

Have your say

4Cs Annual Update



2022-2023

Introduction

This report presents (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023) 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 key information in respect of customers' feedback to us and helps to inform our Customer Care Standards and our 'customer first' Council Plan (2020- 2024) priority.

It covers our comments, concerns, complaints and compliments, which were introduced as part of the Have Your Say (4Cs) approach following the launch of our digital platform. This provided additional options for our customers to feedback to us, where 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.

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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.

We received 73 compliments in 2022/23, which is on par with the previous year’s figure of 75 but

an overall increase of 52% when compared to the 2020/21 figure of 43.

The top five service areas receiving compliments are: waste and recycling (27), customer services (9), planning (7), revenue and benefits (7) and economic and community development (7).

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.’

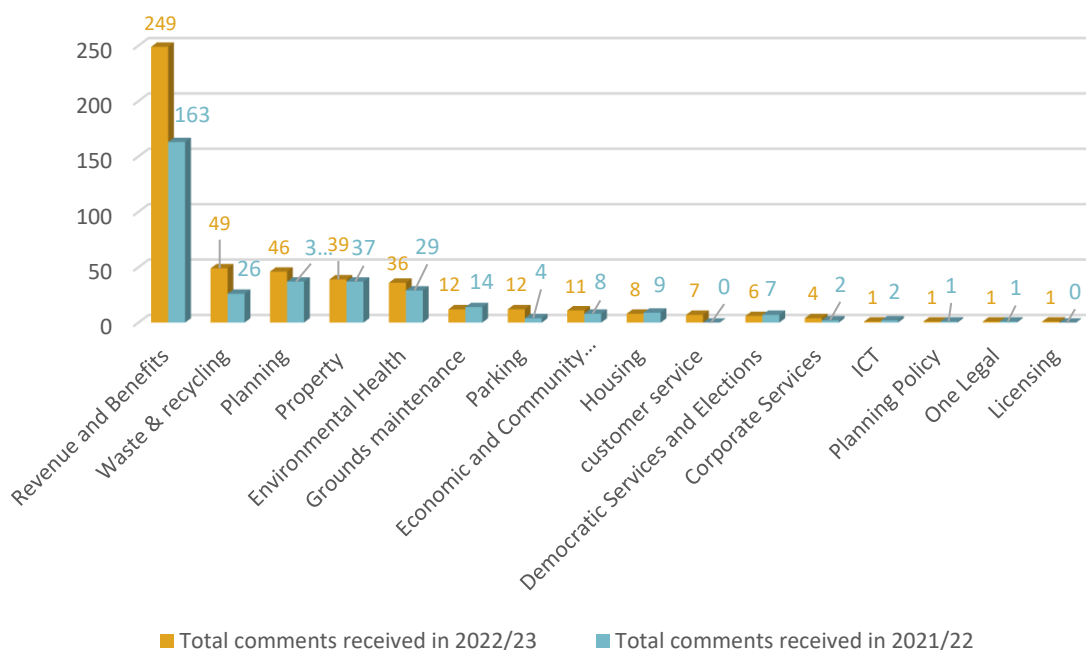
During the year we received 483 comments through the ‘comment’ option online. This is an increase of 42% when compared to 2021/22 figure of 340 comments.

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 change of circumstances for council tax accounts, requesting information from service areas, planning application queries, council tax payments, benefit queries, and queries relating to waste and recycling.

During 2023/24, a review on the comments will be carried out to get a better understanding of timescales of the comments, types of comments being received and identify any duplication of forms that might be available for the customer to complete.

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.

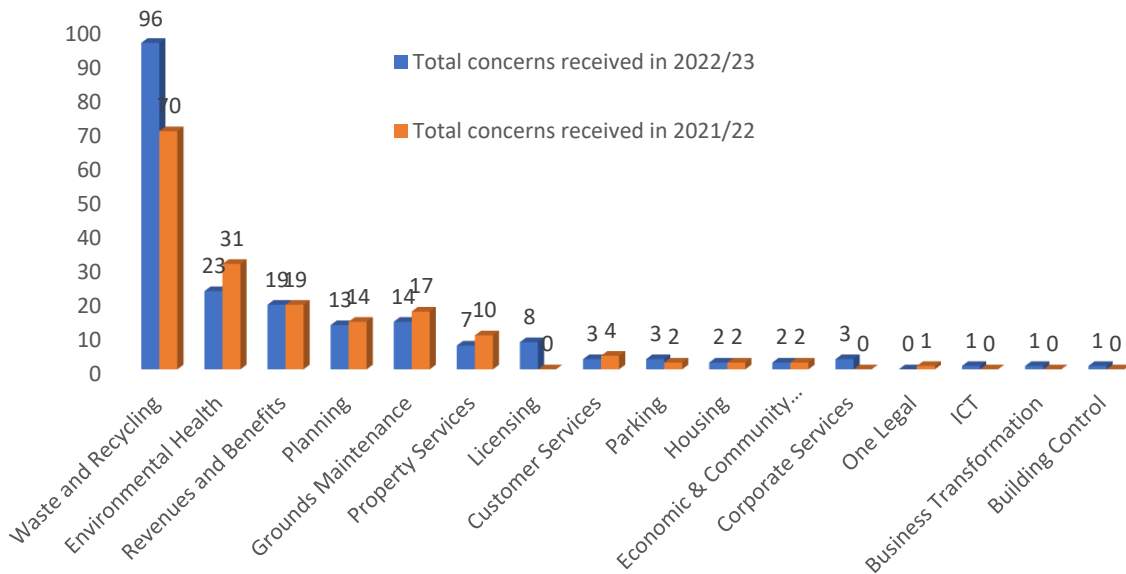
The benefit to a customer raising a concern rather than a formal complaint is that the response time is generally quicker. Formal complaints have a statutory response time of 20 working days, whereas concerns should be responded to within our Customer Care Standards expectation of five working days.

Last year, a total of 196 concerns were raised - an increase of 14% compared to 2021/22 of 172 concerns.

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 2022/23:



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:

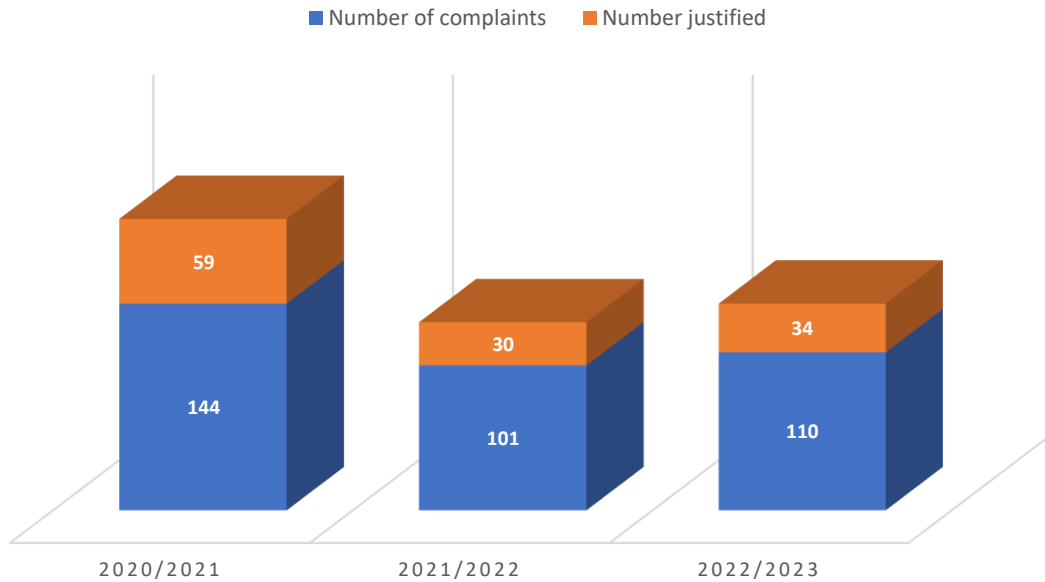
- **Stage one**- the complaint will be acknowledged within three working days and responded to fully by the relevant manager of the service within 20 working days.
- **Stage two**- if the customer is not satisfied with the stage one response, they may ask (within 30 working days) for the complaint to be reconsidered. An independent senior manager 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.



THREE-YEAR TREND

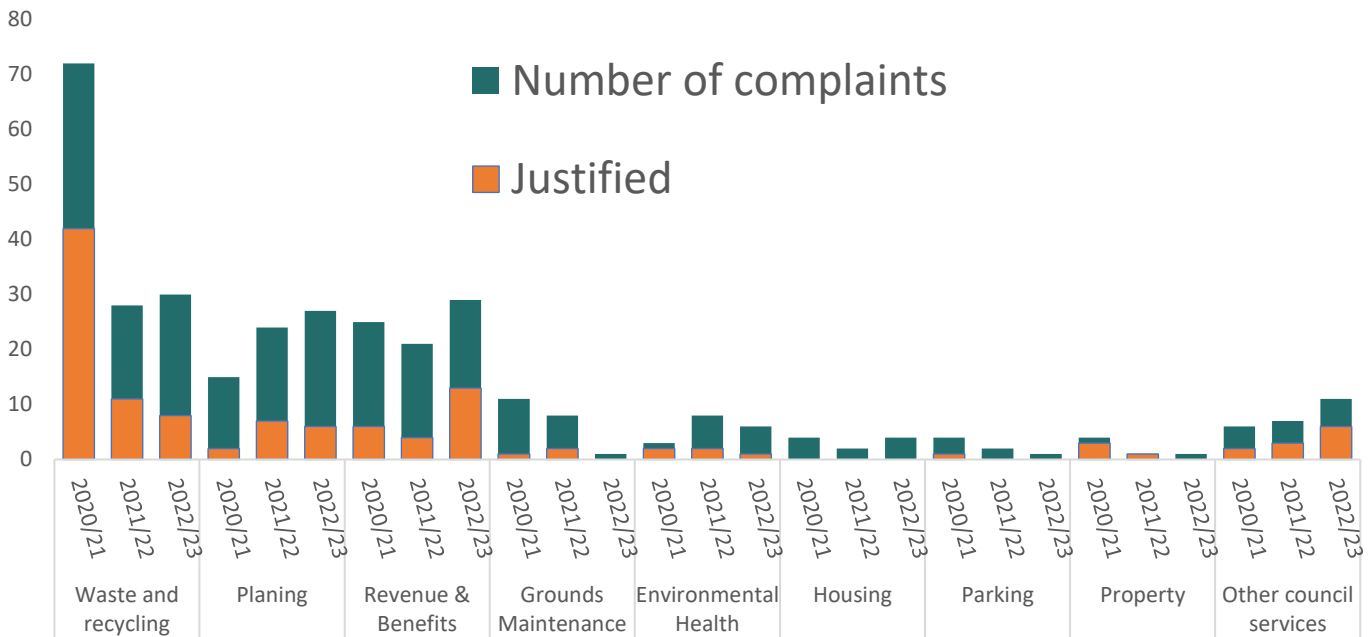


- 110 complaints were received in 2022/23. Eight were withdrawn during the complaints process. Of the 102 complaints where decisions were made, 72 (71%) were responded to within the required timescale.
- Changes have been implemented to improve the response rate which include; monitoring all stages within the Audit and Governance team, rolled out training for those answering complaints and increasing reminders are sent to the responding managers. As a result, in Q1 2023/24 the response rate was over 95%.
- Around one in three complaints were not justified following investigation at stage one.
- 19 complaints were escalated to stage 2.

Stage one

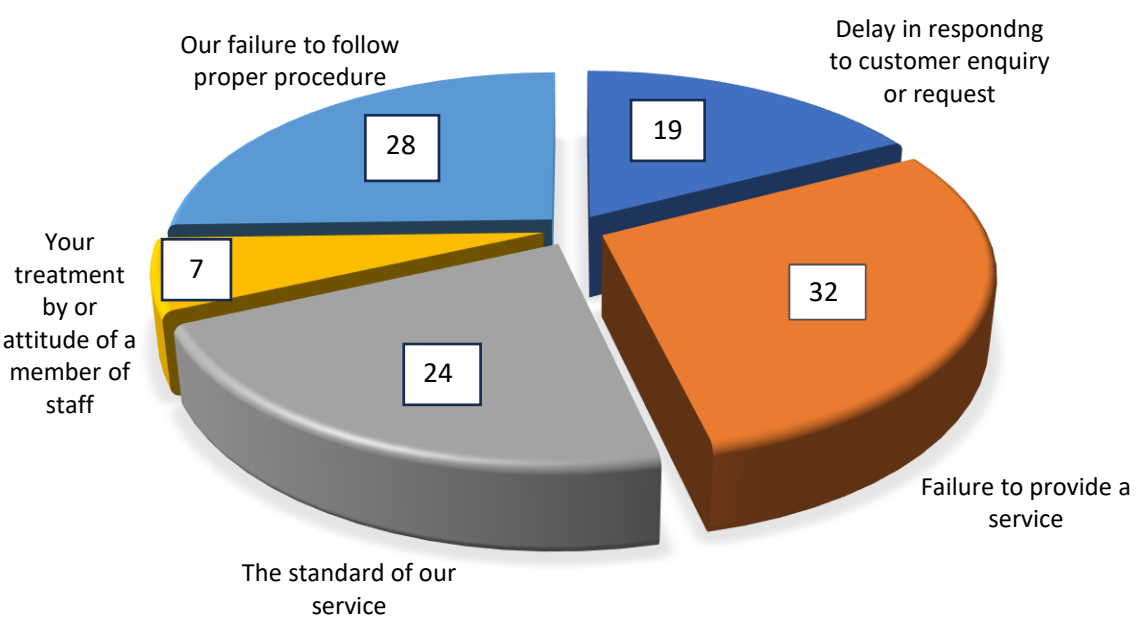
What service area did the complaint relate to and how many were justified?

The complaints were made to the following services:



- 'Other council services' include Customer Services, Licensing, Land charges, Corporate Services, Building Control and One Legal.
- Of the 110 formal complaints received, 34 were justified at stage one, 36 partially justified, 32 not justified and eight were withdrawn during the process.
- There was a 58% decrease in the number of waste and recycling complaints compared to 2020/21. This is because customers, if they wish to, can raise waste-related issues as a 'concern' rather than having to be dealt with through the formal complaints process.

The nature of the complaint issues were:

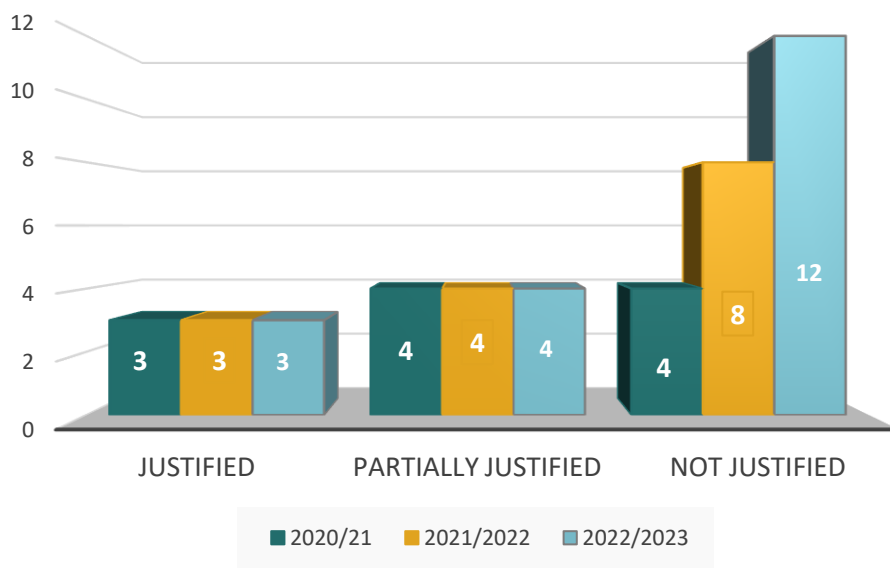


How many stage one complaints were answered within 20 working days?



- Since 2019/20 there has been a 23% reduction in the number of complaints being responded to on time.
- Last year, 71% of stage one complaints were responded to on time compared to the 74% in the previous year. This is below our target of 90%. Additional training and increase in monitoring have been carried out to improve this, which has led to Q1 2023/24 response rate as being 97%.
- The top three service areas responding outside of time were Planning (11), Revenue and Benefits (10) and Environmental Health (5).

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

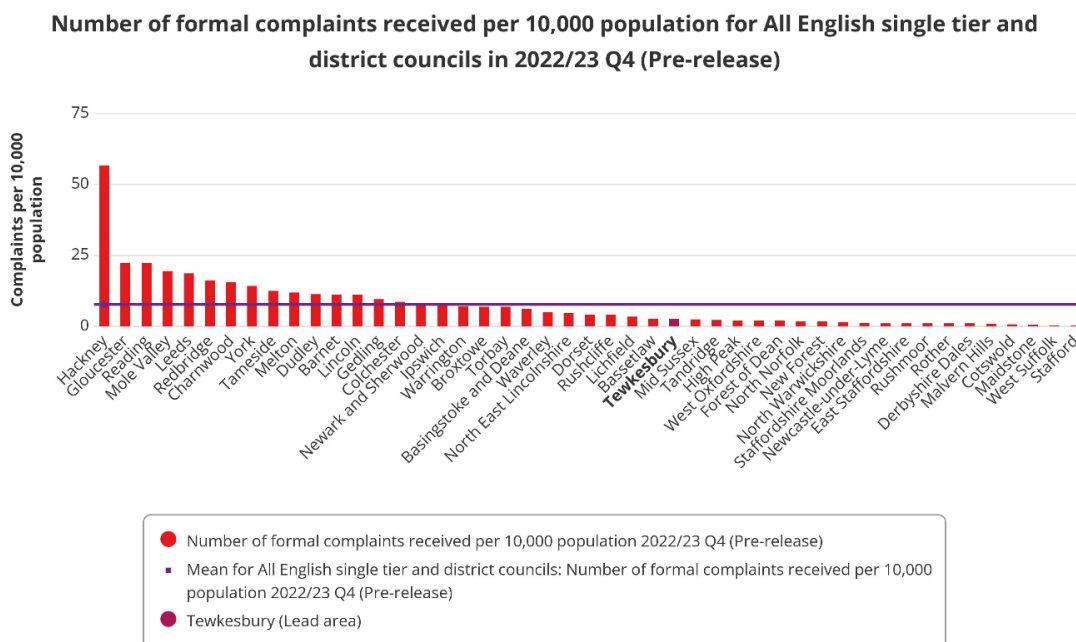


- 19 stage two complaints were received during 2022/23 - a slight increase compared to 15 in the previous year.
- Three of the 19 stage two complaints were justified, in line with the performance of last year.
- Two complainants were offered ex-gratia payments where fault was found, together totalling to £2,050. These complaints related to Building Control and Revenue and Benefits.

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 other local authorities. The mean is recorded at 7.68 per 10,000 and Tewkesbury is significantly lower at 2.72 per 10,000.



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 <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/tewkesbury-borough-council/statistics> but can also be found attached at appendix one.

In 2022/23, the LGSCO investigated six complaints relating to our services –

- Two were referred to the council for local resolution as they had not been through the council's complaints process.
- Two were closed after initial enquiries.
- One had insufficient information to proceed.
- One was fully investigated, and a justified decision was made. Details of this investigation can be found on the LGSCO website.

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 2022/23:

- Communication – most complaints had an element of needing improved communication from the service. (Note, this is not a reflection on the corporate communications team).
- Timely responses – many complaints related to our failure to respond within the customer care standards timescales.

The Audit and Governance team will continually seek assurance that lessons learnt are being implemented. Following an audit that took place in 2022/23, audit found there was assurance that lessons learnt were being implemented.

A recommendation from the audit was to introduce an ability to record lessons learnt through the digital platform and additional training be carried out. This was completed and to ensure continued assurance of lessons being learnt, a 10 per cent sample of the 34 justified complaints, at random, was checked. The following was found:

- Complaint relating to contacting Revenue and benefits team. A new citizen access portal has been purchased which will allow residents and businesses to access their accounts 24 hours 7 days a week to update their own records. This will reduce the number of calls received.
- Repeated missed bins and delay being added to the assisted waste collection service. No further missed bins have been reported. A new in-cab system is also being created which will help with monitoring bin collections and assisted collections to ensure they are added and collected accordingly.

Complaints training

Managers responsible for responding to complaints undertook in-house training in June 2023. Further training sessions will be promoted and undertaken by the appropriate officers on a regular basis.

Complaints policies and procedures

The council's complaints policy is regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects current practices and legislation. The Audit and Governance team will be monitoring the work the LGSCO and Housing Ombudsman are undertaking to create a joint complaint code.

7. What is next?

The LGSCO complaints code is planned to be introduced in April 2024. If, following their consultation the code is applied there will be new measures to carry out to comply with the code such as implementing an annual self-assessment on the councils' complaints. This will be factored in as part of the councils review to the complaints process and policy.

In addition, further training sessions will be organised for those officers who respond to complaints.

A review on the efficiency and effectiveness of the comments and concerns process will also be looked at to ensure it is adequate for all users, the customer and service areas.

We will also continue to report on a quarterly basis to Leadership where necessary providing a summary report for each quarter.

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

19 July 2023

By email

Mr Cunningham OBE
Chief Executive
Tewkesbury Borough Council

Dear Mr Cunningham OBE

Annual Review letter 2022-23

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 2023. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints. As always, I would encourage you to consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. 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.

The end of the reporting year, saw the retirement of Michael King, drawing his tenure as Local Government Ombudsman to a close. I was delighted to be appointed to the role of Interim Ombudsman in April and look forward to working with you and colleagues across the local government sector in the coming months. I will be building on the strong foundations already in place and will continue to focus on promoting improvement through our work.

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.

Over the past two years, we have reviewed our processes to ensure we do the most we can with the resources we have. One outcome is that we are more selective about the complaints we look at in detail, prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate. While providing a more sustainable way for us to work, it has meant that changes in uphold rates this year are not solely down to the nature of the cases coming to us. We are less likely to carry out investigations on 'borderline' issues, so we are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall.

Our average uphold rate for all investigations has increased this year and you may find that your organisation's uphold rate is higher than previous years. This means that comparing uphold rates with previous years carries a note of caution. Therefore, I recommend comparing this statistic with that of similar organisations, rather than previous years, to better understand your organisation's performance.

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 were satisfied 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 26 July 2023. 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

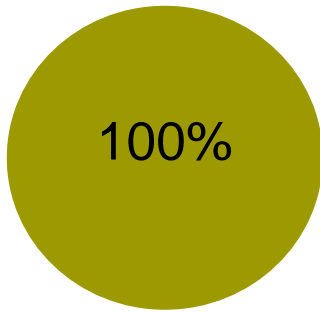
I know that complaints offer organisations a rich source of intelligence and insight that has the potential to be transformational. These insights can indicate a problem with a specific area of service delivery or, more broadly, provide a perspective on an organisation's culture and ability to learn. To realise the potential complaints have to support service improvements, organisations need to have the fundamentals of complaint handling in place. To support you to do so, we have continued our work with the Housing Ombudsman Service to develop a joint complaint handling code that will provide a standard for organisations to work to. We will consult on the code and its implications prior to launch and will be in touch with further details.

In addition, our successful training programme includes practical interactive workshops that help participants develop their complaint handling skills. We can also offer tailored support and bespoke training to target specific issues your organisation might have identified. We delivered 105 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1350 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training or get in touch at training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

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

Complaints upheld



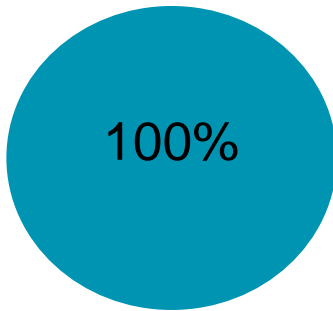
100% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **59%** in similar organisations.

1
upheld decision

Statistics are based on a total of **1** investigation for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



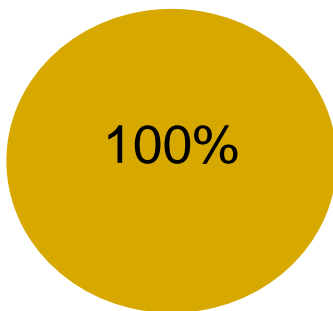
In **100%** of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.

This compares to an average of **100%** in similar organisations.

Statistics are based on a total of **1** compliance outcome for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

- Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An organisation with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation



In **100%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **15%** in similar organisations.

1
satisfactory remedy decision

Statistics are based on a total of **1** upheld decision for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023