



Corporate Overview Group

Tuesday, 19 November 2024

Annual Customer Feedback Report 2023/24

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. This report summarises the customer feedback received during 2023/24 and provides a comparison to previous performance. Key points include the following:

- 48 complaints were received by the Council at Stage 1 of its complaints process – this is a slight decrease compared with last year, and typical of the trend for 40 to 50 per year.
- The percentage of complaints escalated past Stage 1, 27.1%, has decreased from 36.0% in 2022/23.
- Consistency in handling complaints has stayed at a high level, as has the number of complaints that are responded to within target time – 44 out of 48 or 92.7% were responded to within 10 working days (stage 1 and 2).
- Analysis of the 48 complaints received in 2023/24 showed that 79.2% were unjustified – a significant increase on 66% in the previous year.
- The Council received 203 compliments about its services in 2023/24 – 26 more than the previous year.
- Overall, it is a very positive report with a reduced number of complaints, few complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman and a rising number of compliments for services.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) Scrutinise and comment on customer feedback for 2023/24
- b) Endorse the Rushcliffe Complaints Policy 2024 (Appendix 2).

3. Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 To enable members to scrutinise customer feedback for the year 2023/24.

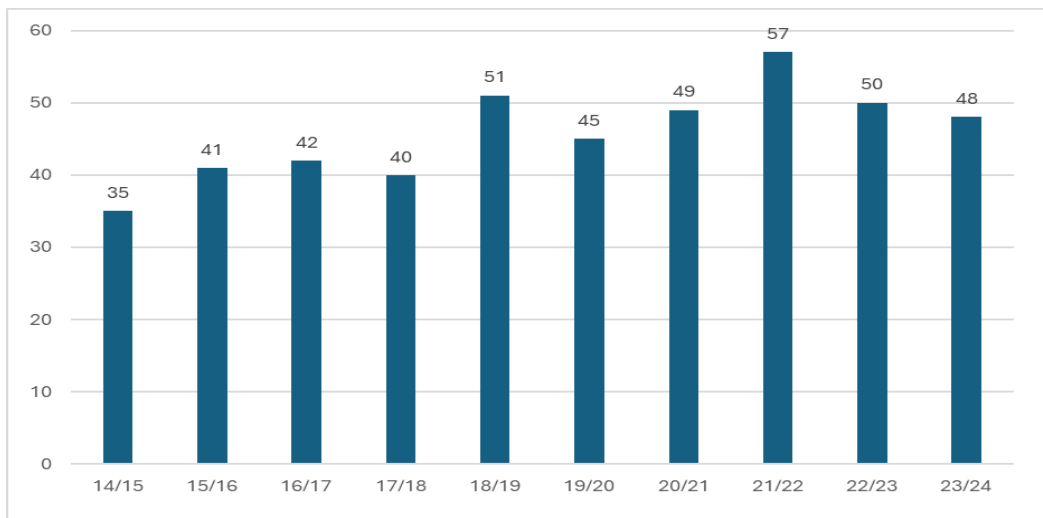
3.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) launched their aligned Complaint Handling Codes in February 2024. Local Authorities were required to complete and submit a self-assessment to show what measures were in place

for the handling of complaints submitted to the council. As a result, a formal Complaints Policy has been written and is attached as Appendix 2.

4. Supporting Evidence

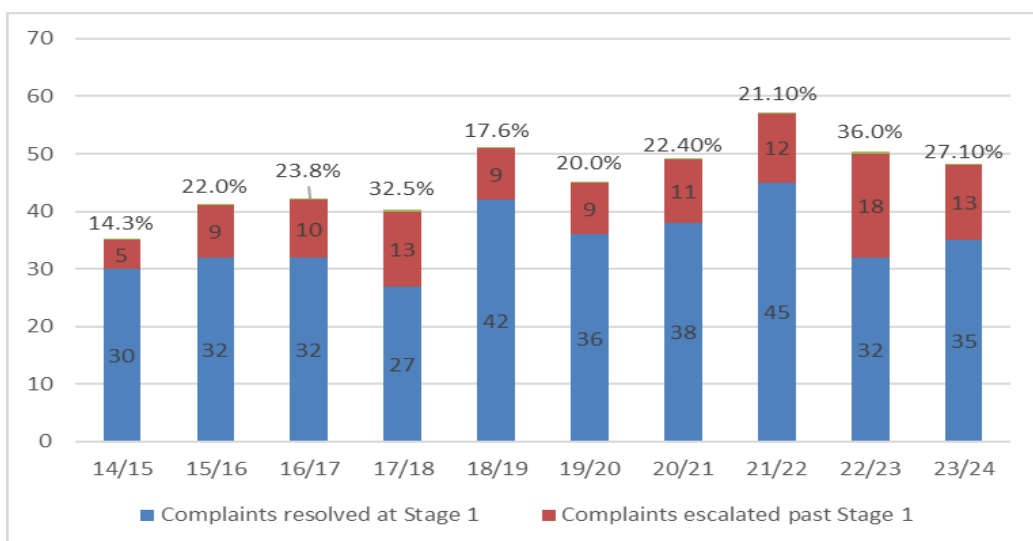
4.1. Total Complaints

The number of complaints received by the Council in 2023/24 was 48. This is two fewer than last year and continues the downward trend since 57 were received in 2021/22. There were also 34 complaints against Nottinghamshire County Council, not included in the total above, and were duly passed on via the appropriate channels.



Total Complaints Year by Year

4.2. Escalation of Complaints



4.3. 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, 15 out of 48 complaints were escalated to Stage 2, the subjects being:

- Environmental Health enforcement (four)
- Planning application / decision / communications / enforcement (four)
- Housing allocation (two)
- Insurance claim (one)
- Online payments (one)
- Waste collection (one)
- Licensing application (one)
- Building Control (one).

The percentage of escalations past Stage 1 in 2023/24 is 29.2% (15 out of 48) – considerably lower than last year (36.0% or 18 out of 50).

4.4. Complaints handling – Timeliness and Quality of Response

44 out of 48 complaints in 2023/24 were answered within target time (stage 1 and 2). There were also 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.

Service Area	Total Complaints	In Target Time (10 working days)	%
Development and Economic Growth	15	12	80%
Neighbourhoods	22	21	95.5%
Finance and Corporate Services	11	11	100.0
Chief Exec's Department	0	0	-
Total	48	44	92.7%

4.5. 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 or individuals may have their own learning.

10 out of 48 (20.8%) complaints were judged to have been justified. This is lower than last year, when 17 out of 50 (34.0%) were felt to have been justified.

4.6. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Statistics

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

During 2023/24, the LGSCO received one complaint (seven last year) and/or enquiries about services offered by Rushcliffe Borough Council about Planning and Development. The outcome of the investigation was that the complaint was not upheld.

The LGSCO 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	1	0	1
Ashfield	2	1	1
Bassetlaw	2	1	1
Broxtowe	3	3	0
Gedling	1	0	1
Mansfield	2	2	0
Newark & Sherwood	0	0	0
Charnwood	2	1	1
North West Leicestershire	0	0	0
Melton	5	2	3
Erewash	0	0	0
South Kesteven	3	1	2

4.7. **Distribution of complaints between service areas**

The table in **Appendix 1** gives brief details of the complaints received during the year 2023/24, how they were distributed across the four service areas, whether they were resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2, and whether or not they were felt to be justified.

4.8. **Complaints Monitoring**

Although monitoring forms were sent out where appropriate, none were returned. Therefore, we did not get a picture of how complainants 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.

4.9. **Compliments**

The number of recorded compliments has increased 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	Number of Compliments 2023/24	Number of Compliments 2022/23
Chief Exec’s Dept	4	0
Finance and Corporate Services	42	33
Neighbourhoods	123	115
Development and Economic Growth	34	24
Total	203	177

5. **Risk and Uncertainties**

Serious reputational damage could be suffered if the Council fails to respond appropriately to complaints. 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 at a financial loss due to an error made by the Council.

6.2 Legal Implications

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is the independent body responsible for investigating complaints made against public bodies where it is alleged there has been maladministration causing injustice. The powers of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman come from the Local Government Act 1974. The LGSCO will generally only investigate a complaint against a public body where the complaint has firstly been taken through that body's internal complaints procedure. It is therefore essential that the Council maintains a robust and transparent complaints process. The LGSCO has the power to make recommendations to a public authority following a complaint however the recommendations are not mandatory, findings and recommendations are however published by the LGSCO.

6.3 Equalities Implications

Whilst there are no direct equalities implication arising from the recommendation of this report, it is important to note that the Council and its officers strive to treat each complaint on its merits and any equalities matters will be properly considered.

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.

6.4. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no biodiversity net gain implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

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

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) Scrutinise and comment on customer feedback for 2023/24
- b) Endorse the Rushcliffe Complaints Policy 2024 (Appendix 2).

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 2 – Complaints Policy 2024

Appendix 1

Service Area	Number of Complaints	Subject of complaint	Resolved at Stage 1 or 2	Justified?
Development and Growth Economic	15	5 x Planning decisions resulting from perceived poor processes 4 x Planning applications process (delay / communication) 4 x Enforcement 1 x Confidentiality 1 x Building Control	3 x stage 1; 2 x stage 2 4 x stage 1 2 x stage 1; 2 x stage 2 1 x stage 1 1 x stage 2	5 x No 1 x No 1 x No 1 x No 1 x No
Neighbourhoods	22	14 x Staff / enforcement issues 2 x Streetwise – cleansing / park maintenance 2 x Housing Applications 1 x Licensing application 1 x Waste collection 1 x Home Alarm billing 1 x Rushcliffe Country Park kiosk	10 x stage 1; 4 x stage 2 2 x stage 1; 2 x stage 2 1 x stage 2 1 x stage 2 1 x stage 1 1 x stage 1	11 x No, 3 x Yes 2 x Yes 2 x No 1 x No 1 x No 1 x No 1 x No
Finance and Corporate Services	11	7 x Council Tax issue / bailiff 2 x Business Rates 1 x Insurance claim 1 x Online payments	7 x stage 1 2 x stage 1 1 x stage 2 1 x stage 2	6 x No; 1 x Yes 2 x Yes 1 x No 1 x Yes