



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Audit Committee

26 July 2023

Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Nathan England - Cabinet Member: Finance, Customer Services and Governance
Lead Director:	Felicity Mercer – Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services
Service Area:	Customer Relationships and Welfare Services
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	SMT - 13 June 2023 Business Briefing - 22 June 2023 Cabinet - 13 July 2023 Audit Committee - 26 July 2023

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Audit Committee:

- 1.1 Review the Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23 in respect of Adult Statutory Complaints, Children's Statutory Complaints and Corporate Customer Feedback and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Review Letter 2023;

Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23

- 1.2 Notes the reduction in complaints received in 2022/23, the increase in positive feedback and the improvement in complaint handling performance.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update Audit Committee on the Council's Customer Feedback between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 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 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 all staff are encouraged to adopt an 'Everything Speaks' approach, paying attention to detail and reporting any issues they see with our services. 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 the cost of living crisis which has put significant pressure on our residents and customers as they seek support. As a result, the Council has seen significant demand 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.

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 19%. Telford and Wrekin Council has seen a 95% increase in compliments in the last 4 years.
- 4.2 In June 2022 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, a measure of how easy people found it to access our services. This is a strong score compared with the average for other local councils of 6.1 a good result is reflected in a low score with the lower the score the more positive the result.
- 4.3 The benchmarking survey was followed up by a workforce survey which sought to measure our workforce's engagement with our customer strategy, culture and processes. An index score of 75.12 was received, higher than other local government sectors who achieved an average of 70.28, and indicating that our workforce are generally well engaged with our strategy.
- 4.4 The Customer Insight Programme now has 186 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers and are now undertaking assignments to help us shape and improve our services. We have seen a 6% increase in volunteers during 2022/23.
- 4.5 Feedback from customers in relation to our Corporate Contact Centre indicates that performance is excellent. Customer satisfaction on our contact centre telephone calls was 91.2%, which will in part be connected to the high performance of 99.3% calls being answered in 10 minutes for the year. 99.6% of customers were also satisfied with the experience using our Automated Assistant, Ask Tom.
- 4.6 A total of 656 complaints were received across the Council, including statutory complaints, in 2022/23 from 639 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 equates to less than 1% of all transactions. To provide some context, the Council emptied 10.6 million bins during 2022/23, and handled 268,241 calls to our Corporate Contact Centre, resurfaced 17km of roads, replaced 45km of road markings and welcomed approximately 1 million visitors to our events.
- 4.7 In March 2021, anonymous complaints were formally included in our reporting in response to feedback from the LGA peer review. Complaints about Council Policy were also formally included at this time. This year these have, accounted for 9 complaints and 6 complaints, respectively.

Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23

4.8 The number of Children's Statutory Complaints decreased in the year to the lowest number received in 8 years. Adult Statutory Complaints increased marginally to 35 from 33 in 2021/22.

4.9 Corporate Feedback Report (Appendix A)

4.9.1 There has been a sustained increase in compliments in the last 4 years from 290 in 2019/20 to 566 in 2022/23.

4.9.2 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.

4.9.3 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.

4.9.4 During 2022/23 the Customer Insight Programme completed a number of deep dives, and snapshot reviews of different elements of the customer experience at our front facing buildings. The report outlines some of the results including details of the recommendations and the improvements and quick wins completed.

4.9.5 The Council's Customer Strategy included the aim for senior managers to go 'back to the floor' to observe customer experience first-hand, for example listening to calls in the corporate contact centre or working alongside staff and serving customers in front facing roles. In June 2022, the Back to the Floor Programme was launched, which saw the Senior Management Team visiting front facing services, which included, Independent Living Centre (ILC), Telford Theatre, Housing and the Corporate Contact Centre. There were many outcomes as a result of this programme that are detailed in the report.

4.9.6 Alongside the Snapshot reviews, Mystery Customers have also completed further digital reviews. This has included testing the Adult Social Care pages on the website and the new Registration Services 'Occasions' website. Mystery Customers also tested the 'Borrow an iPad' Scheme. These online reviews and user ability testing helps us to design an app or a website that the community can easily use. During the year 84 Customer Insight assignments were completed with 87% satisfaction with the experience when using the Council's services.

4.9.7 There continues to be a range of ways that our customers can provide feedback e.g. QR Code Surveys, automated telephone surveys as the end of calls, Mystery Customer programme and other mechanisms such as the Making It Real Board. Any improvements made are included on our You said, We did webpage, please see background papers section for the link.

4.9.8 In 2022/23 601 corporate complaints were received which is a significant reduction on the 702 that were received in 2021/22. Of the 601 corporate complaints that

Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23

were responded to in the year 258 were partly or fully upheld, this is where services have acknowledged that we could have done better.

- 4.9.9 During 2022/23 the Council has responded to corporate complaints in an average of 11 days (improving on the average response timescale of 12 working days achieved in 2021/22), which is well within the 15 working day timescale. 80% of corporate complaints were responded to within the 15 working day target time scale, broadly in line with the 81% achieved in 2021/22. The Council continues to perform well in terms of response timescales. A breakdown of directorate performance can be found at Appendix 1 within the report.
- 4.9.10 7% of the complaints received escalated to stage 2 of the procedure, with only 7 complaints upheld. The number of complaints escalated reduced from 57 in 2021/22 to 41 in 2022/23.
- 4.9.11 All 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.
- 4.9.12 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen at page 27 of the Corporate Feedback Report (Appendix A).
- 4.9.13 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 2022/23 a total of 792 Leader and Cabinet enquiries were received, an 18% increase on the year before. Whilst there was an increase, 91% of responses were responded to within the target timescales.

4.10 Adult Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix B)

- 4.10.1 We received 35 Adult Statutory complaints in 2022/23, a marginal increase on the 33 received in 2021/22. A further 65 complaints were resolved under the 24 hours resolution process and were therefore not registered under the statutory procedure in accordance with legislation. Of the 33 complaints responded to in the year, 76% (25) were upheld.
- 4.10.2 In 2021/22 the average number of days to respond to an Adult Statutory complaint across all portfolios was 33 working days, however in 2022/23 these timescales significantly reduced to 25 working days. This demonstrates a significant improvement on timescales over the last 2 consecutive reporting years.
- 4.10.3 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen from page 10 of the Adult Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix B).
- 4.10.4 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,

Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23

Making it Real Board, and the feedback forms. A current example of this in action is the Ageing-Well Strategy, which have been actively developed with residents who are experts by experience, with support from the Making It Real Board, who include members who have lived experience of accessing our services.

4.11 Children's Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix C)

- 4.11.1 We received 20 Children's statutory complaints in 2022/23, a decrease on the 24 received in 2021/22, and the lowest number received in 8 years. 5 cases progressed to an independent Stage 3 investigation during the year. No Stage 3 panels were completed in 2022/23.
- 4.11.2 Of the 20 complaints completed in the year, 62% (13) of the complaints were upheld.
- 4.11.3 The average number of days to respond to Children's Statutory Complaints during the year was 16 working days, which is a marginal increase on the 14 working days achieved in 2021/22 but remains within the timescale outlined in the regulations.
- 4.11.4 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen from page 11 of the Children's Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix C).

4.12 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Enquiries

- 4.12.1 During 2022/23 a total of 19 complaints were escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, 4 detailed investigations remained open on 31 March 2022.
- 4.12.2 During the year, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman made the decision that 14 complaints were premature, or the Ombudsman decided not to further investigate. There were 8 detailed investigations completed in 2022/23, a decrease on the 11 investigated in 2021/22, and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has confirmed that four complaints were upheld.
- 4.12.3 In all cases where complaints were upheld, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council successfully implemented their recommendations.
- 4.12.4 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 The Council could decide not to adopt a standalone policy for dealing with CSE complaints. This is not recommended as it is important to ensure that Council is able to respond effectively and promptly to such complaints, that complainants are

Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23

clear about the process to follow if they are unhappy with how the Council has managed their case. Additionally, the Independent Inquiry recommended that the policy was reviewed and this review has been carried out with support from individuals with lived experience.

6.0 Key Risks

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

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 A community- focussed, innovative Council providing efficient, effective and quality services.
- 7.2 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 membership to the Institute of Customer Services (ICS) and the mystery customer exercise has been funded from reserves.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report with this report. It should be noted, however, that under the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, there are some complaints involving Children's Services and Family Safeguarding which must follow the procedure contained within the Regulations. Where a complaint is made which is of a type that should be dealt with under the Regulations, the Council is required to ensure that this occurs.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 The policies to which the Council works in respect of customer feedback and complaints is in line with the latest guidance issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 Not applicable

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 Some complaints relate to Social Care, there are strong links into the local health and care system.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 All our complaints policies provide an opportunity for residents to raise any concerns around inequality. Our policies take account of our customers communication accessibility needs.

12.2 The policies specifically meets the aims of the public sector equality duty; eliminate unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations, for people who share protected characteristics. To ensure that we continue to meet this enduring duty we collect data on a regular basis on complainants and report on the protected characteristics of complainants and nature of any discrimination or inequality.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 Not applicable

14.0 Background Papers

14.1 You said, We did [webpage](#)

15.0 Appendices

- A Corporate Feedback Report 2022-23
- B Adult's Statutory Complaint Report 2022-23
- C Children's Statutory Complaint Report 2022-23

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	14/07/2023	18/07/2023	RP
Finance	14/07/2023	17/07/2023	PT