



Annual Corporate
Complaints and
Compliments
Report
2019/2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council operates a Corporate Complaints policy and procedure which is overseen by the Customer Services Division. Complaints, compliments and comments are managed through the corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, Oracle Service Cloud. Any member of staff can record complaints and compliments through the corporate intranet using the online form. Customers can log complaints, compliments and comments online or can request them to be recorded through their preferred access channel.
- 1.2 Service Cloud holds records of all complaints, compliments and comments and is used to manage the status and timescales of corporate complaint handling within the organisation. The related data is also analysed to identify trends and lessons learned to help us to improve our services and the customers' experience.
- 1.3 All complaints about Adults Social Care and Support and Children's Services, including Children's Special Educational Needs (SEN) are dealt with by the Adults and Children's Complaints Team.

2. The Corporate Complaint Process

- 2.1 The Corporate Complaints policy is reviewed and updated annually. The procedure is as follows:
 - **Stage one**, complaints are investigated and responded to by the appropriate service area. Complaints should be responded to within a maximum of 20 working days. Where complaints are considered more complex, with the agreement of the customer and of the appropriate Head of Service or Complaints team a complaint may be responded to within 30 working days.
 - **Stage two**, if a customer remains dissatisfied with the response that has been given a complaint is escalated to the final stage of the complaints procedure. The appropriate Head of Service or senior officer will review the complaint and the stage one response and respond to the customer within 10 working days or for more complex complaints within 20 working days, in agreement with the customer.

3. Summary of complaints and compliments we received

- 3.1 709 complaints were received for 2019/2020, a decrease of 121 (14.6%) compared to the previous year when 830 were received.
- 3.2 Of the 709 complaints received 66 (9.3%) progressed to the second and final stage of the complaints procedure. This is a reduction on the previous year where 85 (10.2%) were resolved at stage two.
- 3.3 The preferred access channel for customers to make a complaint has changed from telephone (245) to online (264) and emails (161) as the third option. The other options are relatively low and include post and walk in centres. Customers are encouraged to use our online forms, where possible.

- 3.4 The Council has a translation and interpreting service for users of Council services where the first language is not English or due to a disability or impairment, the customer requires alternative formats such as British Sign Language or large print.
- 3.5 Key trends for the year were:
- There has been a decrease in the number of complaints received.
 - Service areas that provide services to all residents received the most complaints as forecast and reflected in previous years.
 - 62% of all customers choose dissatisfaction with service delivery as the main reason for complaint.
- 3.6 1273 compliments were received in 2019/2020 this compares to 1137 for the previous year, an increase of 136 (12%).
- 3.7 Table one shows complaints and compliments for the last three years. The proportion of complaints compared with compliments is reasonably constant at around 40:60 complaints to compliments.

Table One: Complaints and compliments by year 2017/2018 to 2019/2020

	2019/20	%	2018/19	%	2017/18	%
Complaints	709	35.8	830	42.2	719	40.7
Compliments	1273	64.2	1137	57.8	1046	59.3
Total	1982		1967		1765	

4. Corporate Complaints Quarterly Service Area Analysis

- 4.1 Analysis has helped us to understand how and when we receive complaints, it allows us to monitor the impact on seasonal services and trends in service delivery. To demonstrate this we have broken down the number of complaints received further. Table Two shows complaints received by quarter.

Table Two: Complaints by Quarter 2017/2020

Quarter	2019/2020		2018/2019		2017/2018	
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total
Q1 (Apr-Jun)	234	33.0%	244	29.4%	165	22.9%
Q2 (Jul-Sep)	182	25.7%	255	30.7%	256	35.6%
Q3 (Oct-Dec)	162	22.8%	168	20.3%	142	19.8%
Q4 (Jan-Mar)	131	18.5%	163	19.6%	156	21.7%
Total	709	100%	830	100%	719	100%

4.2 Overall, reporting is on trend with a decrease across all quarters, the issues with split brown bins are still ongoing however at manageable levels.

4.3 Both Customer Services and Waste and Recycling have had the largest decrease across all quarters. This is as expected and brings the complaints down to numbers similar to the previous year.

4.4 Analysing the quarterly results further has shown the following;

Quarter one:

- Highways had 39 complaints, an increase of 16 complaints. Six of these related to road closures during the Velo event in May. No other trends were identified. Increase of 18% over the year.
- Streetcare had 24 complaints, an increase of eight. In June there were eight complaints relating to the overall maintenance of cemeteries. This is also the start of the busiest season for street care.
- The largest increase has been for Planning and Building Control who had 15 complaints compared to one the same period the previous year. Complaints related to decisions made and lack of communication by officers.

Quarter two:

- Income and Awards received 7 complaints, a decrease of 10 complaints. No trends were identified.
- Streetcare received 22 complaints, an increase of 11. Complaints related to hedge/grass cutting, behaviour of crew members and road/path maintenance across the borough. Increase of 34% across the year.

Quarter three:

- Planning and Building Control received 17 complaints, an increase of four mainly relating to lack of communication from officers.
- Income and Awards received 13 complaints, an increase of five. No trends identified.
- Neighbourhood Co-ordinators received 12 complaints, an increase of six. No trends identified.

Quarter four:

- Apart from Waste & Recycling that had a decrease of 19 complaints there were no other service areas with a major decrease or increase.

4.5 Complaints are also monitored by service area, table three shows a breakdown of the 10 specific Service Area Teams which received the highest numbers of complaints.

Table Three: Top Ten Service Areas 2017/2020

Specific Service Area Team	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Waste and Recycling	266	421	191
Highways Services	125	106	129
Streetcare	67	50	54
Income and Awards	51	62	56
Neighbourhood & Regulatory Services	45	39	50
Planning and Building Control	44	36	134
Parks Grass Shrubs & Trees	35	26	30
Customer Services (Solihull Connect)	25	52	24
Libraries and Arts	17	12	9
Democratic Services	14	3	7

- 4.6 As mentioned in the quarterly analyses above, both Customer Services (52% decrease) and Waste and Recycling (37% decrease) have had a decrease over the year.
- 4.7 Democratic services had an increase of 11 complaints, eight were related to non-receipt of postal votes where the customers have been advised to make use of proxy votes especially when abroad.
- 4.8 Library Services had an increase of five complaints. The two main reasons were customers not happy with fees and charges for overdue books, in particular children's books and proposals for book loans for book/readers clubs.
- 4.9 To help put the level of complaints into context table four shows some of the activities undertaken by key service areas which tend to be the subject of complaints.

Table Four: Key Council Activities 2019/2020

Service Areas	Activity level
Waste and Recycling	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household waste & recycling collections 2019/20 (refuse, garden waste, mixed recycling, glass) • Bulky Waste available Collections • Visitors to Bickenhill HWRC 	<p>11,282,560</p> <p>4,244</p> <p>200,000</p>
Income and Awards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax bills issued • New Benefit applications processed 	<p>162,945</p> <p>3,703</p>

Service Areas	Activity level
Highways Maintenance Significant Highway schemes implemented	Local Strategic Network Resilience Programme Wildlife Ways Vaisala Trial Trilliant Trial LED Programme A452 Kenilworth Road – retaining wall Community Liveability Programme Chelmunds Cross Meriden Lakes New Pedestrian Zebra crossings Upgrade of Pelican to Puffin Pedestrian crossings TROs to manage local parking issues
Streetcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained grass (m²) • Maintained hard ground (m²) 	8,512,336 m ² 4,637,416 m ²
Planning and Building Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Applications • Building Control Applications • Initial Notices* 	2,988 1,375 878
Customer Services-Solihull Connect Number of contacts by channel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Centre • Walk in Centres • Email • Webforms • Live Chats Cemeteries and Crematoria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cremations and burials • Memorial headstone permits • Scatters • Grave reserves • Reassignments • Memorial sales Registration Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Births , Deaths and marriages 	269,294 48,492 13,494 4,064 5,419 3,691 612 374 97 14 248 2,918
Traffic and Parking Number of Council owned spaces	4,418
Libraries and Arts Services Visitor numbers	508,570
Parks Area of maintained shrubs (m ²)	540,750

*Initial Notices are issued by private companies to advise that they have been engaged to manage Building Regulations compliance.

5. Categories of Complaint

5.1 Complaints are categorised so that we can understand why customers complain. The categories for complaints are provided in Table five. The top three reasons are the same as for previous years:

- Service delivery
- Decision making (policy)
- Impoliteness, rudeness, unfairness, bias or prejudice

Table Five: Categories of complaints

Complaint reason	2019/ 2020	% of total	2018/ 2019	% of total	2017/ 2018	% of Total
Dissatisfaction in service delivery	441	62.2%	618	74.5%	446	62.0%
Dissatisfaction with the way we apply policy, a decision or a procedure	169	23.8%	131	15.8%	218	30.3%
Impoliteness, rudeness, unfairness, bias or prejudice	71	10.0%	60	7.2%	47	6.6%
Refusal to answer reasonable questions, misleading or unsuitable advice	23	3.3%	16	1.9%	5	0.7%
Inappropriate use of personal information	5	0.7%	5	0.6%	3	0.4%
Total	709	100%	830	100%	719	100%

5.2 Complaints indicating dissatisfaction with service delivery as expected represented the greatest proportion at 62.2%. This is a 12.3% decrease for this category from the previous year which related to the split brown bins.

5.3 23.8% of complaints related to dissatisfaction with the way policy or a decision was applied, an increase of 8% on the previous year. Mainly related to decision making that the complainant wasn't happy about.

5.4 71 (10%) complaints were made because of impoliteness and rudeness. Highways 23 (32%), Waste & Recycling 28 (39%). In line with previous years, this category relates mainly to the Parking Enforcement Officers for Highways and Amey Crew for Waste and Recycling. No complaints were logged under this category to do with bias or prejudice.

6. Complaint Timescales

Table six shows the complaints resolved by complaint stage and timescale.

Table Six: Complaint Resolution Timescales 2019/2020

	Complaints at Stage 1	Complaints at Stage 2
Resolved in 20 days	612	
Over 20 days and less than 30 days	80	
Over 30 days	16	
Not Resolved	1	
Stage 2 in 20 days		60
Stage 2 over 20 days		6
Total	709	66

- 6.1 Of the 709 complaints registered at stage one, 612 were responded to within the 20 days, 80 were identified as complex and responded to within 20 to 30 days in line with the Complaints and Compliments policy and the agreement of the complainant. 17 complaints exceeded the 30 day target and a breakdown by service area is provided in Table seven.
- 6.2 Of the 66 complaints escalated to stage two, 60 were responded to within the 20 day timescale with six complaints that went over the 20 days. The complaints team continued to work with the co-ordinators during this period. A breakdown by service area and reasons for exceeding timescale is provided in Table eight.
- 6.3 If at stage one or two a complaint is more complex or an in depth response is required, the deadline can be extended which should be negotiated with the customer and agreed by the Corporate Complaints Lead.
- 6.4 The complaints team monitor all complaint timescales to identify those approaching target completion, the team will liaise with the relevant co-ordinators and where necessary speak to the relevant investigating officer or Head of Service.
- 6.5 There are a number of reasons for a complaint to exceed timescale including:
- A. Complexity of the complaint: complaints relates to multiple services, requires monitoring or site visits.
 - B. More information needed from the customer which caused a delay in being able to start the investigation.
 - C. Delay in completing the complaint on the system even though a response has been sent to the customer.
 - D. Failure to allocate complaint to investigator
 - E. Poor response time management of the complaint by investigating officers.
 - F. Responded to out of SLA due to Covid-19.

Table Seven: Complaints exceeding 30 days at stage one by Service Area

Service Area Team	Total of Stage 1 out of SLA	A	B	C	D	E	F
Neighbourhood & Regulatory Services	6			1		5	
Planning Design & Engagement	6	2		1		2	1
Highways Services	3			1		2	
Libraries Arts and Information	1					1	
Resources	1						1

Table Eight: Complaints exceeding 20 days at stage two by Service Area

Service Area Team	Stage 2 out of SLA
Planning and Building Control	3
Streetcare	1
Parks grass shrubs & trees	1
Neighbourhood & Regulatory Services	1

- 6.6 One customer had not been kept informed, one exceeded timescale by one day and one complaint that went over timescale due to Covid-19, the customer had been kept informed.
- 6.7 The other three complainants had been kept informed due to complexity of complaint.
- 6.8 Despite consistent reminders we are finding some complaints are being responded to outside of the timescales and we will continue to work with the areas concerned and provide on-going training and support.
- 6.9 The complaints team continue to work with co-ordinators to ensure responses where possible are sent within timescale, and customers are kept informed with deadline extensions.
- 6.10 To mitigate the impact of poor response time to the customer and to support investigating officers there is an automated reminder system as part of the complaints process as well as reminders from the complaint co-ordinator.

7. Learning from Complaints

- 7.1 One of the most important outcomes of investigating complaints is to learn from them. Categories of learning are used so that we can understand how feedback can be used to improve or shape services in the future. Table nine shows the categories recorded after a complaint has been investigated.

7.2 In line with the Council’s legal obligations under Part 7 of the Immigration Action 2016, the Council’s complaint procedure has incorporated a measure in which a customer can make a formal complaint to the Council, should any member of the public feel that a customer-facing council officer has insufficient fluency in spoken English in the performance of their role. Since the implementation of the Act, we have received no complaints in relation to this category which is a positive indicator on the quality of English fluency used by staff employed in the team.

Table Nine: Categories of learning recorded

Learning Category	2019/2020		2018/2019		2017/2018	
	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of total
Improve revised service delivery process	283	39.9%	295	35.5%	204	28.4%
Customer comments included in review of how we apply policies, decisions and procedures	199	28.1%	165	19.9%	179	24.9%
Improvements in communication	172	24.3%	200	24.1%	155	21.5%
Review behaviours and/or training needs for individuals or a team	54	7.6%	154	18.6%	127	17.7%
Review of confidentiality procedures. These should be carried out in accordance with the Data Protections Act.	1	0.1%	16	1.9%	54	7.5%
Total	709	100%	830	100%	719	100%

7.3 The following learning categories were identified as part of the complaints outcome and a summary of the trends:

- Improve service delivery process – Predominately relates to Waste and Recycling.
- Review behaviour developments for individuals or a team – Huge decrease, majority relate to Waste and Recycling (Amey crew) and Highways (NSL parking enforcement officers).
- Improve communication – relates to different service areas with no particular trend identified.
- Customer comments included in review of how we apply policies, decisions and procedures – majority relate to parking restrictions across various locations of the borough where they are causing issues and requests for them to be implemented.

7.4 The complaints team run quarterly reports on recorded learning and contact service areas to discuss the learning actions that have been implemented as a result of the learning to ensure service improvements.

- 7.5 Most officers advise customers on what the learning has been and that they intend to implement it, which is then recorded on Service Cloud. There have been issues with not enough detailed learning being recorded. The complaints team will continue to monitor this and work with the investigating officer to ensure the learning is correct and matches that of the response and to ensure that it is being implemented.
- 7.6 Samples of learning from complaints investigated during 2019/2020 have been included as Appendix 3.2. Once the complaint has been resolved it is the responsibility of the service area to implement any learning improvements identified.
- 7.7 Two case studies have been prepared by Customer Services and Bereavement Services this year to show how a complaint is investigated from start to end, including how we learn from complaints. These case studies are included as Appendix 3.3.

8. Complaints by Ward

- 8.1 To gather a further insight into complaints Table ten shows complaints by Ward in which the complainant lived. This enables us to see if there are any new trends or exceptions to trends that could be analysed further.

Table Ten: Complaints by Ward

Ward	2019/ 2020	% of Total	2018/ 2019	% of total	2017/ 2018	% of total
Out of borough customers	118	16.7%	89	10.7%	72	10.0%
Elmdon	51	7.2%	49	5.9%	39	5.4%
Silhill	49	6.9%	46	5.5%	30	4.2%
Shirley South	44	6.2%	36	4.4%	33	4.6%
Blythe	44	6.2%	74	8.9%	29	4.0%
St Alphege	43	6.1%	54	6.5%	57	8.0%
Knowle	36	5.1%	45	5.4%	36	5.0%
Smiths Wood	36	5.1%	22	2.7%	31	4.3%
Shirley West	34	4.8%	58	7.0%	20	2.8%
Shirley East	33	4.6%	46	5.5%	47	6.5%
Bickenhill	32	4.5%	30	3.6%	132	18.3%
Meriden	31	4.4%	34	4.1%	30	4.2%
Dorridge and Hockley Heath	30	4.2%	44	5.3%	38	5.3%
Lyndon	27	3.8%	48	5.8%	25	3.5%
Kingshurst and Fordbridge	27	3.8%	42	5.1%	23	3.2%
Chelmsley Wood	25	3.5%	44	5.3%	22	3.1%

Ward	2019/ 2020	% of Total	2018/ 2019	% of total	2017/ 2018	% of total
Olton	21	3.0%	44	5.3%	36	5.0%
Castle Bromwich	20	2.8%	25	3.0%	19	2.6%
In Borough no address given	8	1.1%				
Grand Total	709	100%	830	100%	719	100%

- 8.2 There has been an increase in out of borough customers logging complaints with no particular trend identified. This year the data for in borough complaints without an address has been separated from the out of borough ones. The complaints team will monitor these going forward, however the numbers are low and nothing to cause any concern. The address does not need to be provided to investigate a complaint.
- 8.3 The majority of wards have received significantly less complaints compared to 2018/19 as the issues with split brown recycling bins are at a manageable level.
- 8.4 The following wards have seen a noticeable decrease in complaints registered for waste and recycling:
- Blythe: decrease of 30
 - Shirley West: decrease of 24
 - Olton: decrease of 23
 - St Alphege: decrease of 11
 - Chelmsley Wood: decrease of 19
 - Lyndon: decrease of 21
 - Dorridge & Hockley Heath: decrease of 14
 - Kindshurst & Fordbridge: decrease of 15
 - Shirley East: decrease of 13
- 8.5 Four wards have seen very small increases, with no particular trend identified.

9. Compliments

- 9.1 1273 compliments were received in 2019/2020, an increase of 12% compared to 1137 compliments received in 2018/2019. Table eleven shows the top ten Service Areas to receive compliments.

Table Eleven: Compliments Service Area Top 10

Service Area	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Customer Services	598	275	411
Highways Services	427	221	339
Waste and Recycling	79	55	100
Streetcare	48	33	45
Neighbourhood Co-Ordinators	42	13	10
Parks grass shrubs trees	21	20	13
Income and Awards	17	17	8
Cemeteries and Crematoria	12	106	56
Planning and Building Control	9	6	9
Libraries and Arts Services	4	4	41

- 9.2 Compliments are shared with service areas quarterly and at year end. Customer Services share compliments received as part of a staff monthly local brief.
- 9.3 Highways Services have had a large increase of compliments. The service has acknowledged the importance of logging compliments when officers are getting compliments for good work.
- 9.4 Table twelve shows the reasons for receiving compliments. The majority of compliments were made for named employee helpfulness at 77% compared to 68.5% during 2018/2019. High standard of service reduced slightly to 13% in 2019/2020.

Table Twelve: Categories of Compliments

Category	2019/2020	% of total	2018/2019	% of total	2017/2018	% of total
Named employee helpfulness	980	77.0%	779	68.5%	697	66.7%
High standard of service	165	13.0%	161	14.2%	167	16.0%
Helpfulness of service	106	8.3%	182	16.0%	166	15.8%
Other	22	1.7%	15	1.3%	16	1.5%
TOTAL	1273	100%	1137	100%	1046	100%

10. Customer Comments

- 10.1 Customer comments are captured where a customer has a suggestion for service improvement or is not happy with the way we are currently delivering a service or policy and indicate they do not want to log a formal corporate complaint. These comments are predominantly logged by Solihull Connect across all access channels.
- 10.2 Customer comments are shared with all relevant service areas for learning and improvement suggestions. In cases where a customer has requested a response this will be provided by the service area responsible.
- 10.3 Table thirteen shows the number of comments recorded over the last 3 years

Table Thirteen: Number of comments for last three years

	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Number of comments	945	723	528

- 10.4 Table fourteen shows the service areas that received the most customer comments. The majority of comments relate to Waste and Recycling which is consistent with previous years.

Table Fourteen: Top Service Areas receiving the most comments

Service Area	Total
Waste and Recycling	413
Customer Services	168
Income and Awards	81
Highways Services	83
Streetcare	62
Neighbourhood & Regulatory Services	48
Coronavirus	32
Parks grass shrubs trees	26
Elections	24

- 10.5 Key trends of customer comments registered in 2019/2020 relate to:
- Waste and Recycling – various comments made about all services offered.
 - Customer Services – Two customer surveys were carried out to gather comments relating to the Council website and online services including preferred method of contact. This resulted in an increase in comments. There have been no formal complaints or negative comments received.

- Income & Awards – Various comments including payments, recovery, benefits & Bailiffs
- Highways Services – Penalty Charge Notices, parking restrictions and various comments relating to traffic volume caused by road works.

11. Local Government Social Care Ombudsman

Each year the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provides feedback to Local Authorities about the complaints it has received about them in the past year. The feedback is for both Statutory and Corporate Complaints and can be found in Appendix 3.4. There were two Corporate complaints upheld and both have been actioned.

- 11.1 Tables fifteen and sixteen show the services areas for which complaints decisions were made by the LGSCO and what decisions were made.

Table Fifteen: Services Areas decisions made on

Service Areas	Total
Transport and Highways	2
Income and Awards	2
Environmental Service & Public Protection	4
Planning & Development	10

Table Sixteen: Decisions made

Decisions Made	Total
Closed after Initial Enquiries	9
Referred back for local resolution	4
Not Upheld	3
Upheld	2

12. Corporate Complaints and Feedback Policy

The complaints team have spent time monitoring the complaint responses sent to customers. It was important we reviewed the quality of the response from service areas and identified any areas for improvement.

- 12.1 It has been identified that on occasions officers are not using the correct template or in fact no template at all, no closing paragraph giving information on the next steps. The complaints team have checked all templates are correct and uploaded to a page on the Council's intranet and this link has been sent to all investigating officers. A gentle reminder email is also sent to

anyone found not using the right template.

- 12.2 The complaints team have also found some responses are not to the standard expected, incorrect grammar, spelling mistakes, referring to incorrect information within the letter and not covering all the points in the complaint. This is pointed out to the investigating officer and for a further response to be sent covering all the points.
- 12.3 It has been noticed that some investigating officers tend to use a template response that has been previously used, in overtyping it for the next complaint they are not checking all the information has been corrected. It has been suggested that this isn't done and a blank template is used for each new complaint.
- 12.4 There have been no issues with any of the stage two responses from the Heads of Services.
- 12.5 The complaints team review all complaints logged, including those logged directly by the customer using the online complaints form. This has identified customers may be unsure of which area their issue relates to and often use the complaint form instead. Not all of these are formal complaints and can be dealt with outside of the complaints procedure without delay as a service request with the agreement of the customer. 225 complaints were cancelled and recorded as a service request having communicated the reason with the customers concerned.

13. Looking Forward

- 13.1 During 2020/2021 the complaints team will continue to focus on timescales and improved support and training for those areas struggling with complaint response timescales.
- 13.2 Continue to improve performance information and provide service areas with performance data and comparisons for improvements.
- 13.3 A benchmarking exercise has been carried out with a number of local authorities with regards to the timescales for responding to a complaint at stage one. This exercise has flagged up that the majority of councils are either responding within 10 or 15 working days. It is therefore recommended that a pilot is carried out to reduce the timescales to 15 working days. However the complaints team will need to closely monitor and support any service areas that may not meet the timescales.
- 13.4 We recognise the importance of understanding the make up of the community who use the complaints and compliments service and how we continue to make Council services more inclusive. One positive way of doing this is by introducing equality monitoring. We will explore the capabilities of the IT system for equality monitoring for the year 2020/2021.
- 13.5 A number of activities could result in increased numbers of complaints for 2020/2021:

- Covid-19 – disruption to services
- Local Strategic Network Resilience Programme
- Wildlife Ways
- Vaisala Trial
- LED Upgrade Programme
- Fillongley Bridge – Full Deck Replacement
- Community Liveability Programme