

# Telford & Wrekin Council Customer Feedback Report

Improving our Customer Experience  
Annual Report 2020/21



Protect  
Care and Invest  
to create a  
better borough





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## Report summary

This Annual Feedback Report shows that, this year, the Council has seen a 35% increase in the positive feedback received across the organisation. In addition to this, the number of corporate complaints received has decreased by 11%. This is a trend that has continued for the last seven years. When considering the total number of transactions and interactions undertaken by the Council during the year, the data in this report clearly shows that the number of complaints received continues to be well within accepted customer service industry standards and appreciably under 0.05% of all transactions. When considering that over 10.2 million refuse bins were emptied and our corporate contact centre alone handled 228,251 calls during the year. The Council continues to manage complaints well and is committed to putting right anything that has gone wrong.

This year has been challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as many managers were reassigned from their day-to-day roles in order to respond to the emergency, and yet all still managed to continue responding to customer complaints. It is therefore a remarkable achievement that response timescales only increased by one day during this period. It is also fantastic to see that the number of residents and customers who have taken the opportunity to provide positive feedback has increased significantly.

Without a doubt though, there are areas of opportunity for continued improvement, and the Customer Relationship team will continue to work with senior leadership teams to effectively utilise complaints intelligence and customer feedback to support positive improvements in service delivery.

Due to the pandemic, the Customer Insight Programme was regrettably put on hold for a period as the scheduled work involved face-to-face assignments that it was not possible to progress. Work did, however, recommence in July 2020 when Website Reviews were introduced. This was a perfect opportunity to utilise our Mystery Customers to undertake virtual remote reviews of our digital services. We also introduced usability testing, and our Mystery Customers were also able to test our new chatbot, ASK TOM, before it went live. The chatbot was launched in April 2021, allowing customers to get answers to their questions on our website 24/7. Our Customer Insight Programme continues to proactively identify and remedy concerns. It also continues to deliver organisational intelligence to drive transformation and continuous improvement by identifying trends and enhancements that could be made to customers' experience of our services. For more information about the Customer Insight Programme, please go to page 10.

In January 2021, we launched our new Customer Strategy and Customer Contract documents, during the development of which we took the opportunity to consult our Mystery Customers and other groups in the community. Feedback received during the consultation shaped an action plan, as well as the final Strategy and Contract themselves. These documents seek to outline our ambitions for the next four years, during which we want to work with our customers to develop quality services that are accessible to all, while making every contact count. Furthermore, we want to make sure that the experience our customers have is outstanding. We also recognise that to achieve this we need to get the basics right, pay attention to detail and make sure that we uphold high standards of customer service across the Council. To view our Customer Strategy and Customer Contract, please visit [www.telford.gov.uk/customerstrategyandcustomercontract](http://www.telford.gov.uk/customerstrategyandcustomercontract)



## Highlights of 2020/21

\* Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman





## Purpose of the report

- To give Members and Officers an overview of Telford and Wrekin Council's corporate customer feedback, including complaints and compliments, from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. This includes highlighting areas of positive performance and those for development.
- To outline the key developments and planned improvements to customer feedback processes operated by the Council.
- To consider how learning from customer feedback can be used to gain a better understanding of the experience customers are having while accessing council services, drive improvement by acting on the feedback received, prioritise quick wins and ensure that longer-term actions feed into the Customer Strategy, and continue to develop and improve the services we provide.

## Background

The Customer Relationship team co-ordinates complaints relating to three separate complaints processes. These are:

1. The Adult Social Care Statutory Process, reported separately in the Adult Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2020/21
2. The Children's Social Care Statutory Process, reported separately in the Children's Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2020/21
3. The Corporate Complaints Process. These are complaints relating to other services provided by the Council where there is no statutory complaints procedure

In addition, the team deals with a wide range of interactions with customers that do not go on to become formal complaints. These include general enquiries, MP Enquiries, Leader and Cabinet Member Enquiries, comments and suggestions, as well as any matters that are exempt from consideration under our complaints policies.

We recognise that our customers have a range of experiences when contacting us, working with us and using our services. Some of these experiences are positive, and we want to recognise and celebrate where good practice is evident, while others fall short of our standards, where it is essential that we learn from them. As an organisation, we provide customers with a mechanism to feedback to us both positive and negative experiences, and encourage a culture of learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Whenever possible, we take immediate action to put things right at the first point of contact, and if this can't be done, we operate a robust complaints procedure.



Above all, the way we deal with complaints is based on our co-operative values, as published on the Council website [www.telford.gov.uk/info/20268/co-operative\\_council/779/our\\_co-operative\\_values](http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20268/co-operative_council/779/our_co-operative_values) and the following key principles:

- Customer focus – listening to what people tell us and seeing things from the customer’s perspective
- Responsiveness – acting on what people say to us
- Promptness – making sure people get answers in good time
- Transparency – dealing openly and honestly with problems
- Proportionality – making sure that the resolution fits the complaint
- Learning – making sure complaints result in changes and improvement

Our policies are also published on the website [www.telford.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.telford.gov.uk/complaints)

A complaint is defined within the Council’s Corporate Complaints Procedure as:

**‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standards of service, action or lack of action or decisions taken by the Council, or the way in which council employees carry out their duties’**

Telford and Wrekin Council operates a two-stage process for all corporate complaints.

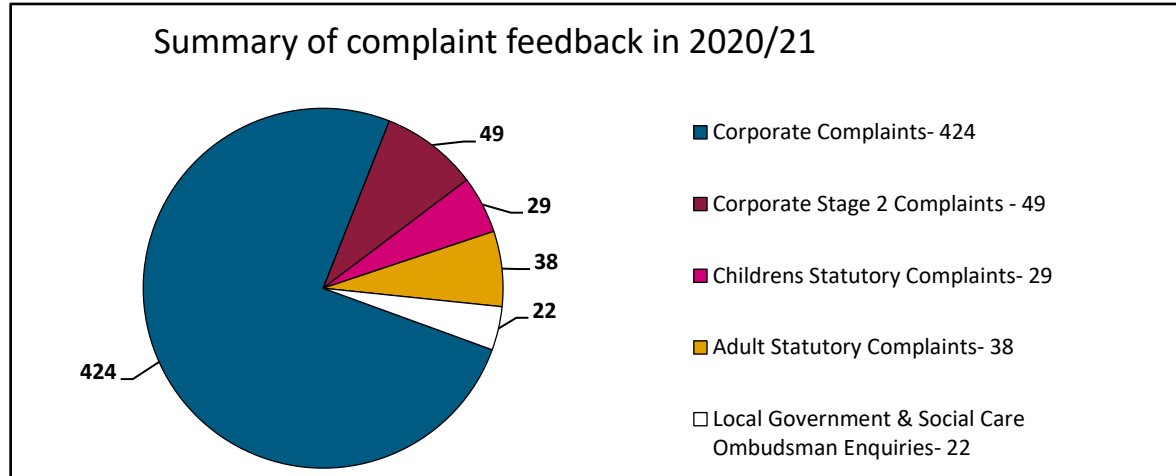
Complaints recorded under the formal procedure (and dealt with in this summary report) do not include those ‘first time’ representations that were effectively requests for a service and so dealt with as such. Accordingly, a new report of a missed bin collection or a broken swing, for example, would not be registered and dealt with as a complaint but instead as a service request. Of course, in the event that the Council failed to respond to this request appropriately, this may then generate a complaint. Appeals against decisions that have separate appeal routes are not dealt with as complaints.

For more information regarding corporate complaints in 2020/21, please go to page 12 of this report.



The charts below show the feedback received by the Customer Relationship team in 2020/21:

**Chart 1: Summary of complaint feedback in 2020/21**

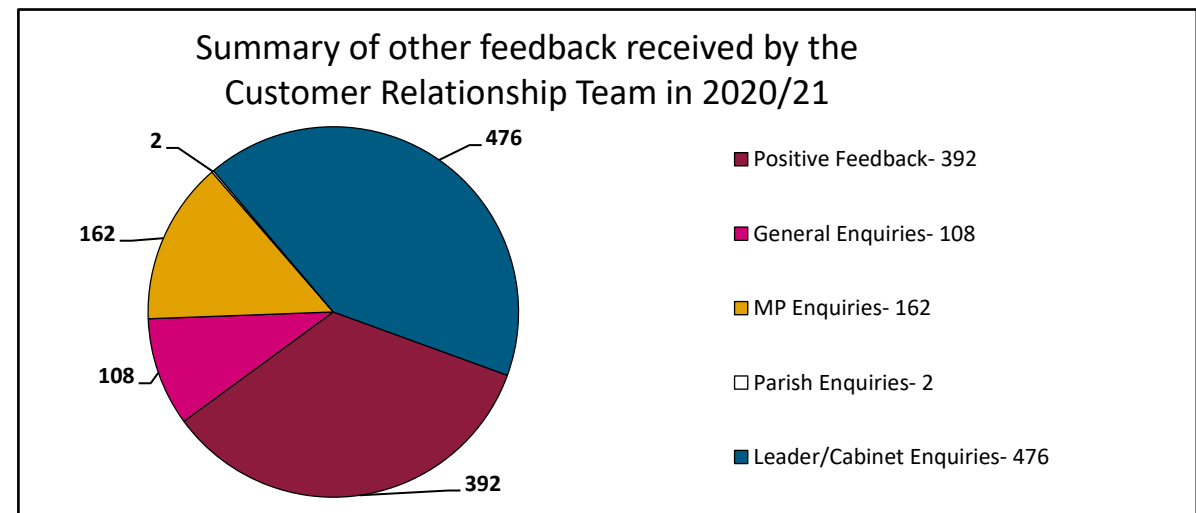


The volume of contacts received by the team totalled 1,702 in 2020/21. This is a 13% increase from the 1,504 in 2019/20. The team also took a total of 1,179 telephone calls over this period.

The number of calls received have dropped again in 2020/21 to 1,179, a 44% reduction on the 2,118 received in 2019/20 and 3,345 received in 2018/19. This is a reflection of the team proactively chasing responses and keeping customers updated.

Our customers' behaviour is changing, with more of them now contacting the team via digital methods such as emails and webforms, with 948 of the latter being completed in 2020/21 compared to 702 in 2019/20.

**Chart 2: Summary of other feedback in 2020/21**





# Positive feedback

In 2020/21, there was a 35% increase in the number of positive feedbacks received, which is excellent. This amounts to a total of 392 instances in 2020/21, amounting to a significant increase on the 290 received in 2019/20.

This year, Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (138) and Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (56) received the the most positive feedback due to the frontline nature of these directorates.

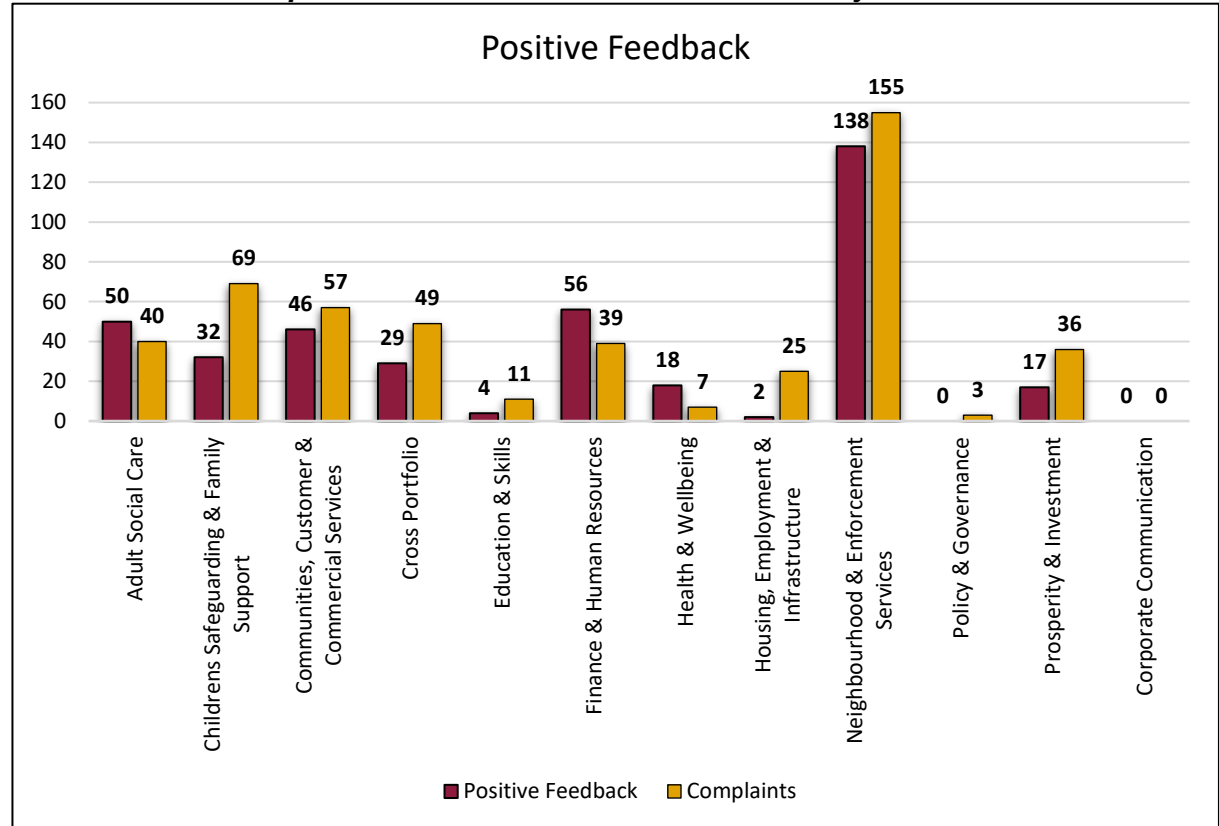
In 2020/21, the definitions of compliments and positive feedback were reviewed and the decision made to combine all positive feedback to recognise that it should be celebrated.

Positive feedback is logged and copied to Directors and Line Managers. This is recognised at service level through team briefs/ meetings and individual 'one-to-one's. The Chief Executive also makes regular 'shout-outs' about staff who have gone above and beyond in his weekly emails to staff.

The chart to the right highlights the positive feedback against the number of complaints received for each directorate.

It is positive to see that Adult Social Care, Finance & Human Resources and Health & Wellbeing each had more positive feedback than the total number of complaints they received.

**Chart 3: Number of positive feedbacks received in 2020/21 by directorate**







Here are some examples of positive feedback received during the year:

*"I write this with shaking fingers. I cannot put into words the sense of relief and gratitude I feel at being awarded this grant after 10 months without any government support at all. I cannot thank you and your colleagues enough for processing this for me. I will be forever in your debt not just for saving my business but for saving my dream."* Revenues Services

*"I think all of the staff in the Council deserve praise, as you are at the sharp end and we wouldn't be going very far without you all, you are all so wonderful for what you do."*

Occupational Therapy

*"...thank you so much- You have gone above and beyond what I expected and been exceptional. I was thinking I would have to wait in a long queue- but you have really helped and do so much more!"* Benefits Service

*"I want to say how pleased I was with the wonderful library service. I had six books delivered to my door by Amy who is also going to collect them and hopefully bring me some more. Well done Telford and Wrekin library services. Thank you"*

Librarv Services

*"I just want to relay my thanks to all of you at Telford & Wrekin Council for all your help and support. There is no fuss when it comes to contacting you. You have also sent me lots of information and contacts for your disability team which is very helpful. I just wanted to say I appreciate you and that I have never experienced any problems. It has been an absolute pleasure dealing with you all, you've been absolutely fantastic. What a wonderful service."* Concessionary Awards

*"I spoke to a lovely professional lady called Yvonne it was a delight to speak to this lady who sorted my collection out so efficiently and with such a friendly manner I came off the phone thinking there are, lovely people at the end of a phone despite what everyone is going through it's made my day... You are very lucky to have these wonderful people working for you."*

Customer Contact Centre



## Customer Insight Programme

Our Customer Insight Programme was launched in October 2019 with the aim of helping us review our services from customers' perspective. The programme is designed to deliver organisational intelligence to drive transformation and continuous development by identifying trends and improvements that could be made to enhance customers' experience of our services.

Following the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020, all active Customer Insight assignments were put on hold. This includes snapshot reviews, which had commenced in February 2020, through which we were reviewing 22 of our front-facing buildings - including our First Point locations, libraries, leisure centres and receptions. At the same time, our Customer Insight Officers were redeployed to other services to support the Council's response to the pandemic.

The Snapshot Reviews will be refreshed and relaunched in July 2021, at which time we also hope to obtain feedback from customers about our COVID-secure measures, in accordance with government guidelines.

The Customer Insight Programme now has 127 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers in order to undertake assignments. When COVID guidelines allow, we aim to recruit more Mystery Customers to ensure that, collectively, they are as representative of our borough as possible.

In July 2020, we recommenced the Customer Insight Programme with a new digital agenda. In keeping with the importance of the 'Stay Home, Keep Safe' message, assignments included website reviews that could be completed by customers remotely. Website reviews were completed for webpages related to Planning, Jobs, Schools, Housing and Bins & Recycling. There were also some 'Treasure Hunt' assignments to test our website's search tool. Following these reviews, improvements have been made to the website, including an update of information on certain pages and the removal of some 'pop-ups'. Following customer feedback, a new Webchat facility has also been developed for a wide range of services, including Waste, Council Tax and Housing. The Webchat service can now be found on the Council's homepage.



*"I thought the website was very well laid out and the information was detailed for this task. Not too busy and well branded."*

Continuing with the 'Stay Home, Keep Safe' guidelines, Mystery Customers continued to feedback on our digital developments by completing assignments around our redesigned Homepage and a proposed My Telford Bookmark, as these could all be carried out at home. This enabled us to continue to successfully gather valuable insights to better deliver our promises to our residents.

In October 2020, Mystery Customers were invited to a virtual focus group to provide feedback and help shape the Council's new Customer Contract and Customer Strategy documents.



## Usability Testing

In March 2021, Mystery Customers carried out usability testing of the Council's new chatbot before it went live. This is an artificial intelligence system that assists customers with their enquiries 24/7 on the Council's website. By customers typing in direct questions, it navigates them to the appropriate area of the website. The feedback we received was reviewed, with one key contribution stating that the initially-proposed name of the chatbot (Telfbot) would not be advisable. Based on the comprehensive feedback provided by this Mystery Customer, the chatbot has now been relaunched with the name...

### ASK TOM.



Mystery Customers will shortly undertake usability testing on our new My Telford app, which is currently in development. This will be launched in the next few months.

**76** assignments have been completed across Mystery Customer digital assignments since July 2020

**91%** of customers were satisfied with their experience with the Council's website

**91%** of customers were satisfied with the quality of information on the website

**92%** of customers were satisfied with the effort involved in navigating around the website

*"I scored 10. Fab. The size, layout and colours used are all great."*

*"I like the fact that you can tell you are on the council's website and it is attractive but doesn't look too busy or make it harder for visually impaired customers to see the pages"*

Some improvements have already been implemented, including the redesign of logos. Downloadable documents are now accessible with our Browsealoud tool on our Schools webpages. The quality of information has also been improved within the Jobs, Housing and Bins & Recycling webpages. Recommendations are now being monitored in an action plan to be completed over the next 12 to 18 months. Once actions have been completed, they will be reported through our 'you said, we did' social media articles.

Some headline figures from ASK TOM testing included:

**83%** of customers were satisfied with the usability of ASK TOM

**91%** of customers were satisfied with the overall look and feel of the functionality

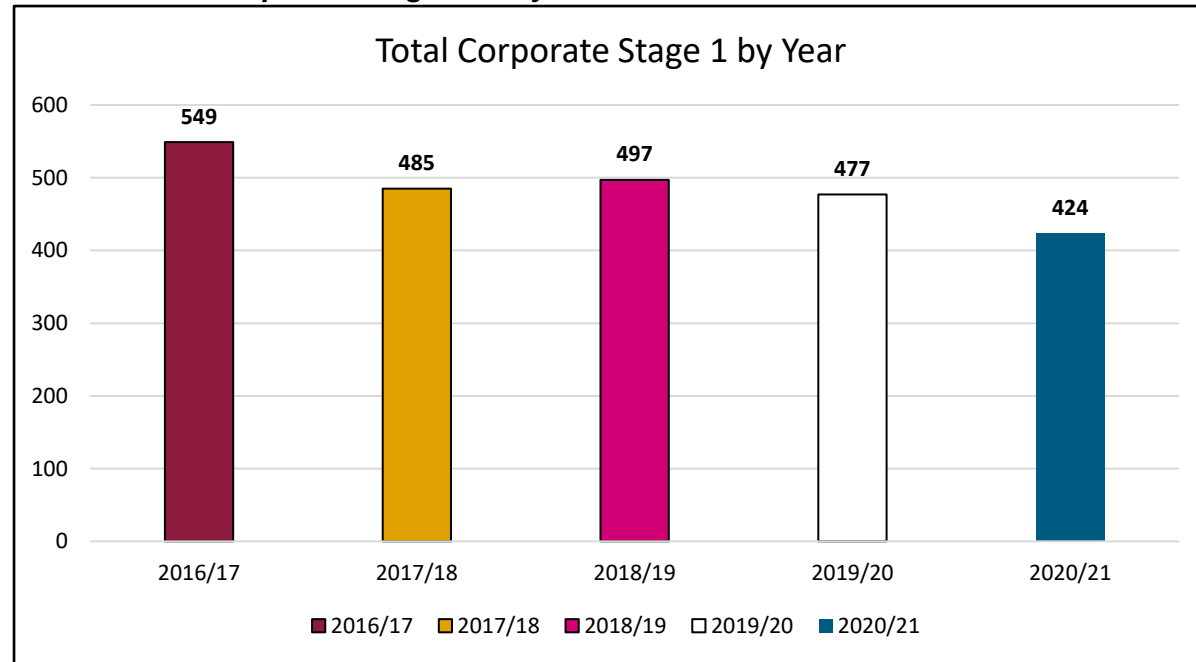
*"It was actually quite reassuring that so much information was available at my fingertips"*



## Corporate Stage One complaints

In the year 2020/21 a total 491 complaints were received, this figure includes both corporate and statutory complaints. The complaints were received from 473 complainants. There were 424 corporate Stage One complaints (those dealt with by more than one service simultaneously are counted as a single complaint). In 2019/20 we received 477, while in 2018/19 this figure was 497. The number of complaints received in 2020/21 decreased to their lowest value of the last seven years. However, the number of complaints received during the last year will have been directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The chart below shows comparisons of the number of complaints over the last five years only.

**Chart 4: Total Corporate Stage One by Year**



For further information regarding Stage Two complaints, please see page 18.

For further information regarding Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries, please see page 22.

The number of complaints continue to remain at a reduced level compared to those received in 2014/15, which saw the figure rise to over 750, although the numbers have remained reasonably static for the last four years.

Of these 424 complaints, 29 were escalated to Stage Two of our procedure and 22 were the subject of Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries (please note that some of these may have been for Stage One complaints prior to 2020/21). There has been a decrease in Stage Two complaints this year from the 49 seen in 2019/20 and 47 in 2018/19. There has also been a decrease in complaints progressing to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman which, in 2020/21, saw 19 corporate complaints referred.

Stage	Number of complaints
One	424
Two	29
LGSCO	19



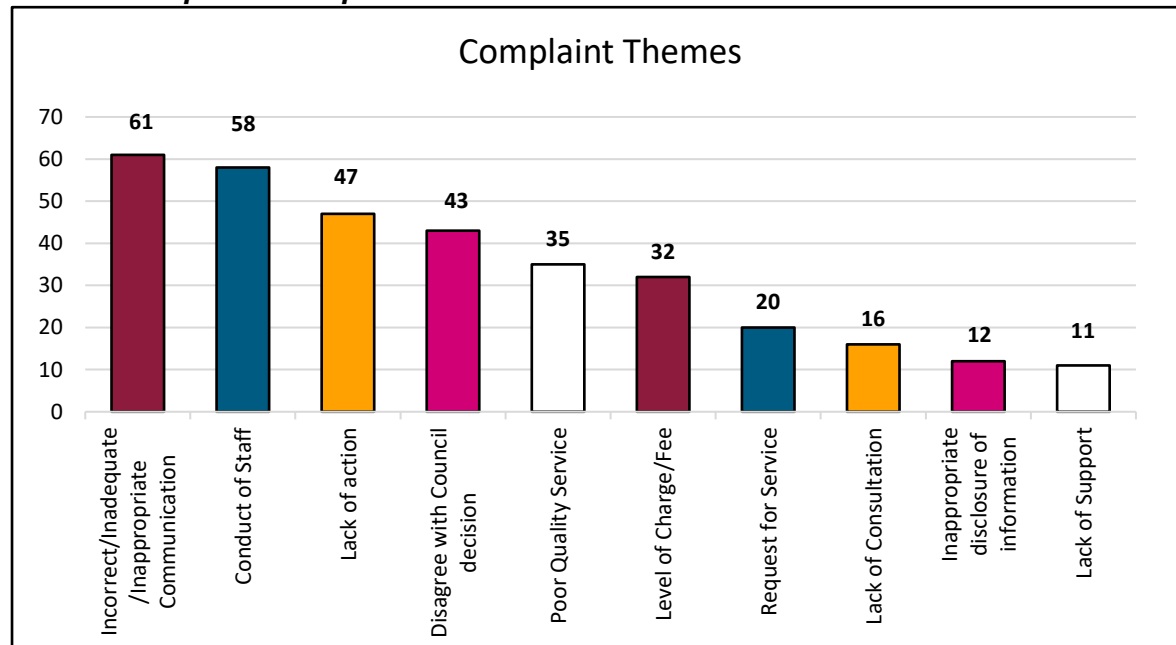
Customer access channels and digital contact (Stage One corporate complaints):

Complaint channel	Number of complaints
Email / webform	322
Telephone	91
Letter	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>424</b>

In 2020/21, 76% of corporate complaints were received via a digital access channel, which includes via our online complaints form and emails directly to the Customer Relationship team.

**Complaint Themes:**

**Chart 5: Corporate complaint themes 2020/21**

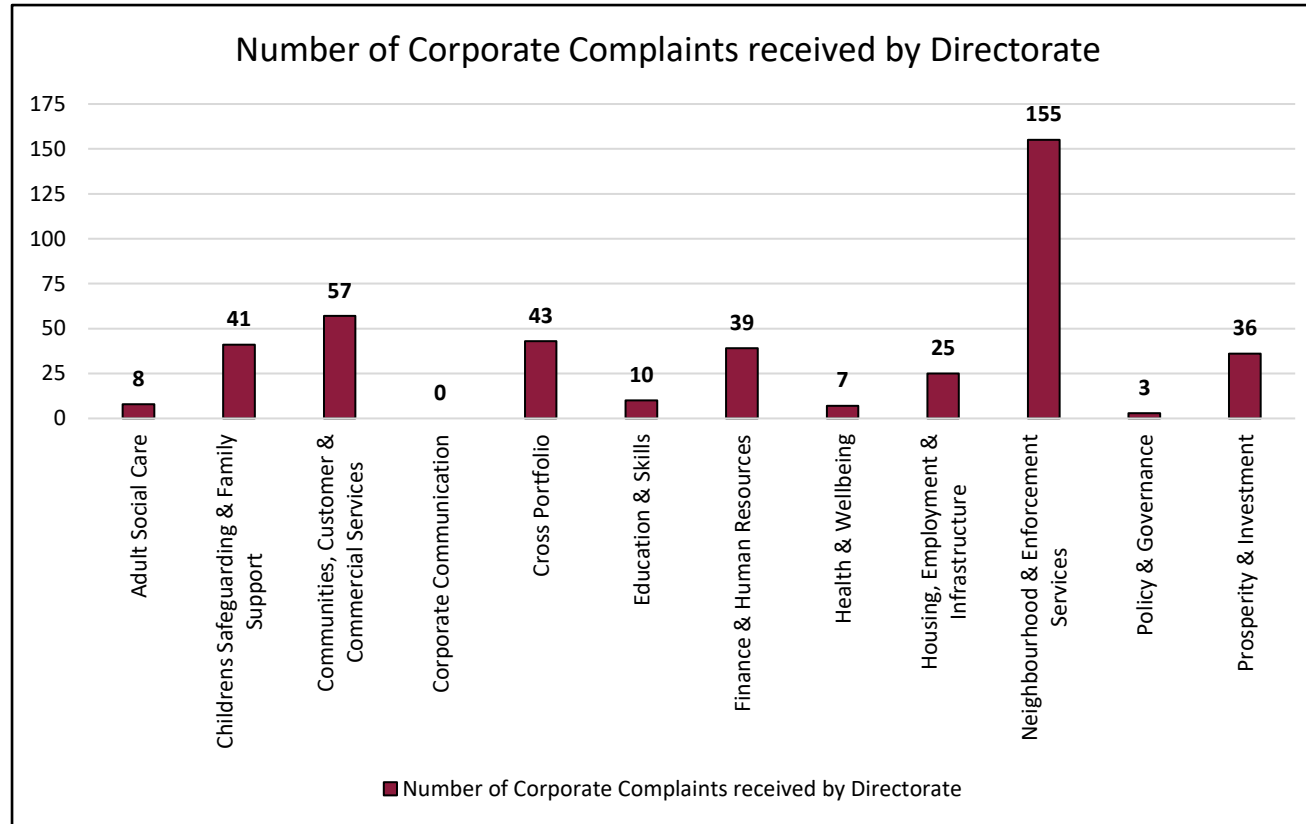


This chart shows the top 10 complaint themes for 2020/21. This is compiled from all complaints received prior to investigation. Further analysis of upheld themes can be found later in this report.

Communication and staff conduct accounted for the majority of complaints received, representing 28% of the total.



**Chart 6: Number of Corporate Complaints received by directorate**



The Directorate that received the highest number of complaints was Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (155). This is a slight increase on the 142 received in 2019/20. However, given the number of customer interactions that take place through Waste, Highways, Grounds Maintenance, Public Protection, Community Safety and Enforcement, this remains a low number.

The second highest number of complaints was received about Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (57). However, this is a significant decrease on the 98 received in 2019/20. This decrease can, in part, be linked to the decrease in interactions at our leisure facilities, theatres and cafés due to the various COVID lockdowns and restrictions.

For further analysis, see the Corporate Service Performance 2020/21 appendix on page 25.



## Stage One complaint outcomes

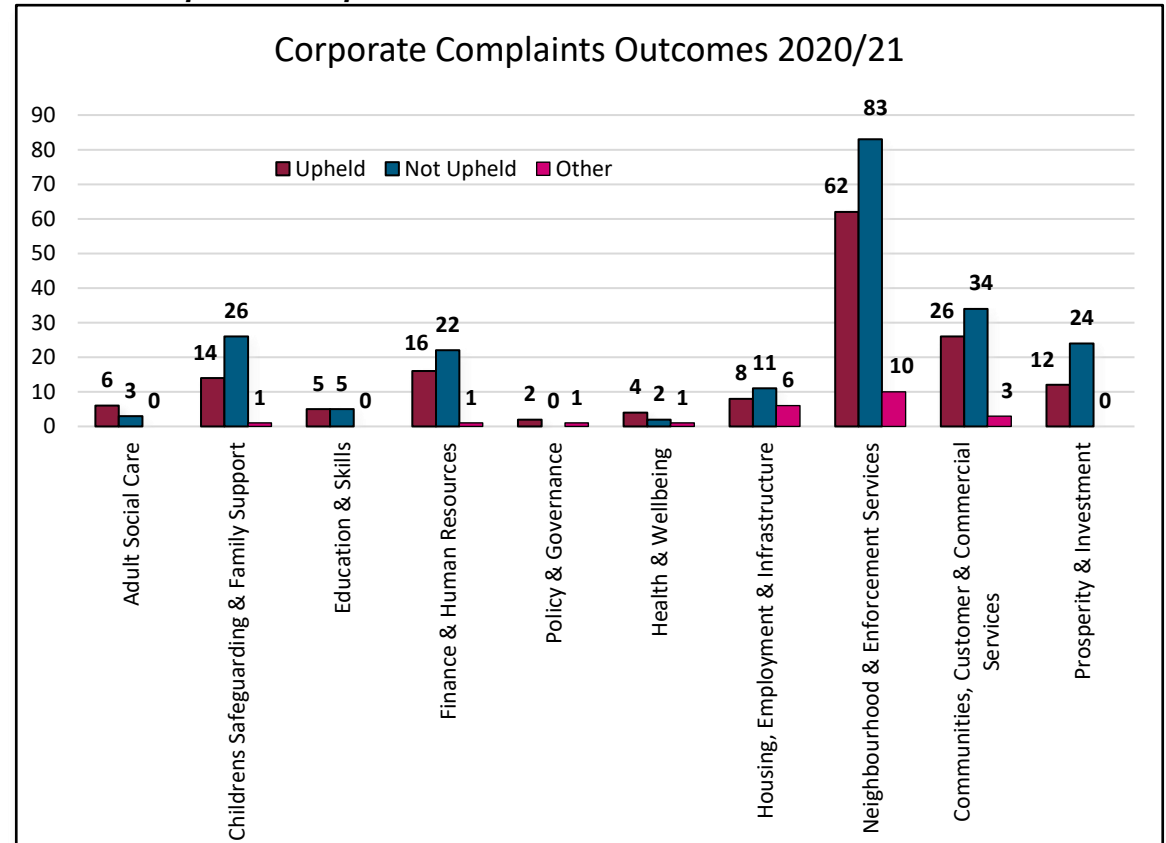
Of the 431 Stage One complaints that have been completed, 42% (180) were upheld. This is where services acknowledged that they could have done better, and represents an improvement on the 43% (201) in 2019/20 and 48% (239) in 2018/19. This indicates that there has been a reduction in cases where we could have done better. 53% (227) of Stage One complaints were not upheld and 6% (24) were either withdrawn, out of jurisdiction or resolved by the service.

**Chart 7: Percentage of complaints upheld by directorate**

Directorate	Percentage of complaints upheld
Adult Social Care	67%
Policy & Governance	67%
Cross-portfolio (Directorate)	58%
Health & Wellbeing	57%
Education & Skills	50%
Communities, Customer & Commercial Services	41%
Finance & Human Resources	41%
Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	40%
Children's Safeguarding & Family Support	34%
Prosperity & Investment	33%
Housing, Employment & Infrastructure	32%
Corporate Communication	0%

The most upheld complaints were within Adult Social Care (62) and Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (26). However, this is very much based on the numbers received for these directorates. The directorates with the highest proportion of upheld complaints were Policy & Governance and Adult Social Care, both at 67%. However, these received very few corporate complaints, which has impacted on their percentages.

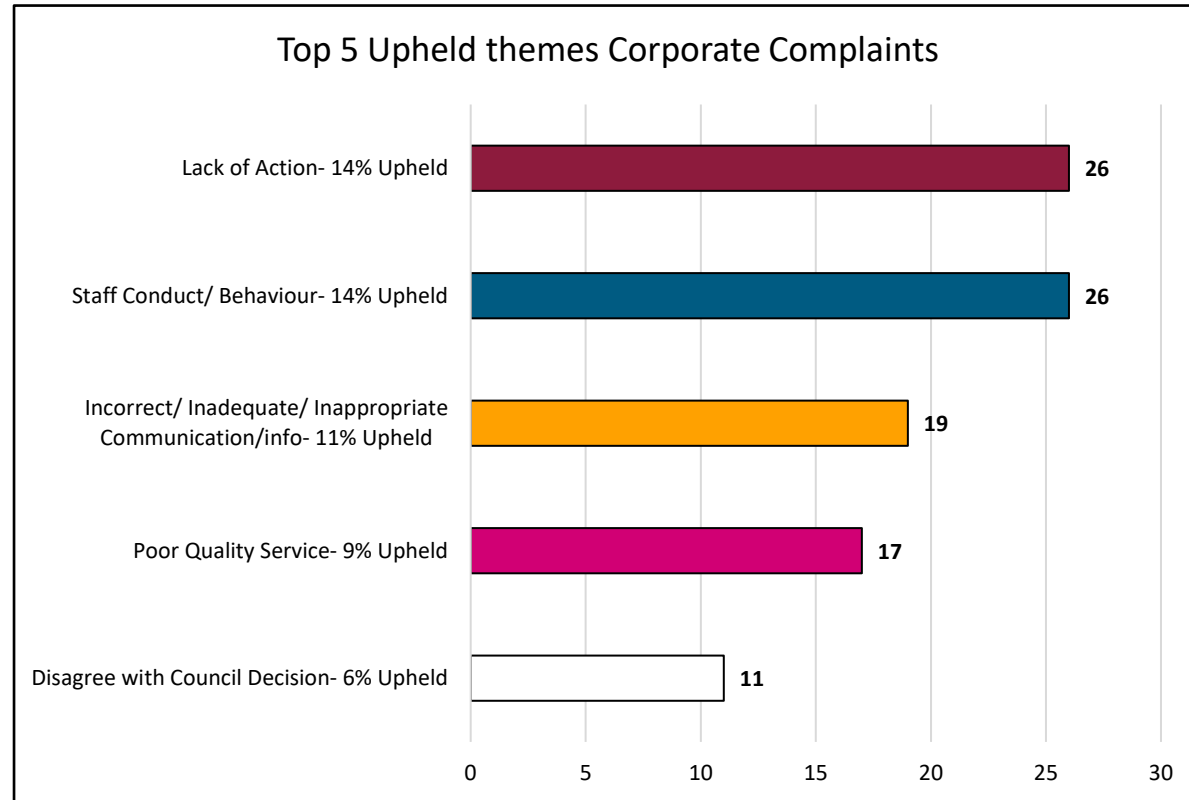
**Chart 8: Corporate complaint outcomes 2020/21**





The top five upheld themes identified corporately at Stage One were:

**Chart 9: Top five upheld themes for corporate complaints**



**Poor Quality Service** accounted for 9% of the upheld complaints. Again, this issue crossed many different services; however, a number were related to waste services and refuse collections. These upheld complaints were raised via Contract Management with our contactors. In the cases upheld, an explanation, apology and service were provided.

**Disagree with Council Decision** accounted for 6% of the upheld complaints. This included complaints raised against waste, enforcement, traffic calming and licencing. The remedies for these complaints were to offer an explanation, apology and provide the service.

180 complaints were upheld, the top five themes being:

**Lack of Action** accounted for 14% of the upheld complaints. This is where the customer complained because they had received no response. There were no trends in Service Areas for this concern and it was seen to cut across all Directorates. In the cases upheld, an explanation, apology and service were provided.

**Staff Conduct / Behaviour** accounted for 14% of the upheld complaints. Staff conduct and behaviour covers a variety of concerns, including a lack of support from individual officers, no identification shown when attending a property, how a member of staff spoke to a customer and the general behaviour of staff, whether face-to-face or over the phone. In the cases upheld, an apology was given, the officers were spoken to by their Line Managers and additional training given.

**Incorrect / Inadequate / Inappropriate Communication / Information** accounted for 11% of the upheld complaints, with the issue crossing many different services. Generally, the concerns raised involved records not been updated correctly (resulting in notices being issued), services not making contact with customers to provide an update, or them not returning calls. The majority of these complaints received an explanation and apology.



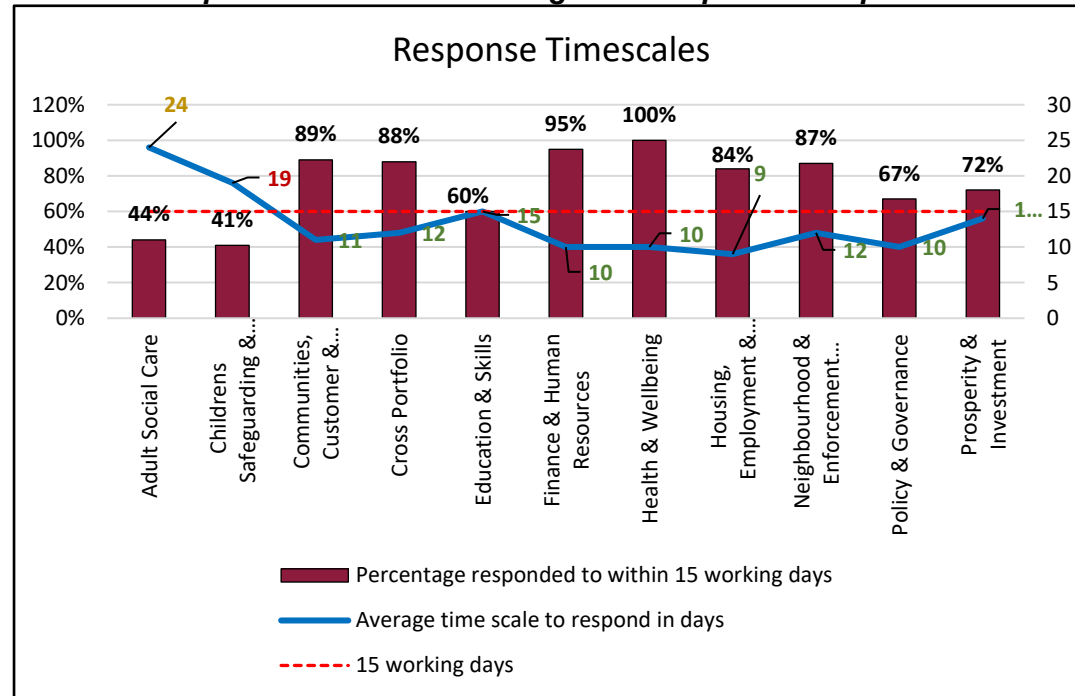


# Timescales for responses at Stage One

The Council's Corporate Complaints Policy states that Stage One corporate complaints should be responded to within 15 working days. This may be extended in exceptional circumstances by a further five days. The following chart shows the percentage of complaints responded to within 15 working days by directorate and also the average number of days for each to respond to corporate complaints at Stage One.

The data indicates that, in the main, directorates are meeting the corporate timescale of 15 working days, which is excellent.

**Chart 10: Response timescales for Stage One corporate complaints**



**Please note:** 2020/21 has been an unprecedented year, during which the Council has and continued to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had an impact on the Council's ability to respond to complaints within timescales, as officers have sometimes been assigned to alternative roles and duties. During this time, complainants were constantly updated regarding the progress of their complaints and when a response would be available.

However, the Council has managed to respond to corporate complaints in an average of 12 days, which is well within the 15 working day timescale.

82% of complaints were responded to within the 15 working day timescale, an increase on the 81% achieved in 2019/20. Our local target is to respond to 90% of corporate complaints within 15 working days. Finance & Human Resources and Health & Wellbeing exceeded this target during the year. Other directorates also saw an improvement in their percentage response e.g. Communities, Customer and Commercial Services, which saw an improvement from 83% in 2019/20 to 89% in 2020/21.

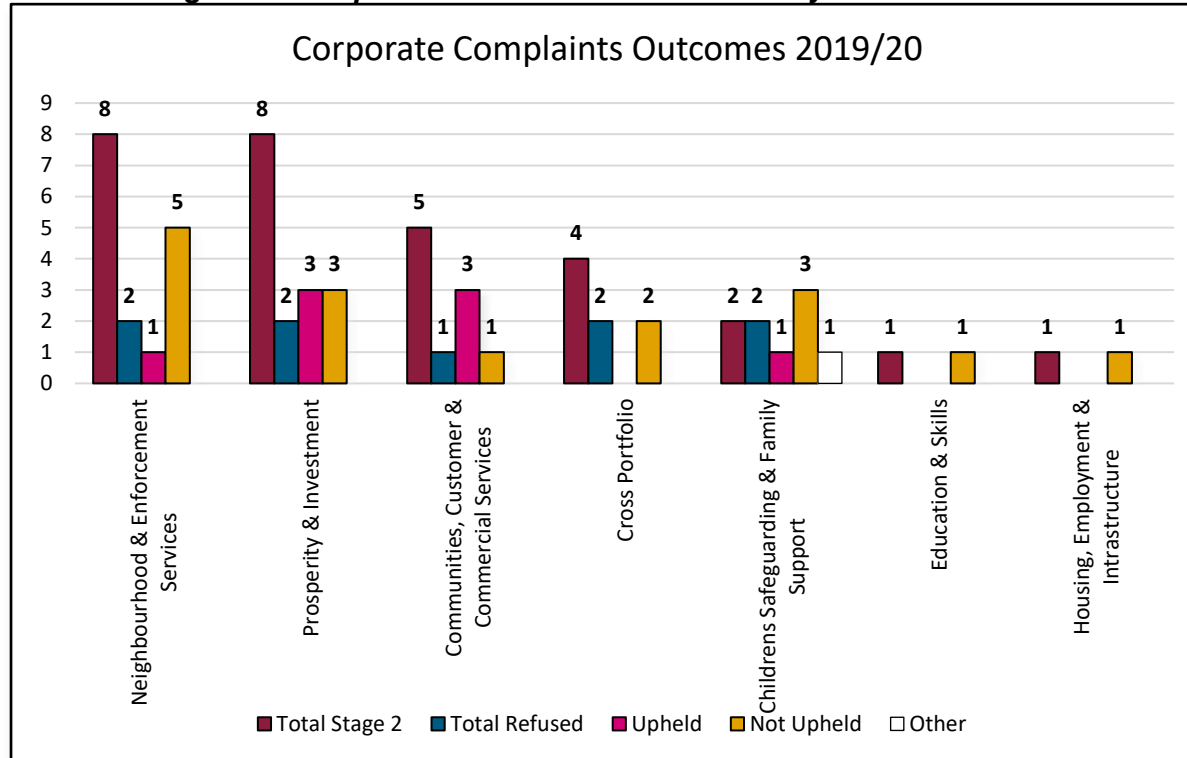
For further information and analysis regarding the five directorates that received the most complaints, please refer to Appendix A. This also includes dashboard data for the remaining five directorates, Corporate Communications and cross-portfolio complaints.



# Corporate Stage Two complaints

During 2020/21, 29 corporate Stage One complaints (7%) progressed to Stage Two of the process. This represents a 3% decrease on the percentage that progressed in 2019/20, 49 (10%). All investigations have now been completed.

**Chart 11: Stage Two complaints received and outcomes by directorate**



A higher volume of Stage Two complaints were seen in Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (8) and Prosperity & Investment (8).

Health, Wellbeing & Commissioning, Adult Social Care, Financial & Human Resources and Policy & Governance had no complaints escalated to Stage Two in 2020/21, meaning that they are not detailed in Chart 11.

Out of the 29 complaints, it was considered that nine had already been addressed at Stage One or the desired outcome that the complainant was seeking was not achievable by progressing their complaint further, i.e. there would have been no added value in taking the complaint through to a full Stage Two investigation.

These complaints were responded to in an average of nine working days. The aim is to respond to Stage Two escalation requests within 10 working days.

Of the 29 Stage Two complaints, 20 resulted in full investigations. This is a 43% decrease on the number completed in 2019/20 (35). 40% of full investigations were upheld.

The average number of working days taken to complete a full investigation was 29. This is an increase on the 24 days taken in 2019/20. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic did affect these timescales; however, this figure is still within the extended timescale of 65 working days outlined in the complaints policy.



# Learning from Corporate Complaints

Although they provide an overall picture of our services, we should not, however, be looking purely at the numbers. We should also be focusing on the learning we have undertaken from these complaints.

Complaints are a valuable source of information that can help to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. We know that numbers alone do not tell us everything about attitudes towards complaints and how they are responded to locally. Arguably, it is of greater importance to understand the impact that complaints have had on people and to learn the lessons from them to so as to improve the experience of others.

Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld, but also in some instances where no fault was found but the Council recognises that improvements to services can still be made.

Occasionally, during the course of an investigation, issues will be identified that need to be addressed over and above the original complaint. The Customer Relationship team will then work with services to ensure that they see the “bigger picture” so that that residents receive the best possible service from the Council.

## Remedial actions taken from resolved complaints at Stage One in 2020/21

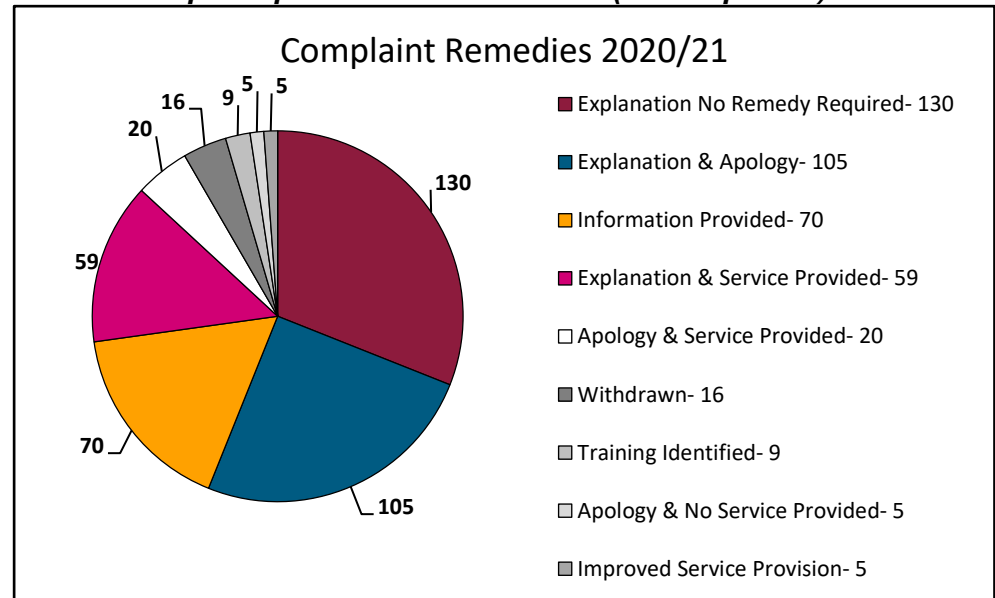
All 180 complaints where fault was found have been reviewed by the Customer Relationship team to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault and identifying any wider learning to avoid such issues recurring in the future.

Remedial action typically consists of both individual redress (e.g. an apology or carrying out overdue work) and wider actions that may affect many other customers. On some occasions, the fault has already been remedied - so the complaints process is used to ensure that the appropriate action has been taken.

Of the remedies recorded against corporate complaints in 2020/21:

- 25% were to provide an explanation and an apology
- 31% were to provide an explanation and no remedy was required
- 14% were to provide an explanation and the service was provided
- 5% were to provide an apology and the service was provided

**Chart 12: Top complaint remedies 2020/21 (all complaints)**





## Positive improvements

Below are some examples of positive changes that have resulted from learning following Stage One complaints:

- The Financial Case Management client charging process has been updated, which will improve timescales
- Procedures reviewed so there is better preparation and communication between social workers prior to meetings
- The omission of an external staircase from a description at the validation stage of a planning application has been corrected
- All officers who complete financial agreements now undertake a one year online course and also have to complete an induction programme, including training to the required competency
- Contactors have been reminded of the fulfilment standards expected in relation to sightlines at junctions to ensure that, when signs are installed, they do not obstruct them
- New proof of residency procedures for Revenues Enforcement agents have been implemented
- Procedures have been reviewed in our Highways team to improve response times to enquiries
- The telephone calls for the Financial Case Management team are now recorded
- The Enforcement team have reviewed the policy regarding images of those under 16 years old appearing in posts linked to ongoing criminal investigations
- The procedure regarding letters from the Planning department has been reviewed and validation officers now check all printing
- We've implemented a revised monitoring process in relation to complaints against the Council's grounds & cleansing contractor around timescales for responses

**YOU SAID...**

Planning letters had not been issued in accordance with procedure.

**WE DID...**

The process was reviewed to ensure this doesn't happen in future. All printing is now checked by validation officers.

[www.telford.gov.uk/yourviewsmatter](http://www.telford.gov.uk/yourviewsmatter)

Protect  
Care and invest  
to create a  
better borough

Telford & Wrekin  
COUNCIL



- Worked with the contactors at our Household Recycling Centres on solutions to increase information for site users on waiting times and restrictions
- Where incorrect information had been provided to a customer, this has been fed back to officers and training given
- Additional training has been given to officers regarding communication over the telephone and how to manage calls effectively

Below are examples of positive changes that have resulted from learning following Stage Two complaints:

- The Enforcement team have reviewed the process for Penalty Charge Notice challenges and will now accept verbal representations in specific circumstances
- The Anti-social Behaviour team will make sure that Community Trigger-related correspondence provides details of any agreed actions from multi-agency meetings
- The Waste team have added details to their webpages advising that last entry to our Household Recycling Centres might be earlier than advertised due to COVID-19 compliance
- The Commissioning & Procurement team have introduced a new escalation process to ensure that delayed payments are progressed sooner
- Customer Contact Centre and Switchboard advisors have been reminded of call escalation and termination processes
- Family Connect have been reminded that calls should be handled in a professional and sensitive manner

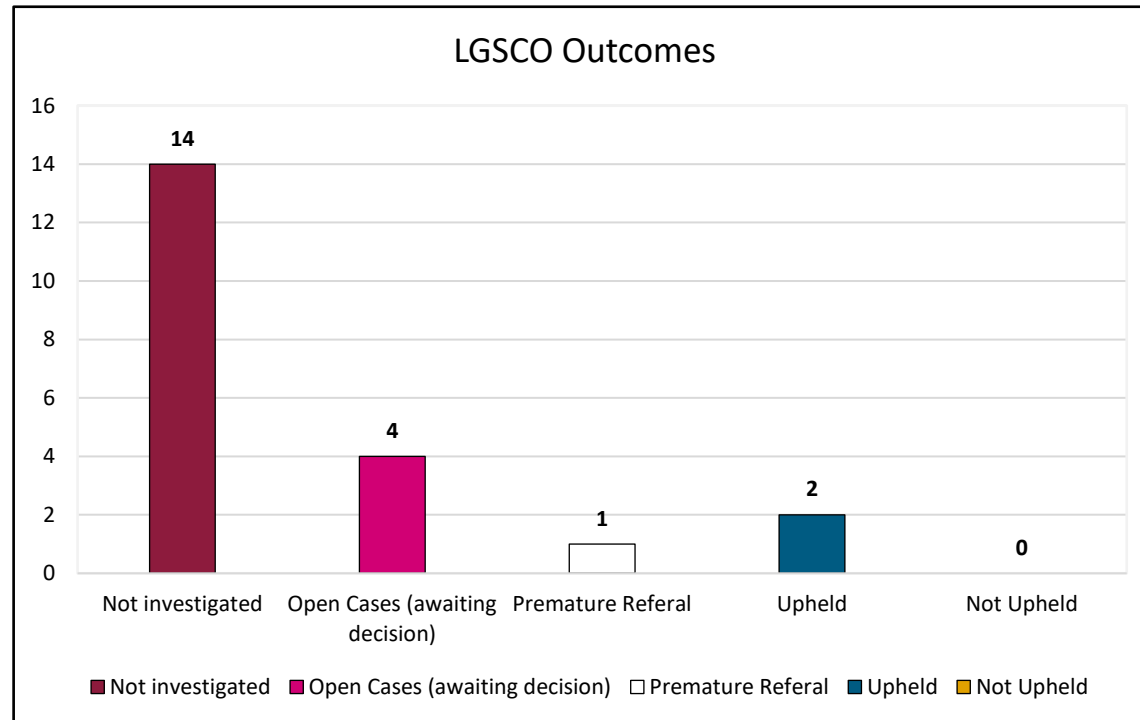


## Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) has the authority to investigate complaints when it appears that our own process has not resolved them. Complainants can refer their complaint to the LGSCO at any time, although the Ombudsman will generally refer them back to us if they have not been through our process first. In exceptional circumstances, the Ombudsman will look at things earlier; this usually being dependant on the vulnerability of the person concerned.

During this period, 19 complaints were forwarded to the LGSCO.

**Chart 13: Corporate LGSCO outcomes**



Of the 19 corporate complaints, four remain open awaiting a decision. Two decisions were also received in 2020/21 in respect of complaints escalated in 2019/20.

There were two upheld corporate complaints in 2020/21, both of which followed complaints that were escalated in 2019/20.

Telford & Wrekin Council has taken learning from the upheld decisions, and 100% of recommendations made by the LGSCO have been completed by us.

More information regarding the Council's performance and LGSCO decisions can be found at: [www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre](http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre).



## Concluding comments

The data held in this report highlights that there has been a 6% increase in the formal customer feedback received in 2020/21. Although there has been an 11% reduction in the number of complaints received, the number of positive feedbacks has increased by 35%.

Whilst the number of complaints received is small in comparison to the number of transactions, each service has used the complaints they have received to inform ongoing service improvements.

The outcomes for this year are positive when considered against the backdrop of the national response to COVID-19 and the fact that officers were also undertaking other duties as a result. Our overall response timescales have increased slightly from 11 to 12 working days during the year. However, this remains within the timescales outlined in our Corporate Complaint Policy and was expected given the challenges faced.

In 2021/22, we must remain focussed on continuous learning from complaints, even in cases where the complaint is not upheld and no fault is found. In these instances, we need to consider if there is a point in the customer journey that could be improved in order to prevent repeat complaints in the future, for example via improved communication or access channels.

All complaints are an opportunity to learn and improve the service we provide.

Actions will be monitored going forward and services challenged to follow-up on learning opportunities from all complaints, including those that are not upheld. This is to ensure that positive changes continue to be made to customers' experience when they do business with the Council.

Feedback from our Customer Insight Programme has also added to the customer feedback received in 2020/21, and the programme will continue in 2021/22 to ensure that we are proactive in trying to prevent complaints and improve our customers' experience.

Real time instant insights will also be gathered via new QR code surveys located in many of our buildings, including our libraries, leisure centres, receptions, cafés and Register Office, and also from our Contact Centre satisfaction survey.

We will also continue to ask our customers to user-test new technologies and processes so that they remain involved in the development of our services.



## Oversight and support provided by Customer Relationship team

The Customer Relationship team continues to support Service Areas to both manage and learn from complaints. The key services they offer are:

1. To manage and support the Council's approach to customer intelligence, ensuring we effectively manage and learn from our interactions with customers
2. Provide support to services concerning all aspects of customer insight and obtaining feedback
3. Perform in-depth and snapshot reviews of our services, our key physical front doors and digital front door
4. Provide services with complaints advice and support, including support with persistent and unreasonable complainants
5. Provide reports on the quality of complaint responses and make recommendations for improvement
6. Act as a critical friend to challenge service practice
7. Provide advice on drafting comprehensive responses to complaint investigations
8. Continue to escalate overdue complaints to Directors

## Customer Relationship team priorities for 2021/22

During 2021/22, the Customer Relationship team will focus on a number of key priorities:

- Continue to roll out the Customer Insight Programme, Mystery Customer Snapshot Reviews and Mystery Customer Website Reviews, with the view to proactively reduce complaints further
- Perform a review of how we obtain customer feedback across the Council, mapping what feedback different services gather and ensuring that we obtain feedback from all demographics
- Drive an improvement in the percentage of complaints responded to within timescales from 82% to 90%
- Obtain approval for our reviewed and updated complaint policies
- Continue to provide a quarterly and monthly reporting dashboard of performance data to senior management so that improvement can be driven forward continuously during the year
- Continue to improve and add to the resources available to managers when responding to complaints and other correspondence, while encouraging self-help
- Work to maintain low levels of maladministration findings by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman
- Develop a new customer service training package
- Organise Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman complaint training for managers





## Appendix A: Corporate Service Performance 2020/21

Greater detail has been provided for those services that received over 50 complaints during the year. A breakdown of the headline figures is available for all directorates on page 29.

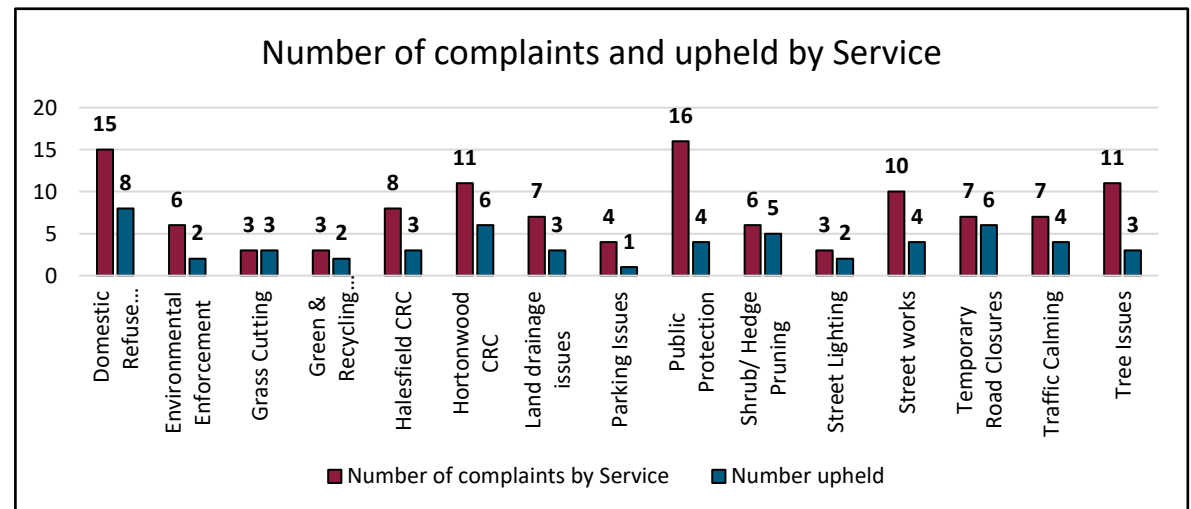
### Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services



The majority of Neighbourhood & Enforcement services are customer-focused frontline services that have millions of interactions with customers during the year. Our Waste Services team emptied approximately 10.2 million refuse bins across the borough in 2020/21. Furthermore, 99.94% of bin collections were completed on time. Our Neighbourhood Services team facilitated the emptying of 2,414 public litter bins in 2020/21, and over 10,600,000 square metres of ground was cleansed and maintained during the year.

The majority of complaints were received by Public Protection and Domestic Refuse Collections. The chart shows the number of complaints per service where three or more complaints were received.

**Chart 14: Number of complaints for Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services**





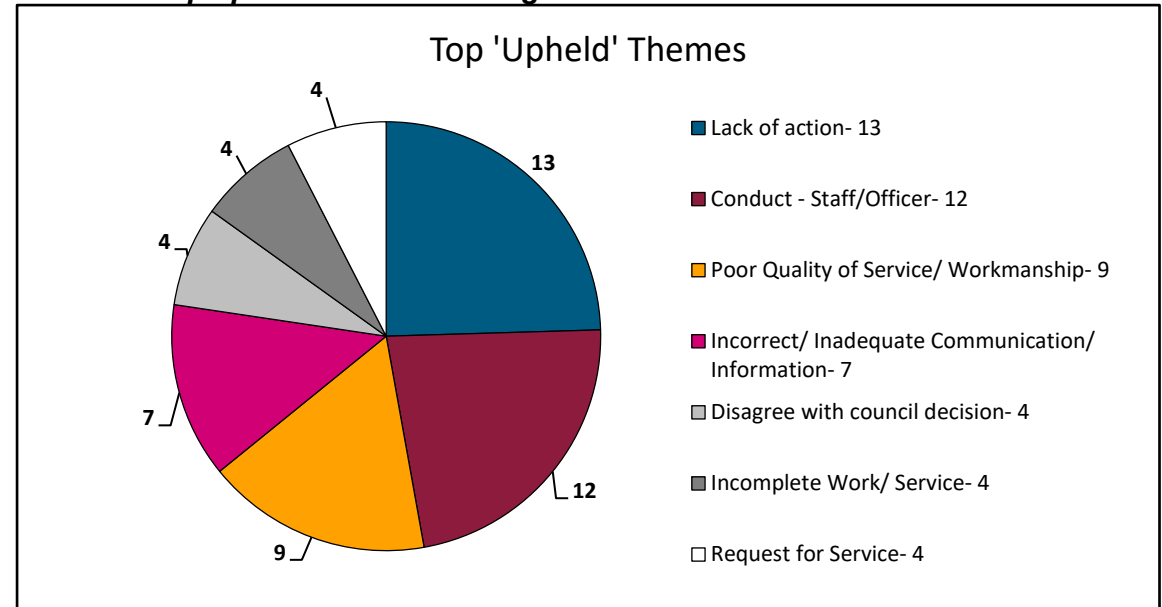
Public Protection received 16 complaints, four of which were upheld. Domestic Refuse Collections received 15 complaints, eight of which were upheld - this being due to a variety of issues, including whole-street and individually-missed collections. The number of complaints in this area has significantly decreased from the 31 complaints received in 2019/20, of which 25 were upheld.

Tree issues resulted in 11 complaints, three of which were upheld. Issues included no notification of works, disagreement with hedge removal and timescale to action not meeting customers' expectations.

Whilst 40% (62) of complaints were upheld, this is extremely low compared to the number of interactions that took place across this directorate.

It should be noted that 12 upheld complaints related to staff conduct or behaviour. 13 complaints that were upheld related to a lack of action. These complaints were against a number of services, including Public Protection, Street Lighting and land drainage. In situations where there is a delay in carrying out actions, customers should be updated and their expectations managed.

**Chart 15: Top upheld themes for Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services**

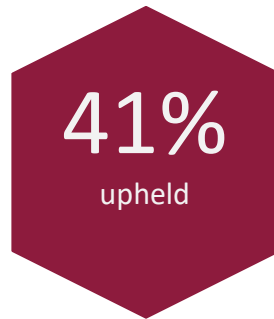


Below are details of the number of complaints and positive feedbacks received in respect of the main contractors for Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services. In 2020/21, the amount of positive feedback exceeded the number of complaints received for each contractor. All complaints are monitored as part of contract management.

Contractor	Complaints	Positive feedbacks
Veolia	35	75
Idverde	13	32
Balfour Beatty	3	5
Prysmian	0	3



## Communities, Customer & Commercial Services



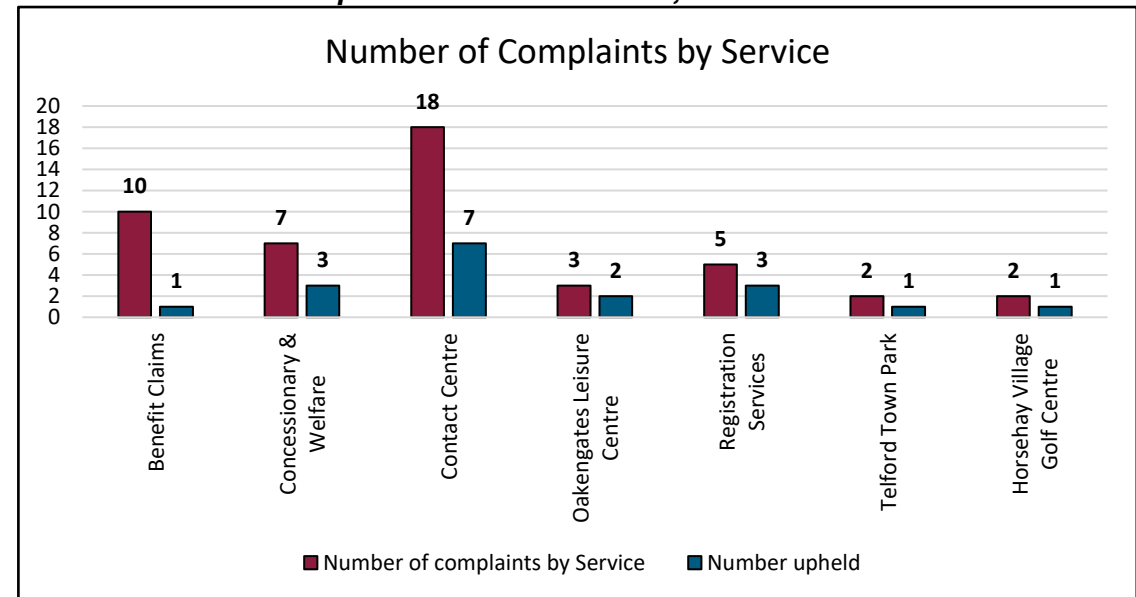
The chart to the right shows the number of complaints received by services where three or more complaints were lodged. The majority of complaints related to the Customer Contact Centre.

Visitors to our leisure centres decreased significantly during the year due to COVID restrictions and lockdowns. Many officers from Leisure Services were redeployed in response to the pandemic, while The Place@Oakengates Theatre became a testing centre.

The total number of customer contacts received and dealt with by our Contact Centre in 2020/21 was 228,251, which is fewer than the 278,194 handled in 2019/20 due to a reduction in enquiries about services caused by the pandemic.

Additional phone lines were also provided during the year, including a Community Support line to assist shielding residents access food parcels, prescriptions and other support.

**Chart 16: Number of complaints for Communities, Customer & Commercial Services**





Of the upheld complaints, the main service was the Customer Contact Centre (18), who had seven complaints upheld. This is a 4% reduction in upheld complaints compared to 2019/20 and also represents a 36% reduction in the number of complaints received since 2019/20. The seven upheld complaints related to staff conduct, quality of service, lack of action and disagreement with council decisions.

The Benefits Service received ten complaints, one of which was upheld, due to access to the service by phone and issues with automation on the line. The Concessionary & Welfare team received seven complaints, three of which were upheld. Two of these related to staff conduct and the other related to a delay in notifying a change. Training was identified for staff, and an explanation and apology provided.

The top 'upheld' themes for the directorate were as follows:

There were 26 upheld complaints, representing 41% of the total.

Six upheld complaints related to staff conduct/behaviour. In each case, Team Leaders have been working closely with the officers involved to prevent recurrences in the future.

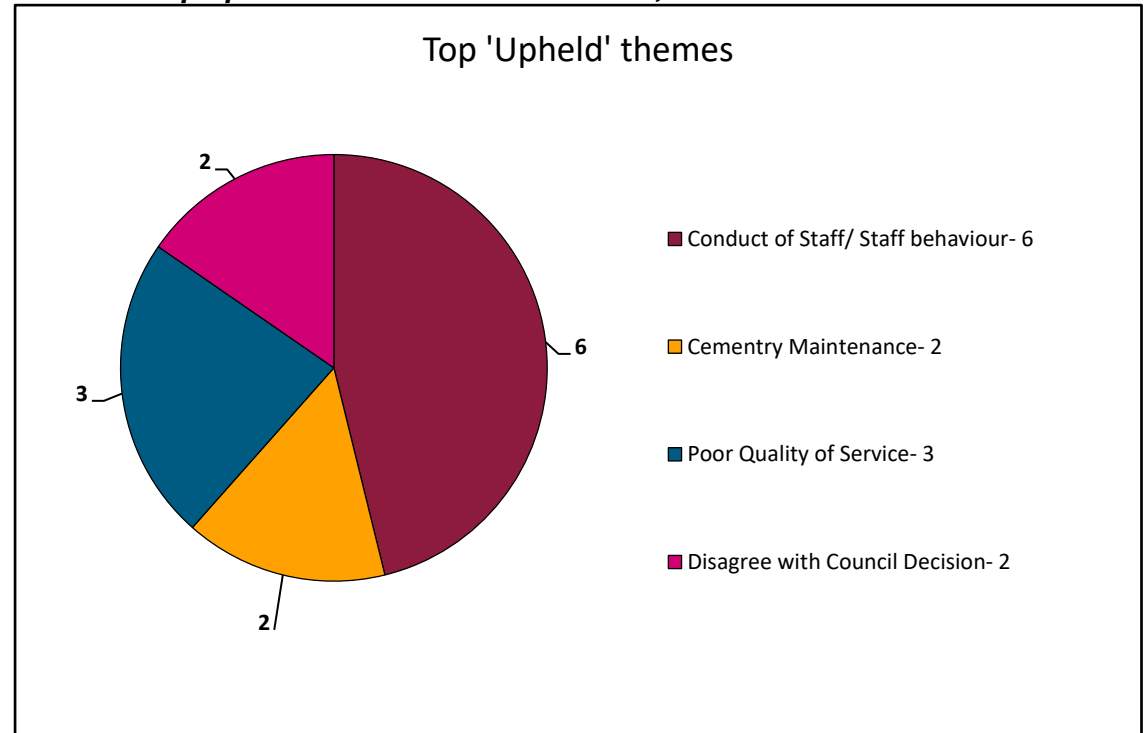
Two complaints related to cemetery maintenance where concerns were raised regarding flooding and the general condition of a cemetery. Action was taken to remedy these concerns.

The instances recorded for poor quality of service vary, but this area included issues with a phone line connection, the level of information requested by an advisor and an overall experience of Horsehay Village Golf Centre.

Two upheld complaints related to a disagreement with a council decision, which included the choice of music for an event and a payment schedule not updated for a customer following a phone call.

Other themes that accounted for one upheld complaint each included COVID-19 Test & Trace sites, a delay in notifying a change, a lack of action, a lack of consultation and a webpage not working.

**Chart 17: Top upheld themes for Communities, Customer & Commercial Services**





**Chart 18: Headline figures for all directorates**

Directorate	Complaints	Percentage upheld	Average number of working days to respond	Percentage of responses within 15 working days	Positive feedbacks
Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	155	40%	12	87%	138
Communities, Customer & Commercial Services	57	41%	11	89%	46
Cross-portfolio	43	58%	12	88%	29
Children Safeguarding & Family Support	41	34%	19	41%	32
Finance & Human Resources	39	41%	10	95%	56
Prosperity & Investment	36	33%	14	72%	17
Housing, Employment & Infrastructure	25	32%	9	84%	2
Education & Skills	10	50%	15	60%	4
Adult Social Care	8	67%	24	44%	50
Health & Wellbeing	7	57%	10	100%	18
Policy & Governance	3	67%	10	67%	0
Corporate Communications	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0