



# Annual Corporate Customer Feedback Report

2022/2023

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council operates a Corporate Complaints policy and procedure which is overseen by the Customer & Cultural 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 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. There were 93 further complaints; Children's Services (86) and Adults Social Care (seven) that were investigated through this team. Further information can be found in the end of year reports for both Children's & Adults Services which can be found on the Council's webpages.
- 1.4 Complaints about Council housing landlord services are handled by our Arm's Length Management Company, Solihull Community Housing (SCH), including liaison with the Housing Ombudsman. The complaints process operated by SCH is in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

## 2. 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 complaint's 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

3.1 629 complaints were received for 2022/2023, an increase of 10 (1.6%) compared to the previous year when 619 were received.

Of the 629 complaints received 69 (11%) progressed to the second and final stage of the complaint's procedure compared to 80 (12.9%) in 2021/2022.

3.2 The complaints team review all complaints logged and it was identified that a further 140 complaints had been logged which had been cancelled and were recorded as service requests with the agreement of the customer.

3.3 SMBC's website includes a copy of the Complaints Policy and process and information about how to complain. The website is accessible for people with visual impairment or literacy issues via the 'Text resize' option and the 'Recite' button. The web pages can be translated into various languages by the reader.

3.4 The preferred access channel for customers to make a complaint continues to be digital consisting of online forms/emails (52.9%), telephone (45.2%), post (1.1%) with other methods (0.8%). Customers are encouraged to use the online methods where possible.

3.5 The Council also offers 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. We have had no translation requests for the year 2022/2023.

3.6 Key trends for the year were:

- There has been a slight increase in the number of complaints received.
- There has been a decrease in complaints escalated to stage 2.
- Service areas that provide services to all residents received the most complaints as forecast and reflected in previous years.
- 59.6% of all customers choose dissatisfaction with service delivery as the main reason for complaints.

3.7 969 compliments were received in 2022/2023, compared to 957 for the previous year, an increase of 12 (1.25%).

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.

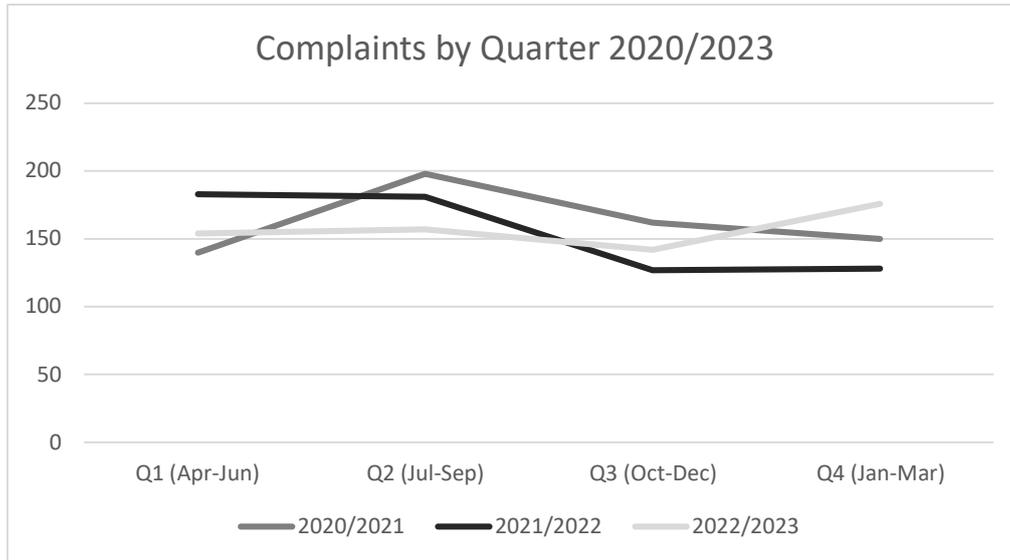
**Table One: Complaints and compliments by year 2020/2021 to 2022/2023**

	2020/21	%	2021/22	%	2022/23	%
<b>Complaints</b>	650	37.1	619	39.3	629	39.4
<b>Compliments</b>	1104	62.9	957	60.7	969	60.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1754</b>		<b>1576</b>		<b>1598</b>	

#### 4. Corporate Complaints Quarterly Service Area Analysis

4.1 Analysis has helped us to understand how and when complaints are received, it allows us to monitor the impact on seasonal services and trends in service delivery. To demonstrate this, complaints numbers have been broken down further. Graph One shows complaints received by quarter.

**Graph One: Complaints by Quarter 2020/2023**



4.2 There has been a decrease in complaints in both quarters one and two with an increase in quarter four from 2021/2022.

4.3 Planning Design and Engagement mainly planning services saw the biggest decrease in quarter one with 14 less complaints, this continued into quarter two with a decrease of 11 complaints. Issues in 2021/2022 had been identified which had resulted in an increase that year and training and support was put in place.

4.4 Highways Services had the following increases in complaints:

	<b>2021/2022</b>	<b>2022/2023</b>
<b>Quarter one total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>41</b>
Highways Maintenance	9	19
Traffic & Parking	9	16
<b>Quarter two total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Quarter three total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>38</b>
Traffic & Parking	6	22
<b>Quarter four total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>38</b>
Traffic & Parking	11	29

4.5 The increase in quarter one relating to new cycle lanes, no other trends were identified. Quarter three related to parking services with no trend and quarter four Traffic and Parking, 14 of these related to behaviour of enforcement officers.

- 4.6 Parks, grass, shrubs and trees had a decrease in quarter one by 10 complaints. We normally see an increase in this quarter with it being the start of the peak season. It is important to stress that this service trend does fluctuate and is very much influenced by weather and growing conditions depending on the year.
- 4.7 Income and Awards had a decrease from 2021/2022 in quarter three by seven complaints and quarter four by 11 complaints, there was no trend identified.
- 4.8 Waste & Recycling – in comparison to 2021/2022, quarter one had a decrease of 14 complaints and quarter two by 18 complaints, this is despite the new contract starting in April 2022. However, there was an increase in quarter four by 23 complaints, these related mainly to missed domestic waste collections due to service suspension as a result of heavy snow and icy conditions in March 2023.
- 4.9 Customer & Cultural Services had an increase in quarter two by six complaints, four of these related to Cemeteries with a total of 13 complaints, no other trends were identified. Quarter three had an increase of nine complaints with cemeteries receiving 11 more than the previous year. There were various issues with some relating to too many decorations around graves. In quarter four, cemeteries received a total of 21 complaints which was an increase of 13 from the previous year, these related to overall maintenance of cemeteries and facilities and personal items being removed from graves.
- 4.10 To help put the level of complaints into context, table two shows some of the activities undertaken by key service areas which tend to be the subject of complaints, with the number of complaints received.

**Table Two: Key Council Activities 2022/2023**

<b>Service Areas</b>	<b>Activity level</b>	<b>No of Complaints</b>
<b>Waste &amp; Recycling</b>		
• Household waste & recycling collections (refuse, garden waste, mixed recycling, glass)	11,829,172	181 (0.002%)
• Bulky Waste available collections	6,234	16 (0.26%)
• Visitors to Household Waste Recycling Centre	130,121	17 (0.01%)
<b>Income &amp; Awards</b>		
• Council tax bills issued	174,000	55
• New HB claims paid	682	(0.03%)
• New CTR claims paid	2,241	
	Award made to all residents liable for council tax	

Service Areas	Activity level	No of Complaints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration of government initiatives such as Energy Rebate Scheme</li> </ul>		
<b>Streetcare</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintained grass (m<sup>2</sup>)</li> <li>Maintained hard ground (m<sup>2</sup>)</li> </ul>	8.5million m2 4.2million m2	34 (% N/A)
<b>Planning &amp; Building Control</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning Applications</li> <li>Building Control Applications</li> <li>Initial Notices*</li> </ul>	2,690 1,139 957	43 (0.90%)
<b>Customer &amp; Cultural Services</b> <b>Solihull Connect</b> Number of contacts by channel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact Centre</li> <li>Walk in Centres</li> <li>Digital: Email / Webforms / Chat</li> </ul> <b>Cemeteries &amp; Crematoria</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cremations and burials</li> <li>Memorial headstone permits</li> <li>Scatters</li> <li>Grave reserves</li> <li>Reassignments</li> <li>Memorial sales</li> </ul> <b>Registration Service</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birth, Death and marriage registrations</li> <li>Births registered on behalf of Birmingham Registration services</li> <li>Copy certificates</li> </ul> <b>Libraries &amp; Arts Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor numbers</li> </ul>	278,817 26,432 14,374  3755 715 389 229 30 197  4,102  1,677 2,871  283,624	21 (.007%)   54 (1.02%)      1 (0.01%)   5 (.002%)
<b>Parks</b> Area of maintained shrubs (m <sup>2</sup> )	708,153	27 (% N/A)
<b>Parking Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking spaces maintained</li> <li>Penalty Charge Notices issued</li> </ul> <b>Highways Maintenance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potholes filled</li> <li>Streetlights maintained</li> <li>Drainage gullies cleansed</li> <li>Roads resurfaced</li> </ul>	2,799 35,153  1,095  26.1 Km.	84 (% N/A)  58

Service Areas	Activity level	No of Complaints
<b>Highway Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highway Permits processed</li> <li>• Traffic Regulation Orders made</li> <li>• Bikeability training courses</li> </ul> <b>Highway improvement schemes</b>	13,294 260  Five new pedestrian crossings Traffic signal junction upgraded HS2 new highway layouts & improvements to M42 J5a Footpath improvement schemes Parking Displacement programme	

\*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 three. The top three reasons are the same as for previous years:

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

**Table Three: Categories of complaints**

Complaint reason	2020/ 2021	% of Total	2021/ 2022	% of Total	2022/ 2023	% of Total
Dissatisfaction in service delivery	364	56.0	371	59.9	375	59.6
Dissatisfaction with the way we apply policy, a decision or a procedure	199	30.6	156	25.2	155	24.6
Impoliteness, rudeness, unfairness, bias or prejudice	54	8.3	63	10.2	72	11.5
Refusal to answer reasonable questions, misleading or unsuitable advice	27	4.2	26	4.2	25	4.0
Inappropriate use of personal information	6	0.9	3	0.5	2	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 5.2 Complaints indicating dissatisfaction with service delivery represented the greatest proportion at 59.6%.
- 5.3 24.6% of complaints related to dissatisfaction with the way policy or a decision was applied.
- 5.4 11.5% (72) complaints were made because of impoliteness and rudeness, of which 25 related to Waste & Recycling for crew behaviour and 29 for Highway Services for parking enforcement officers. There were six complaints received with regards to allegations of racism which have not been founded. Three for parking enforcement officers, two for waste and recycling operatives and one for an environment health officer. These will be picked up via the Equality and Diversity group. Individuals have received general customer care refresher training.

## 6. Complaint Timescales

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

**Table Four: Complaint Resolution Timescales 2022/2023**

	<b>Complaints at Stage 1</b>	<b>Complaints at Stage 2</b>
Resolved in 15 days	405	
Resolved in 16 to 20 days	165	
21 – 30 days	47	
Over 30 days	12	
Stage 2 in 20 days		65
Stage 2 over 20 days		4
<b>Total</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>69</b>

- 6.1 Of the 629 complaints registered at stage one, 570 were responded to within the 20 days, 47 were identified as complex or needed further time to investigate and responded to within 20 to 30 days in line with the policy and with the agreement of the complainant. 12 complaints exceeded 30 days and a breakdown by service area is provided in table five.
- 6.2 Of the 69 complaints escalated to stage two, 65 were responded to within 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 six.
- 6.3 If at stage one or two a complaint is more complex, the deadline can be extended and should be negotiated with the customer and agreed by the Corporate Complaints Lead. The number of complaints responded to within 20 days has increased year on year.

The complaints team monitor all complaint timescales to identify those approaching target completion, reminders are sent out through the complaints

system. The complaints team will liaise with the relevant co-ordinators or investigating officer/Head of Service where timescales are a concern.

- 6.4 There are a number of reasons for a complaint to exceed timescale:
- A. Complexity of the complaint: complaint 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. No recorded reason for delayed response.

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

Service Area Team	Total out of SLA	A	B	C
Regulatory Services	3		1	2
Planning Design & Engagement	4		1	3
Highways Services	1	1		
Income & Awards	3			3
Parks, grass, shrubs & Trees	1			1

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

Service Area Team	Total out of SLA
Growth Programmes	2
Income & Awards	1
Regulatory Services	1

- 6.5 The four complaints that exceeded timescales were monitored and the complaints team continued to work with all areas to ensure responses were sent out and customers were kept informed.
- 6.6 Income & Awards complaint was resolved at 25 days due to it being a complex complaint and further information required relating to the stage 1 before the stage 2 could be sent out.
- 6.7 It is important to note that one of the highest service areas to receive complaints, Waste & Recycling, dealt with all complaints at stage one and two within the timescales.
- 6.8 Despite constant 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 continues 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 sent as part of the complaints process as well as reminders from the complaint co-ordinator for each area.

## 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 seven shows the categories recorded after a complaint has been investigated.

7.2 In line with the Council's legal obligations under part seven of the Immigration Act 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 Seven: Categories of learning recorded**

Learning Category	2020/2021		2021/2022		2022/2023	
	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of Total
Improve revised service delivery process	254	39.1	324	52.3	<b>267</b>	<b>42.4</b>
Customer comments included in review of how policies & procedures are applied to inform decision making	211	32.5	121	19.5	<b>195</b>	<b>31.0</b>
Improvements in communication	145	22.3	124	20.0	<b>91</b>	<b>14.5</b>
Review behaviours and/or training needs for individuals or a team	40	6.1	48	7.8	<b>74</b>	<b>11.8</b>
Review of confidentiality procedures, carried out in accordance with the Data Protections Act.	0	0.0	2	0.4	<b>2</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>100%</b>

7.3 The following learning categories were identified as part of each complaint's outcome and a summary of the trends:

- Improve service delivery process – predominately relate to Waste and Recycling with complaints relating to missed collections, crew behaviour, not returning bins correctly and/or blocking access.
- Customer comments included in review of how policies and procedures are applied to inform decision making – majority relate to Highways Services

with regards to roadworks around Solihull which include road closures & implementation of new cycle lanes: Blossomfield Road & Widney Lane.

- Improvements in communication – All areas have identified improvement from complaints for this learning category:
  - Cemeteries received nine complaints relating to removal of items from grave plots and maintenance.
  - Streetcare- Various issues across the borough
  - Income and Awards mostly relate to not receiving automatic correspondence sent about council tax accounts and not receiving replies to emails.
  - Waste & Recycling with majority relating to HWRC booking system with customers unaware they need to book or thought they had booked but didn't receive confirmation.
- Review behaviours and/or training needs for individuals or a team – Predominantly Highways with majority relating to traffic enforcement officer's behaviour and Waste & Recycling with regards to crew's behaviour.

7.4 The complaints team run quarterly reports on recorded learning and work with service areas to discuss how this has been implemented to ensure service improvements.

7.5 As an important part of the response to customers, officers will advise of any learning and how it is intended to be implemented. Learning is part of the recorded outcome of all complaints. The complaints team will work closely with officers to monitor where learning is identified to ensure that it is followed up.

7.6 Examples of learning from complaints investigated during 2022/2023 have been included as appendix 3.2 alongside two case studies to show how a complaint is investigated from start to end, including how we learn from complaints.

## **8. Complaints by Ward**

8.1 To gather a further insight into complaints table eight shows complaints by Ward in which the complainant lived. This enables us to see if there are any new trends or exceptions that could be analysed further. Whilst ward reporting is an important insight into complaints activity, it is often difficult to identify any particular trends.

**Table Eight: Complaints by Ward**

Ward	2020/ 2021	% of Total	2021/ 2022	% of total	2022/ 2023	% of total	% of the borough's population
Out of borough or no address given	172	26.6%	137	22.1%	157	25.0%	
Elmdon	31	4.8%	35	5.7%	42	6.7%	5.9%
Silhill	34	5.2%	29	4.7%	38	6.0%	5.7%
Shirley South	32	4.9%	35	5.7%	33	5.2%	5.8%
Blythe	33	5.1%	43	6.9%	28	4.5%	6.8%
St Alphege	33	5.1%	36	5.8%	38	6.0%	6.4%
Knowle	30	4.6%	24	3.9%	17	2.7%	5.2%
Smiths Wood	28	4.3%	25	4.0%	23	3.7%	5.9%
Shirley West	35	5.4%	42	6.8%	36	5.7%	5.9%
Shirley East	28	4.3%	24	3.9%	22	3.5%	5.6%
Bickenhill	31	4.8%	28	4.5%	23	3.7%	5.9%
Meriden	17	2.6%	24	3.9%	28	4.5%	5.9%
Dorridge & Hockley Heath	30	4.6%	21	3.4%	36	5.7%	5.3%
Lyndon	32	4.9%	28	4.5%	29	4.6%	6.4%
Kingshurst & Fordbridge	30	4.6%	12	1.9%	24	3.8%	6.2%
Chelmsley Wood	18	2.8%	17	2.7%	23	3.7%	6.1%
Olton	21	3.2%	33	5.3%	17	2.7%	5.9%
Castle Bromwich	15	2.3%	26	4.2%	15	2.4%	5.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>100%</b>	

- 8.2 There has been a slight increase in customers logging complaints where no address has been provided. An address does not need to be provided to investigate a complaint.
- 8.3 In comparison to 2021/2022 there has been a decrease in complaints relating to waste and recycling, planning services and income and awards for Blythe, Olton and Castle Bromwich.
- 8.4 In compared to 2021/2022 there has been an increase in complaints predominantly relating to Waste & Recycling and Highways Services with no trend identified and six complaints relating to maintenance concerns at Robin Hood Cemetery which come under Customer and Cultural Services for Dorridge & Hockley Heath. Kingshurst & Fordbridge also saw an increase which related to Waste & Recycling issues with no trend identified.

## 9. Compliments

- 9.1 969 compliments were received in 2022/2023, an increase of 12(1.25%) compared to 957 compliments received in 2021/2022. Table nine shows the top five service areas to receive compliments.

**Table Nine: Compliments Service Area Top Five**

Service Area	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Highway Services	531	425	489
Cultural & Customer Services	294	322	293
Waste and Recycling	134	96	74
Streetcare	66	27	45
Parks, Shrubs, Trees	40	14	15

- 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 All service areas are encouraged to log compliments on the corporate system even if a local log is kept.
- 9.4 Table 10 shows the reasons for receiving compliments. The majority of compliments were made for named employee helpfulness, at 74.1% which is an increase from 71.9%. High standard of service has increased slightly to 13.8% from 13.5%.

**Table 10: Categories of Compliments**

Category	2020/ 2021	% of total	2021/ 2022	% of total	2022/ 2023	% of total
Named employee helpfulness	707	64.0	688	71.9	718	74.1%
High standard of service	224	20.3	129	13.5	134	13.8%
Helpfulness of service	121	11.0	119	12.4	96	9.9%
Other	52	4.7	21	2.2	21	2.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 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. 80% of comments are received by telephone following a customer enquiry, email (10.4%) and web (7.4%).

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 11 shows the number of comments recorded over the last three years.

**Table 11: Number of comments for last three years**

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/23
Number of comments	1070	808	823

10.4 Table 12 shows the service areas that received the most customer comments. Majority of comments relate to Waste and Recycling which is consistent with previous years.

**Table 12: Comments by Service Areas**

Service Area	Total
Waste and Recycling	412
Highway Services	140
Income and Awards	72
Streetcare	49
Customer Services	48

10.5 Key trends of customer comments registered in 2022/2023 relate to:

- Waste & Recycling - The majority of comments relate to an operational change in March where collection rounds were changed for over 40,000 properties. Comments were also received regarding the HWRC booking system.
- Customer and Cultural Services - Various comments about recorded message, repeating and waiting times.
- Highway Services - Blossomfield Road cycle track, various roadworks around the borough.
- Income & Awards - Mostly relate to letters received (council tax/benefits). The wording and tone is found to be intimidating or confusing.
- Streetcare- various issues round the borough.

## 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 provided can be found in Appendix 3.3.

- 11.1 For the year 2022/2023 the LGSCO received 12 corporate complaints: eight for Economy and Infrastructure and four for Income and Awards.
- 11.2 One complaint was upheld for Income & Awards where a fair remedy had already been provided by the council and no further action required.

## **12. Looking Forward**

- 12.1 During 2023/2024 the complaints team will continue to focus on timescales and improve support and training for those areas struggling with complaint response timescales.
- 12.2 Work with service areas and continue to provide them with quarterly performance information/data and comparisons for improvements.
- 12.3 It is important to extend the understanding on the make-up of the community who use the complaints and compliments service and how council services can be made more inclusive. One positive way of doing this is by introducing equality monitoring. The online complaints form and the Oracle Service Cloud system are being developed for the use of collecting equality monitoring data.
- 12.4 Briefings for all staff to increase awareness of corporate complaints, feedback and compliments policy.
- 12.5 Refresher training for investigating officers and head of services on effective complaints handling.
- 12.6 To develop and carry out customer surveys to gather feedback on complaints handling.

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