



Corporate Overview Group

Tuesday, 15 November 2022

Customer Feedback Annual Report 2021/22

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. This report summarises the customer feedback received during 2021/22 and provides a comparison to previous performance. Key points include the following:

- 57 complaints were received by the Council at Stage 1 of its complaints process – this is a slight increase compared with recent years, although is considered to be a knock-on effect of service pressures and hardships to residents caused by the pandemic
- The percentage of complaints escalated past Stage 1 has decreased slightly from 22.4% in 2020/21 to 21.1% (12 from 57)
- Consistency in handling complaints has stayed at a high level, as has the number of complaints that are responded to within target time – 56 out of 57
- Analysis of the 57 complaints received in 2021/22 showed that 70.2% were considered unjustified
- The Council received 127 compliments about its services in 2021/22 – 28 fewer than the previous year.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that this report is accepted as a true record of customer feedback in 2021/22.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

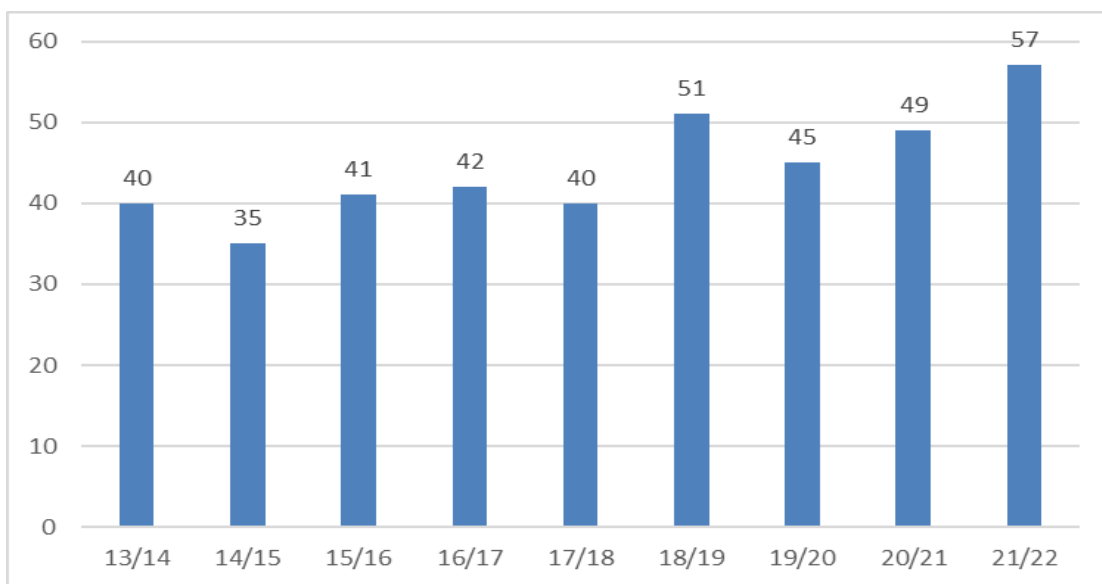
3.1 Officers work hard to investigate complaints quickly and thoroughly. Learning points are identified and fed back at team meetings. Where the interpretation of policy is at the root of the problem, this is considered, and changes made where necessary.

4. Supporting Evidence

4.1. Total Complaints

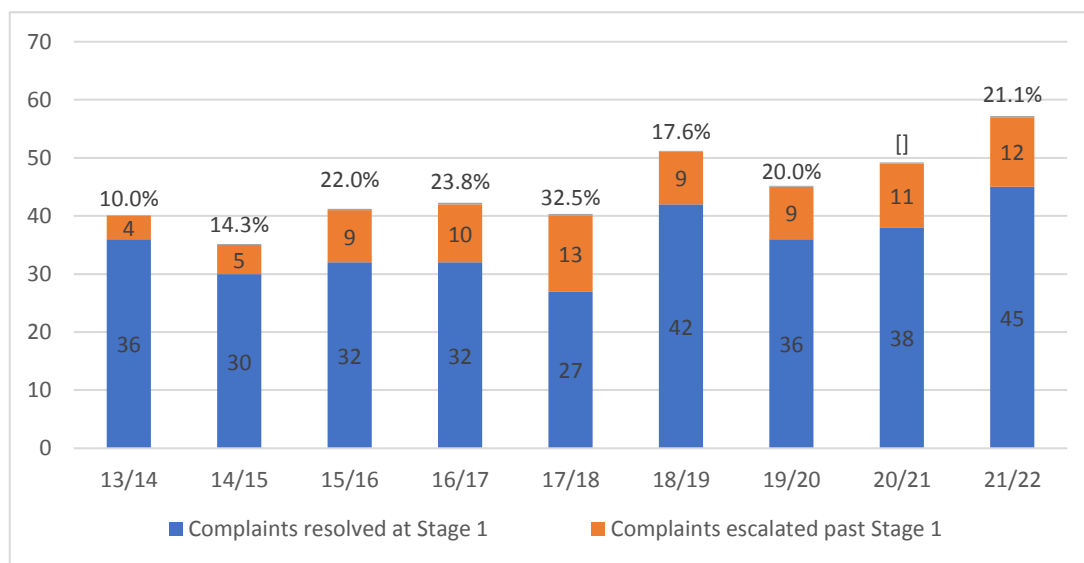
The number of complaints received by the Council in 2021/22 was 57. This is eight more than last year and continues the slight upward trend of the last eight years, as shown on the graph below. There were also 14 complaints against Nottinghamshire County Council, not included in the total above.

These were generally about highways issues and were duly passed on via the appropriate channels.



Total Complaints Year by Year

4.2. Escalation of Complaints



Percentage of complaints escalated past Stage 1

The standard of response at Stage 1 remains high and, more often than not, the complaint is concluded at this stage. However, 12 out of 57 complaints were escalated to Stage 2, the subjects being:

- Planning application / decision (five)
- Environmental Health enforcement (two)
- Environmental Health staff visit
- Housing allocation

- Homelessness
- Council tax
- Planning staff conduct.

The percentage of escalations past Stage 1 in 2021/22 is 21.1% (or 12 out of 57) – slightly lower than last year (22.4% or 11 out of 49).

4.3 Complaints handling – Timeliness and Quality of Response

56 out of 57 complaints in 2021/22 were answered within target time. There were a few cases where there were unavoidable delays in responding to complaints, but in these instances, the complainants were informed. Figures for each service area are shown in the table below. It is felt that complaints were well-handled in all cases except one, where responses were late at both stage 1 and stage 2.

Service Area	Total Complaints	In Target Time (10 working days)	%
Neighbourhoods	23	23	100.0
Development and Economic Growth	20	19	95.0
Finance and Corporate Services	12	12	100.0
Chief Exec's Department	2	2	100.0
Total	57	56	98.2

4.4 Justified Complaints

A complaint is adjudged to be justified if an individual or service area has done something wrong to cause the complaint, or if the level of service does not come up to the standard expected.

If learning points arise as a result of someone complaining about a particular service area, they are raised at sectional team meetings as part of on-going training for staff.

17 out of 57 (29.8%) complaints were judged to have been justified. This is lower than last year, when 19 out of 49 (38.8%) were felt to have been justified.

4.5 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Statistics

Occasionally, complainants escalate their complaints to the LGO. This is an option when the Council's process has been exhausted and the customer still does not consider that they have achieved a satisfactory outcome.

During 2021/22, the LGO received 10 complaints and/or enquiries about services offered by Rushcliffe Borough Council:

- seven were about Planning and Development
- two were about Benefits and Council Tax
- one was about Environmental Services.

The LGO issued decisions on seven complaints, and they were as follows:

- three were referred back for local resolution (all three about Planning)
- four were closed after initial enquiries (one about Planning; one about Environmental Services and two about Benefits and Council Tax).

The LGO data for detailed investigations is shown in the table below, along with a comparison with other neighbouring local authorities.

Local Authority	Total detailed investigations	Upheld	Not upheld
Rushcliffe	0	0	0
Ashfield	2	0	2
Bassetlaw	0	0	0
Broxtowe	4	3	1
Gedling	3	2	1
Mansfield	0	0	0
N & S	0	0	0
Charnwood	5	3	2
N W Leics	1	1	0
Melton	3	2	1
S Kesteven	0	0	0

4.6 Distribution of complaints between service areas

The table in **Appendix 1** gives brief details of the complaints received during the year 2021/22, how they were distributed across the Council's four service areas, whether they were resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2, and whether or not they were felt to be justified.

4.7 Complaints Monitoring

Although we did send out monitoring forms where appropriate, none were returned. Therefore, we did not get a picture of how complaints felt their complaints were handled.

The level of response to the short questionnaire asking 'how did we do?' has always been very sporadic, and as such, firm conclusions are difficult to draw. The feeling is that where a problem has been easy to fix, and the customer has got their desired outcome, satisfaction tends to be higher. Where the

complaint involves a protracted case, involving services such as benefits or planning, the complaint is as of a result of misinterpretation / misunderstanding of policy, and so satisfaction tends to be much lower.

4.8 Compliments

The number of recorded compliments has fallen slightly compared to the previous year. The distribution among service areas is shown in the table below, along with a comparison to last year:

Service Area (new corporate structure)	Number of Compliments 2021/22	Number of Compliments 2020/21 (pre corporate restructure)
Finance and Corporate Services	32	25
Neighbourhoods	78 (+1 for Streetwise)	81 (+11 for Streetwise)
Growth and Economic Development	12	18
Chief Exec's Dept	4	22
Total	127	157

5 Risk and Uncertainties

Serious reputational damage could be suffered if the Council fails to respond appropriately to complaints. Annual training is offered to those investigating and responding to complaints, and support is given to individuals during the process to ensure a thorough investigation is undertaken and the response to the complainant is clear, complete and customer focused.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

Very occasionally compensation is given where complainants find themselves out of pocket due to an error made by the Council.

6.2 Legal Implications

Should complainants remain dissatisfied after the Council has concluded its investigation, they can take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

6.3 Equalities Implications

The Council and its officers strive to treat each complaint on its merits.

6.4 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no direct Section 17 implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	The successful resolution of complaints supports all of the Council's priorities.
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	
The Environment	

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that this report is accepted as a true record of customer feedback in 2021/22.

For more information contact:	Charlotte Caven-Atack Service Manager – Corporate Services 0115 914 8278 ccaven-atack@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers Available for Inspection:	None
List of appendices (if any):	Appendix 1 – Complaints by Service Area

Appendix 1

Service Area	Number of Complaints	Subject of complaint	Resolved at Stage 1 or 2	Justified?
Neighbourhoods	23	8 x Housing / Homelessness issues 4 x Enforcement issues 3 x Staff conduct 3 x Environmental Health issues 1 x Taxi Licensing issue 1 x Community Asset Register issue 1 x NFFC Academy issue 1 x R2Go issue 1 x LEX Leisure issue	2 x Stage 2; 6 x Stage 1 2 x Stage 2; 2 x Stage 1 3 x Stage 1 1 x Stage 2; 2 x Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1	2 x Yes; 6 x No 4 x No 1 x Yes; 2 x No 3 x No No No No Yes Yes
Growth and Economic Development	20	17 x Planning applications 1 x Planning enforcement issue 1 x Staff conduct 1 x Tree felling issue	5 x Stage 2; 12 x Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 2 Stage 1	5 x Yes; 12 x No No No Yes
Finance and Corporate Services	12	9 x Council tax issue 2 x Business rates issues 1 x Issue with automated payment system	1 x Stage 2; 8 x Stage 1 2 x Stage 1 Stage 1	6 x Yes; 3 x No 2 x No No

Chief Exec's Department	2	1 x Postal voting issue 1 x Staff conduct	Stage 1 Stage 1	No No
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