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) continued its work with public bodies in Wales last year. The model complaints policy has already been adopted by local authorities and health boards in Wales, we have now extended this to an initial tranche of Housing Associations and Natural Resources Wales. The aim being to implement this work across the Welsh public sector.

In addition to this, the CSA published information on complaints handled by local authorities for the [first time](#) – a key achievement for this work. The data for 21/22 showed:

- Over 15,000 complaints were recorded by Local Authorities
- 4.88 for every 1000 residents.
- Nearly half (46%) of those complaints were upheld.
- About 75% were investigated within 20 working days.
- About 8% of all complaints closed ended up being referred to PSOW.

The CSA has now implemented a model complaints policy with nearly 50 public bodies, and delivered 140 training sessions, completely free of charge, during the last financial year. The feedback has been excellent, and the training has been very popular - so I would encourage Vale of Glamorgan Council to engage as fully as possible.

Complaints made to the Ombudsman

A summary of the complaints of maladministration/service failure received relating to your Council is attached, along with a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints relating to members of the Council and the Town & Community Councils in your area.

In light of the new duties on political leaders and standards committees to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members, we look forward to working with you, your Monitoring Officer and standards committees to share any learning from the complaints we receive and to support your authority's work.

I would also welcome feedback on your Governance & Audit Committee's review of your authority's ability to handle complaints effectively so that we can take this into account in our work and support its work on the handling of complaints.

Finally, can I thank you and your officials for the positive way that local authorities have engaged with my Office to enable us to deliver these achievements during what has been a challenging year for everyone. I very much look forward to continuing this work and collaboration to ensure we further improve public services across Wales.

Further to this letter can I ask that your Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance & Audit Committee to assist members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance and share any feedback from the Cabinet and the Governance & Audit Committee with my office.
- Continue to engage with our Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff, fully implementing the model policy, and providing complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by 30 September.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of your Council and to your Contact Officer. Finally, a copy of all Annual Letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Morris

Public Services Ombudsman

cc. Rob Thomas, Chief Executive, Vale of Glamorgan Council.

By Email only: DRThomas@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Received per 1000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	14	0.20
Bridgend County Borough Council	55	0.37
Caerphilly County Borough Council	60	0.33
Cardiff Council*	182	0.50
Carmarthenshire County Council	54	0.29
Ceredigion County Council	52	0.72
Conwy County Borough Council	27	0.23
Denbighshire County Council	34	0.36
Flintshire County Council	99	0.63
Gwynedd Council	39	0.31
Isle of Anglesey County Council	29	0.41
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	27	0.45
Monmouthshire County Council	20	0.21
Neath Port Talbot Council	45	0.31
Newport City Council	40	0.26
Pembrokeshire County Council	39	0.31
Powys County Council	55	0.42
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	51	0.21
Swansea Council	71	0.29
Torfaen County Borough Council	18	0.19
Vale of Glamorgan Council	61	0.46
Wrexham County Borough Council	71	0.52
Total	1143	0.36

* inc 17 Rent Smart Wales

Appendix B - Received by Subject

Vale of Glamorgan Council	Complaints Received	% Share
Adult Social Services	2	3%
Benefits Administration	2	3%
Children's Social Services	5	8%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	2	3%
Complaints Handling	10	16%
Covid19	1	2%
Education	2	3%
Environment and Environmental Health	4	7%
Finance and Taxation	1	2%
Housing	14	23%
Licensing	1	2%
Planning and Building Control	13	21%
Roads and Transport	3	5%
Various Other	1	2%
Total	61	

Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes (* denotes intervention)

County/County Borough Councils	Out of Jurisdiction	Premature	Other cases closed after initial consideration	Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	Discontinued	Other Reports- Not Upheld	Other Reports Upheld*	Public Interest Report*	Total
Vale of Glamorgan Council	8	25	20	7	0	0	2	0	62
% Share	13%	40%	32%	11%	0%	0%	3%	0%	

Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	13	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	7	54	13%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	7	58	12%
Cardiff Council	45	159	28%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	1	16	6%
Carmarthenshire County Council	7	49	14%
Ceredigion County Council	13	46	28%
Conwy County Borough Council	2	24	8%
Denbighshire County Council	4	33	12%
Flintshire County Council	15	94	16%
Gwynedd Council	6	41	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	3	28	11%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2	26	8%
Monmouthshire County Council	2	21	10%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	45	11%
Newport City Council	4	36	11%
Pembrokeshire County Council	2	40	5%
Powys County Council	7	55	13%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	3	45	7%
Swansea Council	10	76	13%
Torfaen County Borough Council	2	20	10%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	9	62	15%
Wrexham County Borough Council	4	67	6%
Total	160	1108	14%

Appendix E - Code of Conduct Complaints

County/County Borough Councils	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Refer to Standards Committee	Withdrawn	Total
Vale of Glamorgan Council	0	10	0	0	1	0	11

Appendix F - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

Town/Community Council	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Refer to Standards Committee	Withdrawn	Total
Barry Town Council	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
St Athan Community Council	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Sully and Lavernock Community Council	0	1	0	0	1	0	2

Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2021/2022. These complaints are contextualised by the number of people each health board reportedly serves.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2021/2022. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2021/2022. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the outcomes of Code Of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2021/2022. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.