

# Have your say

## 4Cs Annual Update



2021-2022

# Introduction

This report presents our first year (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022) summary of our Have Your Say (4Cs) approach.

Our 4Cs approach covers Compliments, Comments, Concerns and Formal Complaints – we encourage residents to give us their views, and these are captured and reported through our digital platform, Liberty Create.

Whilst there is not a statutory requirement for us to report the details contained within this report, we recognise the importance of ensuring our customers feel they will be:

- Listened to.
- Treated honestly, fairly, and politely.
- Given help and advice as quickly as we can.
- Individual needs and right to privacy will be respected.
- Kept informed about what is happening.

This annual report provides an overview of how we are performing in respect of customers' feedback to us and helps to inform our Customer Care Standards and our customer first Council Plan (2020- 2024) priority.

We are pleased to report that overall, the number of complaints received in 21/22 is 30% lower than the previous year. This continues the established four-year trend of reducing the number of complaints we receive year-on-year.

This is the first report covering our comments, concerns, and compliments, which were introduced following the launch of our digital platform. By widening the options available for our customers to feedback to us, we can get a better understanding of any performance trends or areas of concern. Building it on our platform also means customers can get in touch with us about any issue they wish to at a time that suits them.

# Contents

Introduction	1
Compliments	2
Comments	4
Concerns	5
Formal complaints	6
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints	11
Lessons Learnt	12
What is next?	13
Appendix One - LGSCO Annual Review Letter	14



# 1. Compliments

We let our residents know that we consider a compliment to be 'a polite expression of praise or admiration for a service received'.

Compliments can be received in various methods, including phone, email and through our online compliments form.

Last year, we received 75 compliments, which is a 56.25% increase when compared to the 48 received in 2020/21.

Here is a selection of the compliments we received.

## Business Grants team

'Thanks for your help in my incompetence, excellent help from you, I wish everyone was as helpful! You should forward this e-mail to your boss and they should give you a rise!'

## Corporate Services

'Thank you, your help has definitely improved my view of the council considerably.'

## Customer Services

'... You are a star and I think you should be promoted - so if your boss needs a recommendation for you, please get her to email me! Thanks again for sorting all this out!'

## Economic and Community Development

'....You've demonstrated kindness, patience and professionalism in terms of making me aware of the possibility, explaining the guidelines within which the Fund could be used and listening as I share the needs of the Festival in the aftermath of covid...'

'...Your contribution towards the project has enable all of this to happen. The club has some fantastic plans for the future and the facilities will enable them to be delivered. This will not only benefit our members but also the wider community. Thank you so much for supporting us in this project. We look forward to sharing the success of it with you into the future.'



## Environmental Health

'Just wanted to thank you for your support and going the extra mile for us. We really appreciate all that you've done.'

## Grounds maintenance/cleansing

'A wonderful job the grounds maintenance team has done with cutting all the grass and verges around the village - who ever cut all the grass has done a super job!!'

A huge thanks to the crew that swept the road earlier this week - it and the paths were the cleanest I have ever seen! An amazing job!

## Licensing

'It has been an absolute pleasure coming here to deal with Tewkesbury Borough Council'

## Parking

'Good afternoon, My wife and I have just spent another fantastic few days in Tewkesbury and when went to your car park behind the Abbey we saw your sign stating that we could park free of charge due to the work being carried out. We wanted to complement you for your forethought and common sense approach and wanted to thank you. It is a shame that the majority of other councils don't follow your example. Once again thank you and well done.'

## Planning

'Thank you so much for your help. I'm speechless how quickly you have done this for all concerned. Thank you once again.'

'Hi XXX, Just wanted to get in touch to say thanks for your engagement on our project over the past year. We are obviously thrilled to have planning approved, so really appreciate you working with us to find a way forwards.'

## Revenue and Benefits

'Thank you so much for some fab joined up working. It's been a lovely experience dealing with you.'

## Waste and Recycling

'To all the recycling and waste collectors at Tewks BC, who he stands in the window waiting for every Tuesday morning...he loves the 'orange men in the lorry'. We can see how busy you are but you still take the time to wave to him and make his waiting all worthwhile. I've seen you tap your colleagues on the shoulder or shout and point them towards the little boy standing mesmerised in the window so that they too can give him a wave and make his day. Your kindness bowls us over. Thank you.'

# 2. Comments

We let our residents know that we consider a comment to be 'a verbal or written remark expressing an opinion or reaction about a standard of service, policy or decision made by Tewkesbury Borough Council.'

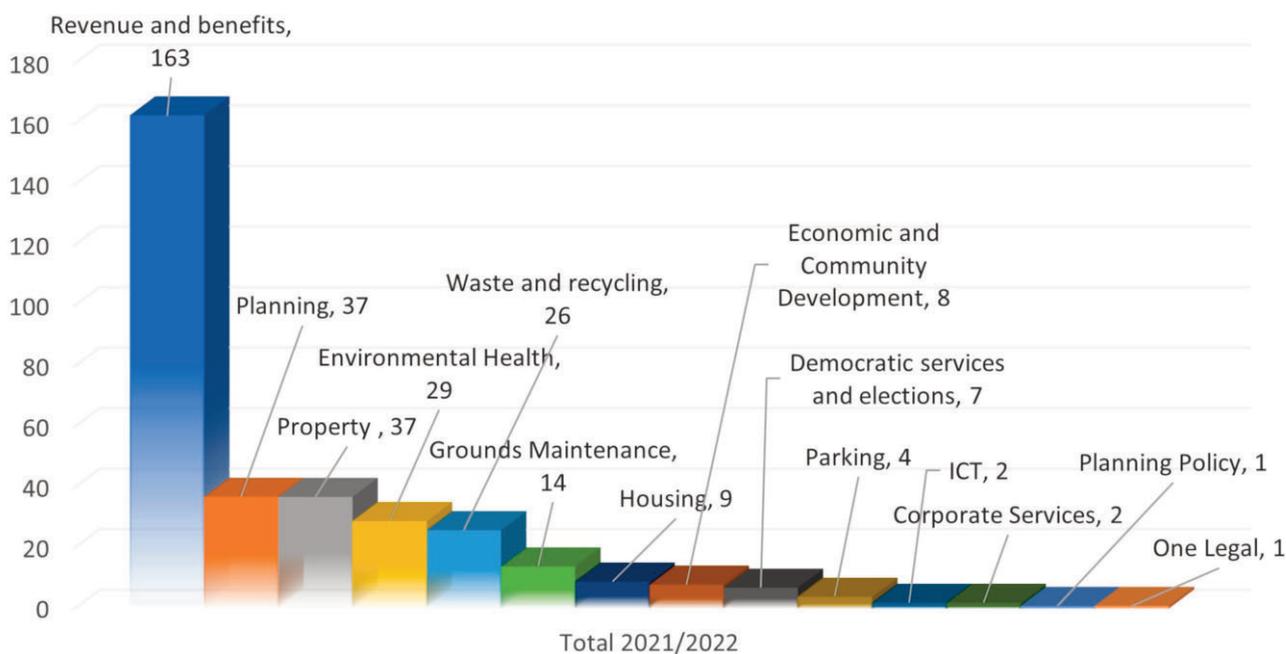
During the year we received 340 comments through the 'comment' option online.

Comments are the responsibility of the service area to ensure they are responded to effectively and efficiently in line with our customer standards and 'have your say' approach.

Examples of comments received during the year include enquiries relating to S106, how to apply for licenses, planning application queries, change of circumstances for council tax accounts, council tax payments, and queries relating to the Jubilee.

During 2022/23, work will be carried out to get a better understanding of the response timescales for comments, as well as the types of comments being received.

The chart below shows a breakdown of comments received by service area:



# 3. Concerns

We let our residents know that we consider a concern to be 'something that is bothering the customer, but they don't feel they need to go through our more formal complaints procedure route to reach a resolution'. An example of a common concern is if a bin has been missed on more than one occasion.

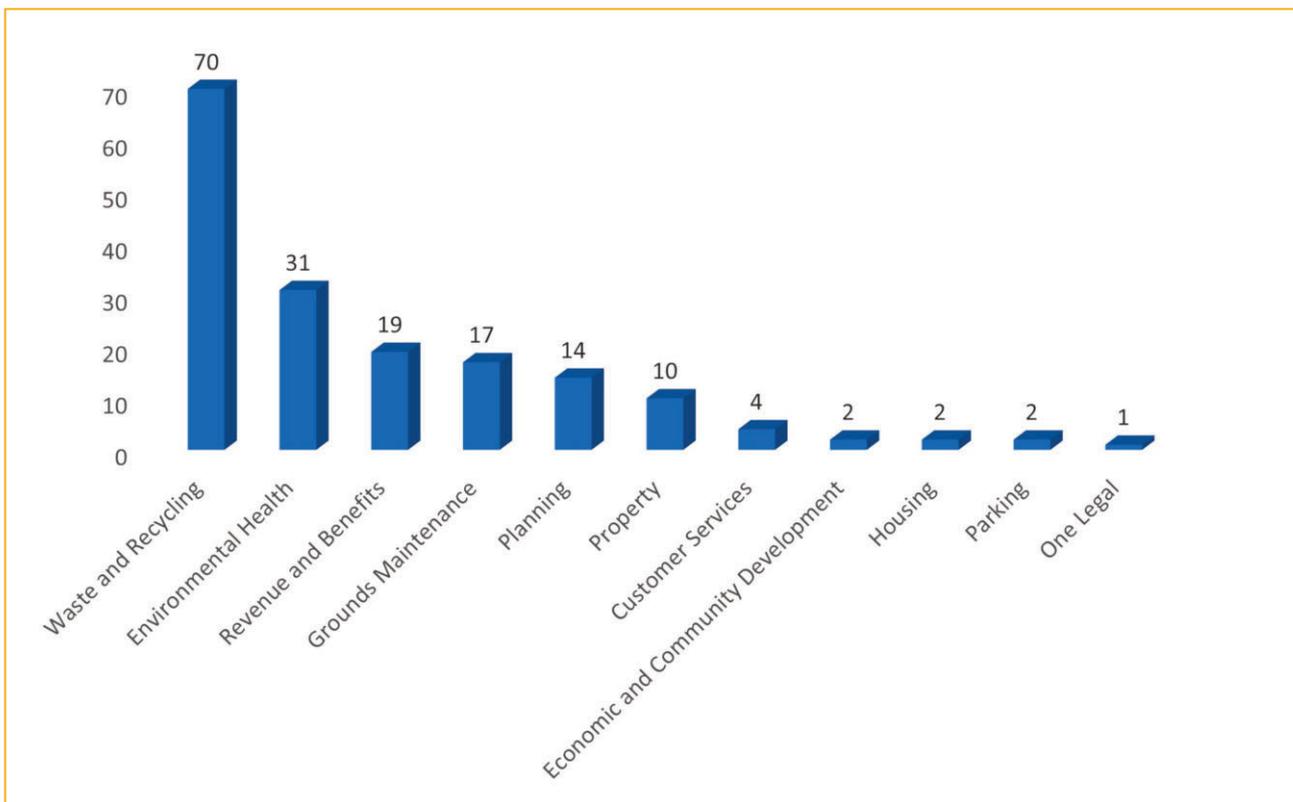
The benefit to a customer raising a concern rather than a formal complaint is that the response time is generally quicker. Formal complaints have a statutory response time of 20 working days, whereas concerns should be responded to within our Customer Care Standards expectation of five working days.

Last year, a total of 172 concerns were raised.

Concerns raised tended to be around front-line services such as waste and recycling, environmental health, revenue and benefits, planning and grounds maintenance.

Examples of concerns raised include repeated missed bins, placement of bins, behaviour of taxi drivers, and chasing for responses for various departments.

The below chart is a breakdown of concerns received by service area during 2021/22:



# 4. Formal Complaints

Unlike comments, concerns and compliments, there is a statutory process in place for formal complaints.

We let our customers know that we consider a formal complaint to be 'an expression of dissatisfaction that requires a formal response about the standards of service, actions, or lack of action, by the council or our staff.'

Our formal complaints policy sets out what customers can expect from this two-stage process – including how we receive, manage, and respond to complaints.

There are two stages to our complaints process:

- **Stage one** - the complaint will be acknowledged within three working days and responded to fully by the relevant operational manager of the service within 20 working days.

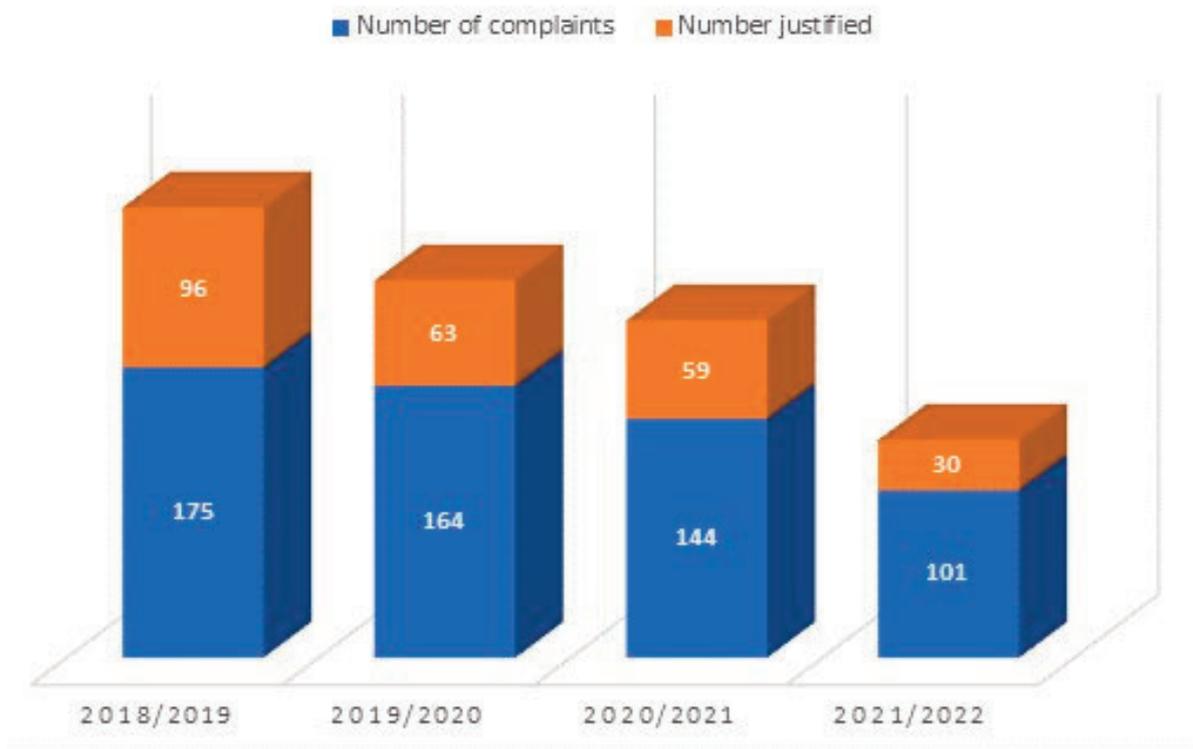
- **Stage two** - if the customer is not satisfied with the stage one response, they may ask (within 30 working days) for the complaint to be reconsidered. An independent head of service will be assigned to investigate the stage two complaint. We aim to respond fully within 20 working days.

We aim to respond to 90% of formal complaints within the agreed timescale. This is monitored as a key performance indicator through the Council Plan performance tracker, which is reported on a quarterly basis to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

If the customer remains dissatisfied, they may appeal to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). A summary of LGSCO complaints can be found on page 11.



### FOUR-YEAR TREND



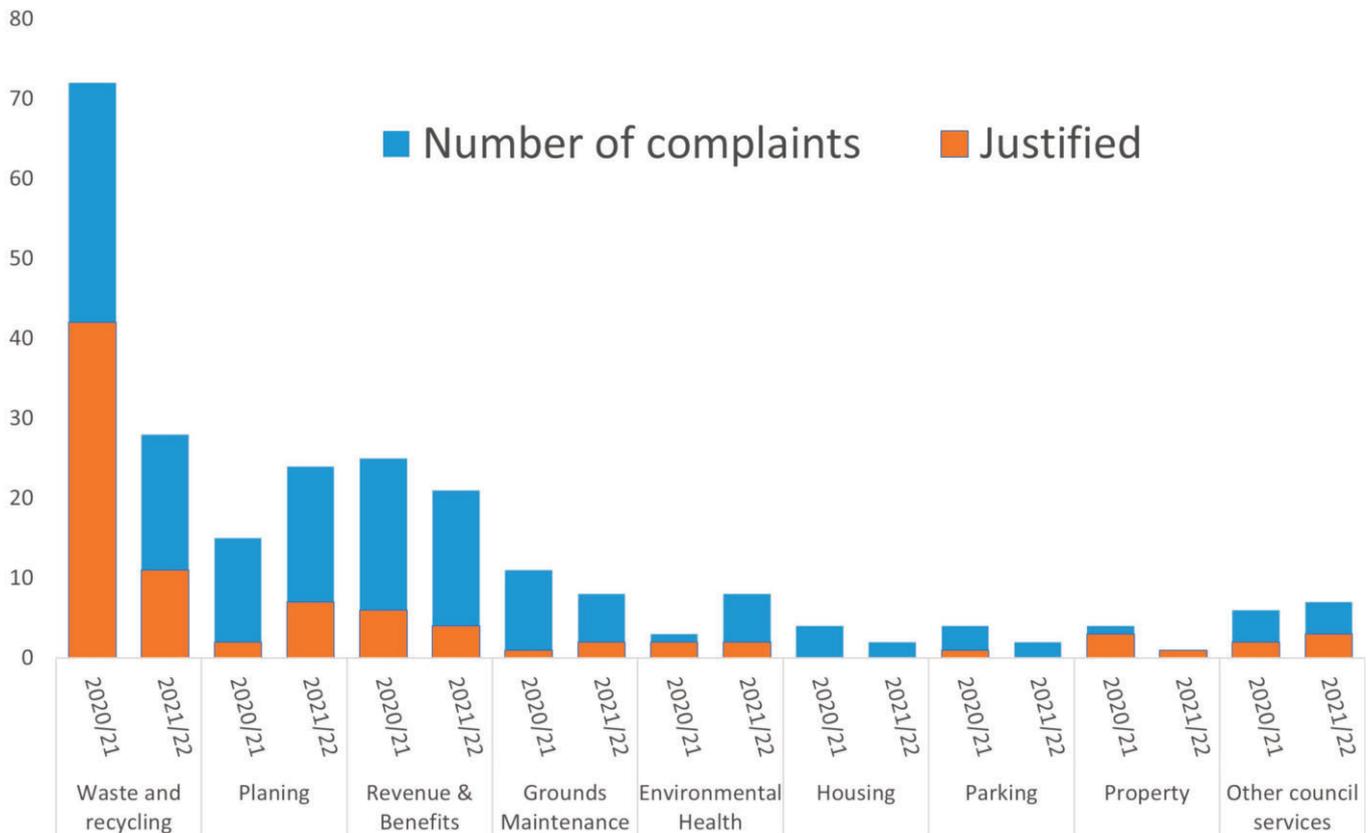
- 101 complaints were received in 2021/22. Four were withdrawn during the complaints process. Of the 97 complaints where decisions were made, 74% were responded to within the required timescale.
- Complaints have reduced since 2018/2019 by 42% - a year-by-year decrease of approximately 11%.
- Around one in three complaints were not justified following investigation at stage one.
- 15 complaints were escalated to stage 2.



## Stage one

### What service area did the complaints relate to and how many were justified?

The complaints were made to the following services:

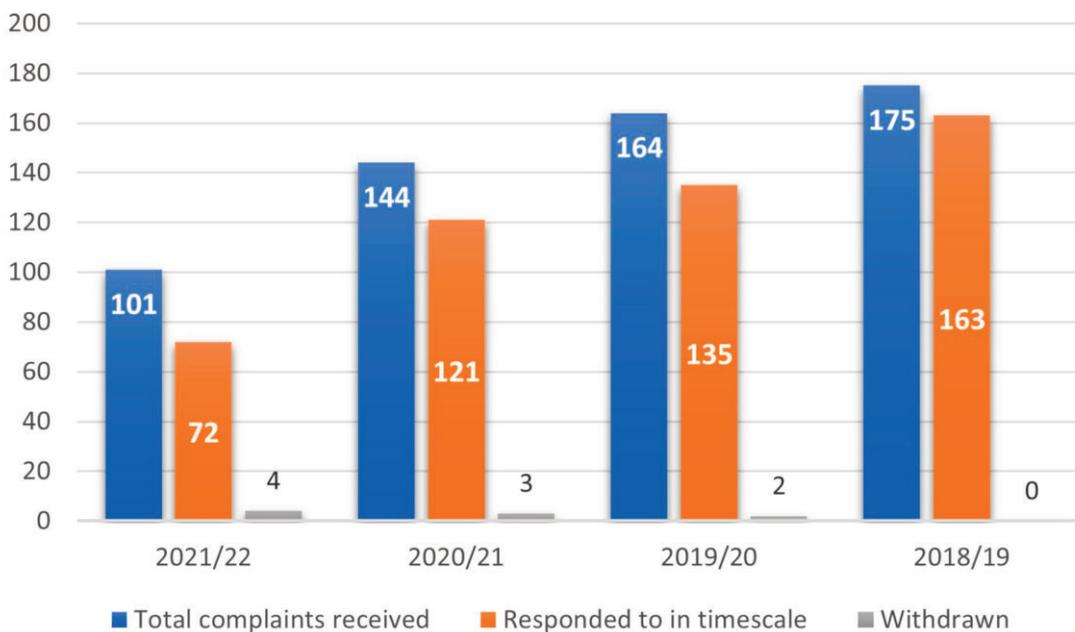


- Of the 101 formal complaints received, 30 were justified at stage one, 36 partially justified, 31 not justified and four were withdrawn during the process.
- 65% of complaints were justified fully or in part, compared to 71% in the previous year.
- 'Other council services' includes: One Legal, Customer Services, Corporate Services, Economic and Community Development, Building Control and the Covid Business Grants team.
- There was a 61% decrease in the number of waste and recycling complaints compared to the year before. This is because customers are now able to raise this issue as a 'concern' rather than it having to be dealt with through the formal complaints process.
- There has been an increase in the number of complaints received and justified within Planning and Environmental Health compared to last year. It is anticipated that the improvements being delivered through the Licensing and Development Management reviews will improve this.
- Two stage one complainants received a financial remedy - together totalling £948.50.

## The nature of the complaint issues were



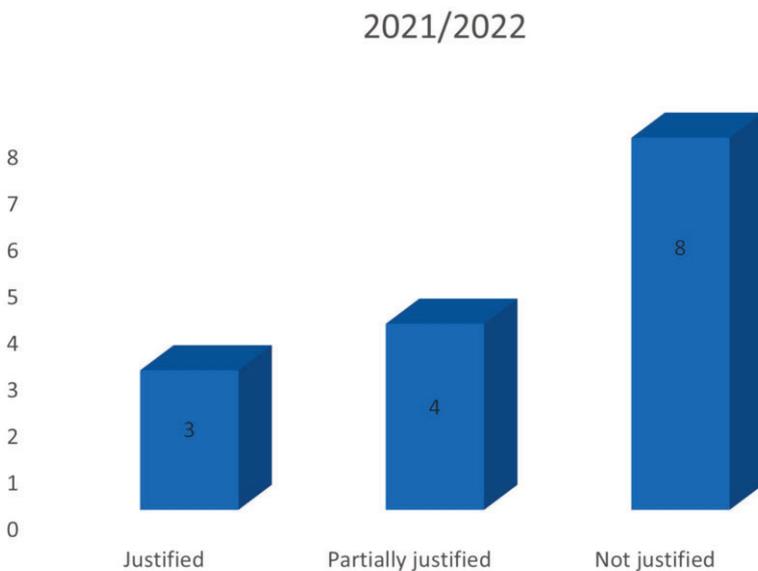
## How many stage one complaints were answered within 20 working days?



- There has been a 21% reduction in the number of complaints being responded to on time.
- Last year, 74% of stage one complaints were responded to on time compared to the 86% in the previous year. This is below our target of 90%.

## Stage two

How many stage two formal complaints were received and what were the outcomes?

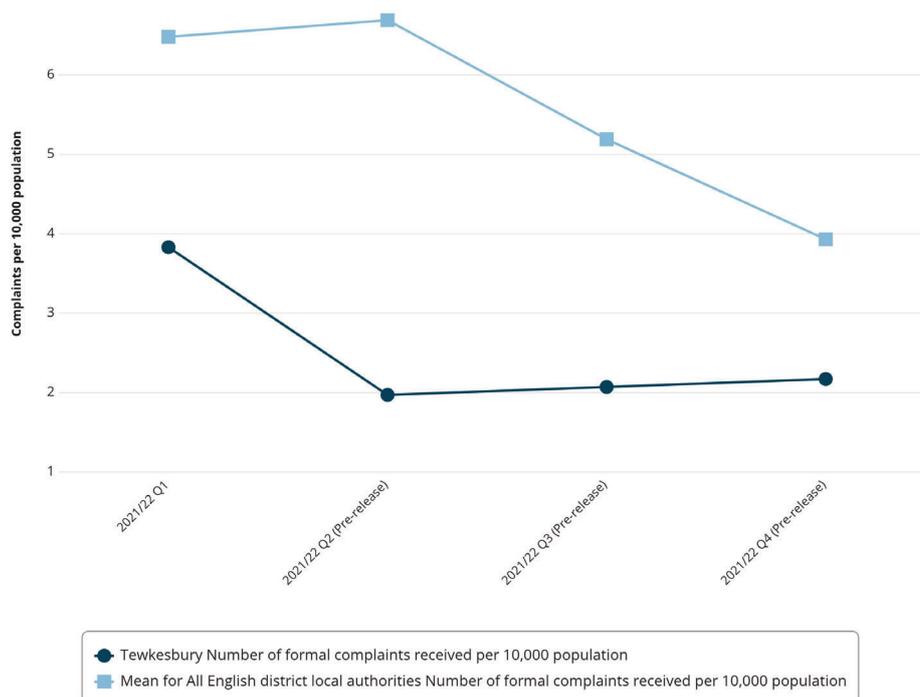


- 15 stage two complaints were received during 2021/22 - a slight increase compared to 12 in the previous year.
- Three of the 15 stage two complaints were justified, in line with the performance of last year.
- Three complainants were offered a one-off payment where fault was found, together totalling to £1,150.

## How are we performing compared to other local authorities?

On a quarterly basis, outturn figures are reported to LG Inform. LG Inform is a dedicated database provided by the Local Government Association (LGA) and it includes a benchmarking tool. One of the indicators reported upon is the number of complaints received per 10,000 population.

The graph below shows how we compare against other local authorities:



Source:  
Local Government Association

Powered by LG Inform

# 5. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints

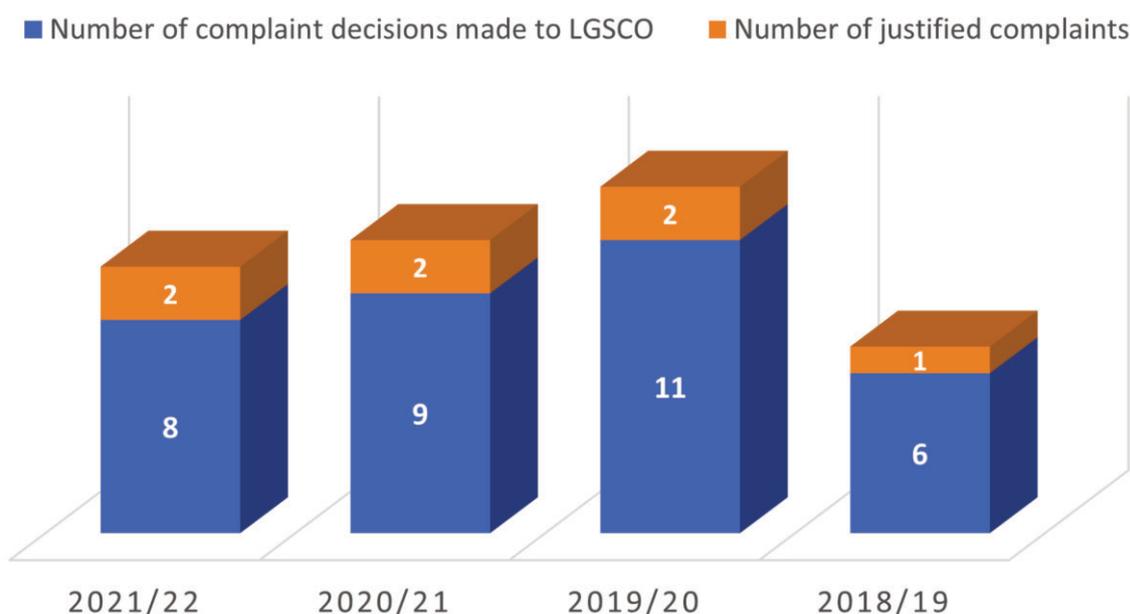
If complainants remain dissatisfied after the second stage of our formal complaints procedure, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The LGSCO deal with complaints against all local government authorities in England (except parish and town councils) and certain other bodies.

On an annual basis every council receives an Annual Review Letter from the LGSCO, which sets out the number of complaints it has received in the year and the decisions made. These decisions are published on its website at [www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/tewkesbury-borough-council/statistics](http://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/tewkesbury-borough-council/statistics) but can also be found attached as appendix one.

In 2020/21, the LGSCO investigated eight complaints relating to our services – two of which were justified. Details of these can be found on the LGSCO website using the above link.

How many complaints were decided and justified by LGSCO over the years?



# 6. Lessons learnt

We consider a lesson learnt to be when 'knowledge or understanding is gained by an experience'. This could be as a direct result from a positive or negative experience. When it's positive, we will look to see if it can be applied elsewhere, and when it's negative, we want to ensure that the issue is not repeated.

The following are key learning points identified from the outcome of the formal complaints received during 2020/21:

- Communication – the majority of complaints had an element of needing improved communication from the service.
- Timely responses – many complaints related to our failure to respond within statutory deadlines.
- Review of the process of small Business Rates Relief.

## Audit outcome

Last year, we committed to Overview and Scrutiny Committee that an internal audit be carried out to seek independent assurance that lessons learnt are being implemented. The audit took place in 2022/23 and found assurance that there is a sound system of governance, risk management and control in place in respect of our formal complaints. A recommendation from the audit was to introduce an ability to record lessons learnt through the digital platform.



# 7. What next?

The LGSO reported in its latest newsletter:

'It is my continued view that complaint functions have been under-resourced in recent years, a trend only exacerbated by the challenges of the pandemic. Through the lens of this recent upheaval and adjustment, I urge you to consider how your organisation prioritises complaints, particularly in terms of capacity and visibility. Properly resourced complaint functions that are well-connected and valued by service areas, management teams and elected members are capable of providing valuable insight about an organisation's performance, detecting early warning signs of problems and offering opportunities to improve service delivery.'

As a council, we agree that it is important we place importance on the information we gain from complaints, and we continually look to ensure our complaints process is robust.

In November 2022, a training session has been organised for those officers who respond to complaints.

We will also continue to report on a quarterly basis to the Management Team and Operational Managers where necessary providing a summary report for each quarter.



20 July 2022

*By email*

Mr Cunningham OBE  
Chief Executive  
Tewkesbury Borough Council

Dear Mr Cunningham OBE

**Annual Review letter 2022**

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2022. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Leader of your Council and Chair of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, to encourage effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer such valuable opportunities to learn and improve.

**Complaint statistics**

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

**Complaints upheld** - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic.

**Compliance with recommendations** - We recommend ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

**Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority** - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and credit organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your organisation with similar authorities to provide an average marker of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data, and a copy of this letter, will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), on 27 July 2022. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

### **Supporting complaint and service improvement**

I know your organisation, like ours, will have been through a period of adaptation as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic lifted. While some pre-pandemic practices returned, many new ways of working are here to stay. It is my continued view that complaint functions have been under-resourced in recent years, a trend only exacerbated by the challenges of the pandemic. Through the lens of this recent upheaval and adjustment, I urge you to consider how your organisation prioritises complaints, particularly in terms of capacity and visibility. Properly resourced complaint functions that are well-connected and valued by service areas, management teams and elected members are capable of providing valuable insight about an organisation's performance, detecting early warning signs of problems and offering opportunities to improve service delivery.

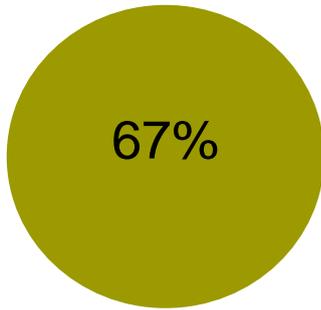
I want to support your organisation to harness the value of complaints and we continue to develop our programme of support. Significantly, we are working in partnership with the Housing Ombudsman Service to develop a joint complaint handling code. We are aiming to consolidate our approaches and therefore simplify guidance to enable organisations to provide an effective, quality response to each and every complaint. We will keep you informed as this work develops, and expect that, once launched, we will assess your compliance with the code during our investigations and report your performance via this letter.

An already established tool we have for supporting improvements in local complaint handling is our successful training programme. We adapted our courses during the Covid-19 pandemic to an online format and successfully delivered 122 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,600 people. To find out more visit [www.lgo.org.uk/training](http://www.lgo.org.uk/training).

Yours sincerely,

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman  
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

### Complaints upheld



**67%** of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **51%** in similar organisations.

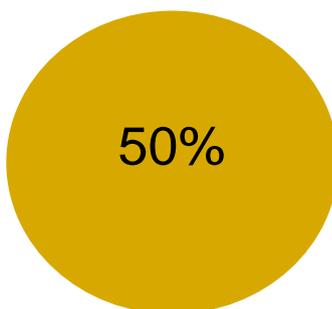
**2**  
upheld decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **3** investigations for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

### Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations

No recommendations were due for compliance in this period

### Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation



In **50%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **20%** in similar organisations.

**1**  
satisfactory remedy decision

Statistics are based on a total of **2** upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022