



# Borough of Telford and Wrekin

## Cabinet

22 September 2022

### Customer Feedback Reports for 2021-22

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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Rae Evans - Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance and Customer Services
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Felicity Mercer – Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services
<b>Service Area:</b>	Customer Relationships and Welfare Services
<b>Report Author:</b>	Lee Higgins - Service Delivery Manager: Customer Relationships and Welfare Services
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Borough-wide impact
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Non-Key Decision
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Borough-wide impact
<b>Report considered by:</b>	Business Briefing – 08 September 2022 Cabinet – 22 September 2022

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#### 1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

- 1.1 It is recommended that Cabinet review the Customer Feedback Reports for 2021-22 in respect of Adult Statutory Complaints, Children’s Statutory Complaints and Corporate Customer Feedback and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Review Letter 2022.

#### 2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the Council’s Customer Feedback between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 and to provide assurance that the Council’s response to complaints is effective and that services are learning from complaints and wider customer feedback and continuously improving.

### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 The Council has a well-established mechanism for customers to tell us when things have gone well, they have received an excellent service, or we have exceeded their expectations. Compliments are shared across the Council and within teams, to inspire, motivate and build confidence and ensure that shared examples of best practice are used to help develop services.
- 3.2 Our Customer Strategy launched in January 2021 outlines our ambitions to work with our customers to develop quality services that are accessible to all, while making every contact count. As part of our established Customer Insight Programme, we have recruited Mystery Customers who help us to review our services from the customers' perspective, providing valuable feedback that allows our services to continually improve.
- 3.3 Our customers can also seek advice and support from the Council's Leader, Cabinet and Members via our Cabinet and Member Enquiry processes, which also allows any trends to be identified and highlights any service development opportunities.
- 3.4 To demonstrate effective complaint handling the Council produces an annual report on complaint handling for Children's Statutory Complaints, Adult Statutory Complaints and Corporate Feedback. These reports can be found at Appendices A, B and C.
- 3.5 This year has seen new challenges both for the Council and for our residents and customers, against the backdrop of COVID 19 and the subsequent aftermath. The increase in the cost of living has also put significant pressure on our residents and customers as they seek support. As a result, the Council has seen significant demand for and increased pressure on its services, particularly during times where swift mobilisation of financial support was required.
- 3.6 In January 2022, the Council continued its commitment to improve our customers experience by becoming members of the Institute of Customer Services (ICS). We aim to work with the ICS to reinforce our Customer Strategy actions and continue to analyse our customers' journeys to improve our services. Membership also allows us to benchmark the Council against similar organisations and share ideas.
- 3.7 The ICS are reporting that complaints are increasing across all organisations in the UK and are at their highest ever level, citing that customers' expectations have changed following the swift mobilisation of businesses during the pandemic, with the pandemic also allowing customers the opportunity to put a lens on their likes and dislikes.
- 3.8 The ICS Customer Behaviours Report highlights that there has been a significant change in customer behaviour in the last two years where customers are becoming less tolerant and that they also want to hold organisations to account, there is also now a heightened expectation for organisations to act quicker.

## **4.0 Summary of main proposals**

- 4.1 The Corporate Feedback Report shows that there has been a sustained increase in compliments which has continued to increase year on year. The number of residents and customers who have taken the opportunity to give a compliment in this reporting period has increased significantly by 21%. Telford and Wrekin Council overall has seen a 64% increase in compliments in the last 3 years.
- 4.2 Our first Institute for Customer Services (ICS) business benchmarking survey was completed by customers. Telford and Wrekin Council scored 72.1, on the UK Customer Service Index. This is a strong score particularly when compared to the average of 64.4 for other local councils. A score of 4.2 was also received for Customer Effort (reflected in a low score the lower the score the more positive the result), this is a strong score compared with the average for other local councils of 6.1.
- 4.3 The Customer Insight Programme now has 175 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers now undertaking assignments and helping us shape and improve our services. We have seen a 38% increase in volunteers during 2021/22.
- 4.4 A total of 759 complaints were received across the Council in 2021/22 from 733 complainants, which, in the context of the many thousands of transactions and interactions that take place across the organisation in a week remains an incredibly small proportion and less than 1% of all transactions. To provide some context, the Council emptied 10.3 million bins during 2021/22, and handled 239,837 calls to our Corporate Contact Centre, resurfaced 49km of roads, replaced 97km of road markings and welcomed approximately 1 million visitors to its Leisure Centres. In line with the national trend reported by ICS, we have seen an increase of complaints received across the Council in 2021/22.
- 4.5 In March 2021 complaints about council policy and anonymous complaints were formally included in our reporting, accounting for 8 complaints and 13 complaints, respectively.
- 4.6 The number of Adult Statutory Complaints and Children's Statutory Complaints decreased in the year to the lowest number received in 6 years and 7 years, respectively.
- 4.7 **Corporate Feedback Report (Appendix A)**
- 4.7.1 The number of residents and customers who have taken the opportunity to give a compliment has increased significantly by 21%. There has been a sustained increase in compliments in the last 3 years from 290 in 2019/20 to 475 in 2021/22.
- 4.7.2 As part of our membership with the Institute of Customer Services (ICS), we are able to benchmark our services against organisations across the UK. Our first survey was considered as a starting point from which we could measure our

improvement over the next 3 years. Early indications suggest that we have a strong starting point from which to improve.

- 4.7.3 Most significantly our customer effort score (reflected in a low score), which reflects the effort our customers must make to access our services, scored 4.2. This is a clear indicator that improvement to our online offer and service access has worked.
- 4.7.4 During 2021/22 the Customer Insight Programme completed a number of deep dives and snapshot Reviews of our front facing buildings, Customer Insight Officers have been undertaking 'Everything Speaks' reviews of these locations. Everything Speaks reviews look at any detail that could impact on our customer's experience from broken equipment, unprofessional formatting of displays or litter. It must be noted that these reviews are not restricted to just physical locations. We have encouraged our workforce to continually think about the image that is given to our customers and report any Everything Speak observations and recommendations to their managers.
- 4.7.5 Alongside the Snapshot reviews Mystery Customers have also completed further digital reviews and have had the opportunity to test some new apps before go live including the new MyTelford, MyTLC app and the new Leisure Services Website. These online reviews and user ability testing help to design an app or a website that the community can easily use.
- 4.7.6 During the year 99 Customer Insight assignments were completed with 86% satisfaction with the experience when using the Council's services.
- 4.7.7 Since April 2021, posters have been located in all front facing buildings asking our customers to comment on the service that they received. These short surveys can be accessed by scanning a QR code on a smart phone or via a website link. They are designed to take a maximum of 30 seconds to complete. These surveys continue to be deployed with posters most recently being placed at the Independent Living Centre and Sky Reach in Telford Town Park. Any comments received as part of these surveys are shared with services instantly so they can consider if improvements can be made.
- 4.7.8 As well as Compliments and Complaints the Customer Relationship Team manages the Leader and Cabinet enquiry process, Member enquiry process and also MP enquiries. During 2021/22 a total of 674 Leader and Cabinet enquiries were received a 41% increase on the year before. Whilst there was an increase, 90% of responses were responded to within the timescales.
- 4.7.9 Of the 702 corporate complaints that were responded to in the year just over half (356) were partly or fully upheld, this is where services have acknowledged that we could have done better. 81% of corporate complaints were responded to within the 15 working day target time scale, broadly in line with the 82% achieved in 2020/21.

- 4.7.10 The service area which received the majority of the Corporate Complaints was Neighbourhood and Enforcement Services, followed by Communities, Customer and Commercial Services. This is an indication of the ubiquitous nature of these services in the day to day lives of every resident and visitor to the Borough, such as refuse collection, highways maintenance and the maintenance of open spaces. Neighbourhood and Enforcement Services also received the highest level of positive feedback during the year.
- 4.7.11 During 2021/22 the Council has continued to respond to corporate complaints in an average of 12 days (maintaining the average response timescale achieved in 2020/21), which is well within the 15 working day timescale. Given the increase in complaints received the Council continues to perform well in terms of response timescales.
- 4.7.12 Of the 702 complaints received, 57 were escalated to Stage two of the procedure with 13 partly or fully upheld. This represents an increase on the 29 received in 2020/21. The average number of days to complete a full investigation has increased to 41 working days, this is still well within the extended timescale of 65 working days as outlined in the complaints policy.
- 4.7.13 All of the 356 complaints partly or fully upheld have been reviewed to ensure wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future. There are no major trends or common themes that have led to complaints being reported.
- 4.7.14 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen at page 27 of the Corporate Feedback Report (Appendix A).

#### **4.8 Adult Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix B)**

- 4.8.1 We received 33 Adult Statutory complaints in 2021/22, a decrease on the 38 received in 2020/21 and lowest number received in 6 years. Of the 33 complaints completed, 58% (19) were upheld.
- 4.8.2 In 2020/21 the average number of days to respond to an Adult Statutory complaint across all portfolios was 53 working days however in 2021/22 these timescales significantly reduced to 33 working days.
- 4.8.3 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen from page 10 of the Adult Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix B).
- 4.8.4 Our Adult Social Care service continue to work in co-production with residents to modernise, develop and design services across the borough that are future proof. Our co-production framework in adult social care supports an ethos of getting people involved whether being a part of the specialist partnership boards, Making it Real board, and the feedback forms. A current example of this in action is the Ageing-Well Strategy, which is being actively developed with residents who are experts by their experience, with support from the Making It Real board, who include members who have lived experience of accessing our services with additional needs.

#### **4.9 Children's Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix C)**

- 4.9.1 We received 24 Children's statutory complaints in 2021/22 a decrease on the 29 received in 2020/21 and the lowest number received in 7 years. All were dealt with at Stage One, with one progressing to an independent Stage Two investigation during the year. No Stage 3 panels were completed in 2021/22.
- 4.9.2 Of the 24 complaints completed in the year, 71% (17) of the complaints were upheld.
- 4.9.3 The average number of days to respond to Children's Statutory Complaints during the year was 14 working days, which is a significant improvement on the 23 days achieved in 2020/21 and is within the extended timescale outlined in the regulations, indicating a clear improvement during the year.
- 4.9.4 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen from page 9 of the Children's Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix C).

#### **4.10 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review 2022 (Appendix D)**

- 4.10.1 During 2021/22 a total of 36 complaints were escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, 4 detailed investigations remained open on 31 March 2022.
- 4.10.2 During the year the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman made the decision that 27 complaints were premature, or the Ombudsman decided not to further investigate. There were 11 detailed investigations completed in 2021/22 a slight increase on the 9 investigated in 2020/19, and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has confirmed that 8 complaints were upheld, in line with the number upheld in the previous year.
- 4.10.3 In all cases where fault was found the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council successfully implemented their recommendations. In two cases the Local Government and Social Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council has provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached them.
- 4.10.4 In each upheld case the Council has taken learning forward to improve practices in relation to the faults identified, apologies have also been given to customers in these cases.

#### **5.0 Alternative Options**

- 5.1 Not applicable

#### **6.0 Key Risks**

- 6.1 Ineffective handling of complaints and management of the complaints procedures may result in reputational damage to the Council.

## **7.0 Council Priorities**

- 7.1 A community- focussed, innovative Council providing efficient, effective and quality services

Key outcome: Our customer experience is the best possible and facilities are accessible to all.

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

- 8.1 The cost of dealing with complaints is mainly in the form of officer time and is therefore met from existing Council budgets. The cost of becoming a member of the Institute of Customer Services (ICS) and the mystery customer exercise will be met from reserves.

10.8.22 PT

## **9.0 Legal and HR Implications**

- 9.1 On 08.10.2020 the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman [LG&SCO] issued updated guidance on effective complaint handling for local authorities

Children's social care statutory complaints are conducted under Section 26 Children Act 1989, the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, known as the CARP Regulations and guidance *Getting the Best from Complaints*

The LG&SCO Guide for practitioners on the Children's statutory complaints process was revised in February 2022.

Complaints about Adult Social Care Services are governed by The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and guidance *Listening, responding, improving: a guide to better customer care*.

08.08.2022 KF

## **10.0 Ward Implications**

- 10.1 Not applicable

## **11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications**

- 11.1 Not applicable

## **12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 12.1 Not applicable

### **13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

13.1 Not applicable

### **14.0 Background Papers**

Not applicable

### **15.0 Appendices**

- A Corporate Feedback Report 2021-22
- B Adult's Statutory Complaint Report 2021-22
- C Children's Statutory Complaint Report 2021-22
- D Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2022

### **16.0 Report Sign Off**

<b>Signed off by</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date signed off</b>	<b>Initials</b>
Legal	08/08/2022	08/08/2022	KF
Finance	08/08/2022	10/08/2022	PT