



Corporate Overview Group

Tuesday, 2 November 2021

Annual Customer Feedback Report 2020/21

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. This report summarises the customer feedback received during 2020/21 and provides a comparison to previous performance. Key points include the following:

- 49 complaints were received by the Council at Stage 1 of its complaints process – this is comparable with recent years despite the service pressures and hardships to residents caused by the pandemic
- The percentage of complaints escalated past Stage 1 has increased slightly from 20.0% in 2019/20 to 22.4% (11 from 49)
- Consistency in handling complaints has stayed at a high level, as has the number of complaints that are responded to within target time – 48 out of 49 – this is despite the additional work pressures of the last eighteen months
- Analysis of the 49 complaints received in 2020/21 showed that 61.2% were unjustified
- Seven complaints were directly related to the pandemic
- Fourteen complaints were referred by complainants to the Local Government Ombudsman – none of these complaints were upheld
- The Council received 155 compliments about its services in 2020/21 – 23 more than the previous year.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that this report is accepted as a true record of customer feedback in 2020/21.

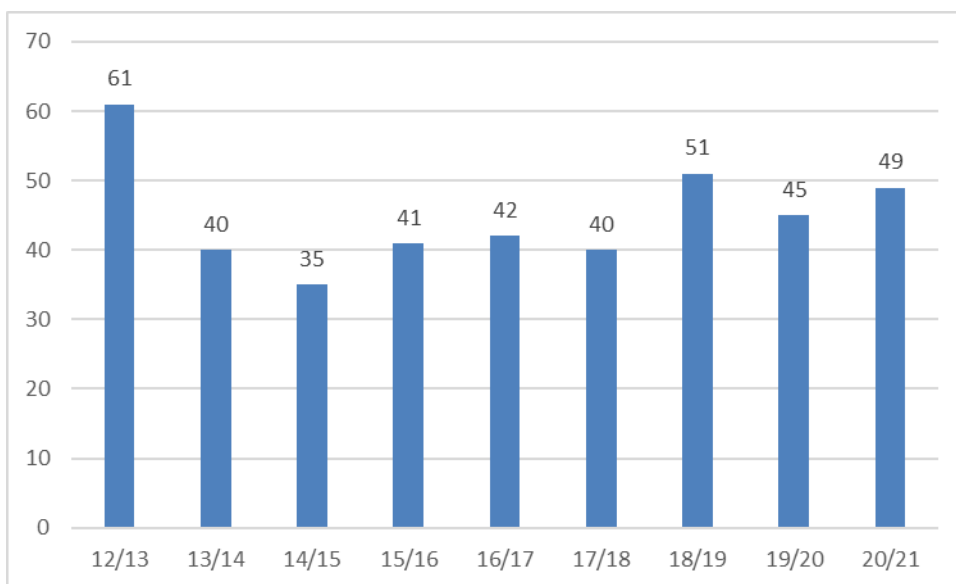
3. Reasons for Recommendation

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

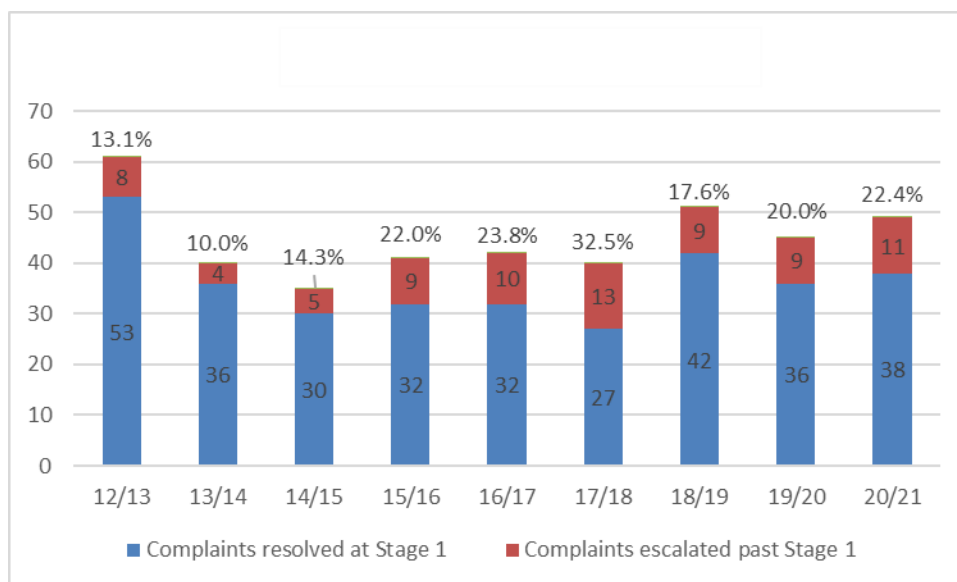
4.1. Total Complaints

The number of complaints received by the Council in 2020/21 was 49. This is four more than last year but continues the trend of broadly similar figures over the last eight years, as shown on the graph below.



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, 11 out of 49 complaints were escalated to Stage 2, the subjects being:

- Planning application / decision (six)
- Housing banding / allocation

- Taxi licensing
- An issue with a local town council and the Monitoring Officer
- Council tax
- Covid relief grant scheme.

The percentage of escalations past Stage 1 in 2020/21 is 22.4% (or 11 out of 49) – slightly higher than last year (20.0% or 9 out of 45).

4.3 Complaints handling – Timeliness and Quality of Response

48 out of 49 complaints in 2020/21 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.

Service Area	Total Complaints	In Target Time (10 working days)	%
Communities	22	22	100.0
Neighbourhoods	15	15	100.0
Finance and Corporate Services	10	9	90.0
Transformation	2	2	100.0
Total	49	48	98.0

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.

19 out of 49 (38.8%) complaints were judged to have been justified. This is higher than last year, when 11 out of 45 (24.4%) 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 2020/21, the LGO received 14 complaints and/or enquiries about services offered by Rushcliffe Borough Council:

- six were about Planning and Development
- five was about Benefits and Tax
- two were about Corporate Services
- one was about Environmental Services.

The LGO's decisions issued on the complaints above were as follows: four were not upheld (three about Planning and one about Environmental Services); six were closed after initial enquiries; four were referred back for local resolution

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

NB: To allow authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, the LGO did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases between March and June 2020. This reduced the number of complaints they received and decided in the 2020-21 year.

Local Authority	Total detailed investigations	Upheld	Not upheld
Rushcliffe	4	0	4
Ashfield	3	0	3
Bassetlaw	1	1	0
Broxtowe	3	3	0
Gedling	0	0	0
Mansfield	0	0	0
N & S	1	1	0
Charnwood	9	1	8
N W Leics	2	1	1
Melton	1	1	0
S Kesteven	1	0	1

4.6 Distribution of complaints between service areas

The table in **Appendix 1** gives brief details of the complaints received during the year 2020/21, 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.

4.7 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 risen. The distribution among service areas is shown in the table below, along with a comparison to last year:

Service Area	Number of Compliments 2020/21	Number of Compliments 2019/20
Finance and Corporate Services	25	12
Neighbourhoods	81 (+11 for Streetwise)	72 (+5 for Streetwise)
Communities	18	30
Transformation	22	13
Total	157	132

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

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. 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 2020/21.

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?
Communities	22	17 x Planning application / decision 1 x ASB during Covid lockdown 1 x State of Boundary Rd park 1 x Planning enforcement 1 x Historical planning issue 1 x Staff conduct	6 x Stage 2; 11 x Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1	4 x Yes; 13 x No Yes No Yes No Yes
Neighbourhoods	15	3 x Housing staff issue 2 x Housing allocation issue / decision 2 x Taxi licensing 2 x Neighbour dispute 2 x Fly tipping issue 1 x Public toilets issue 1 x Pest control charges issue 1 x Issue where letter sent to wrong address 1 x Liquor licensing issue	3 x Stage 1 1 x Stage 1; 1 x Stage 2 1 x Stage 1; 1 x Stage 2 2 x Stage 1 2 x Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1	2 x Yes; 1 x No 2 x No 1 x Yes; 1 x No 1 x Yes; 1 x No 2 x No Yes No Yes No

Finance and Corporate Services	10	6 x Council tax issue 2 x Covid relief grant issues 1 x Staff conduct issue 1 x Councillor community grant issue	1 x Stage 2; 5 x Stage 1 1 x Stage 2; 1 x Stage 1 Stage 1 Stage 1	4 x Yes; 2 x No 2 x No Yes No
Transformation	2	1 x local governance issue 1 x Staff conduct	Stage 2 Stage 1	Yes No