



ANNUAL REPORT OF COMPLAINTS

1st April 2022- 31st March 2023



[Complaints, compliments, comments - North West Leicestershire District Council \(nwleics.gov.uk\)](http://nwleics.gov.uk)

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. KEY HEADLINES – 2022/23
3. OVERVIEW
4. DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS
5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT/ SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING
OMBUDSMAN
6. PERFORMANCE
7. NEXT STEPS

1. INTRODUCTION

North West Leicestershire District Council is committed to being open and accountable, listening to the views of residents and communities and placing them at the heart of its services. Customer feedback through formal complaints and the way that the Council responds to complaints are vital indicators of the overall performance of the organisation. When we cannot resolve a problem straight away our residents have the safety net of a formal complaint procedure through which they can find a resolution.

A complaint is defined within the Council as: “an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Council, or its staff, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.”

Although customer feedback provides a valuable insight into how the Council is performing, complaints and compliments figures do not reflect the full picture. Overall, in terms of the complaints’ procedure, the Council has continued to maintain a high level of performance and strives to improve the quality of service offered to residents. There is a continued commitment to providing high quality, timely responses to formal complaints, and the Council continues to learn and improve based on the feedback received.

Furthermore, building on the key developments made towards the end of 2022, priority areas of focus, in respect of the Council’s response to formal complaints, for next year will include:

- Working to improve performance to complaint procedure timescales.
- Working to work on the quality of responses with the sign off Stage 1 complaints by directors and Stage 2 complaints by the Chief Executive
- Ensuring remedy requests by the Ombudsman are completed within required timescales.
- Continuing to improve the way in which the Council learns from complaints. That all learning reported is considered and the impact of service improvement is understood and recorded.
- Increasing the number of compliments recorded, with the feedback officer and continuing to work with managers to ensure that the process for recording and reporting compliments and complaints is adhered to.
- Design and roll out of mandatory training for all officers using Skillsgate.

2. KEY HEADLINES – 2022/23

**344
complaints
received**

344 complaints were received. (compared with 276 in 2021/22 which is an increase of 25%)



202 compliments were received



35 complaints were upheld from January – March 2023 (Upheld data only started to be collected from this date)



777 requests for services came via the feedback service



57% of complaints were responded to within timescales.



13 complaints were investigated by the Local Government and Housing Ombudsman.

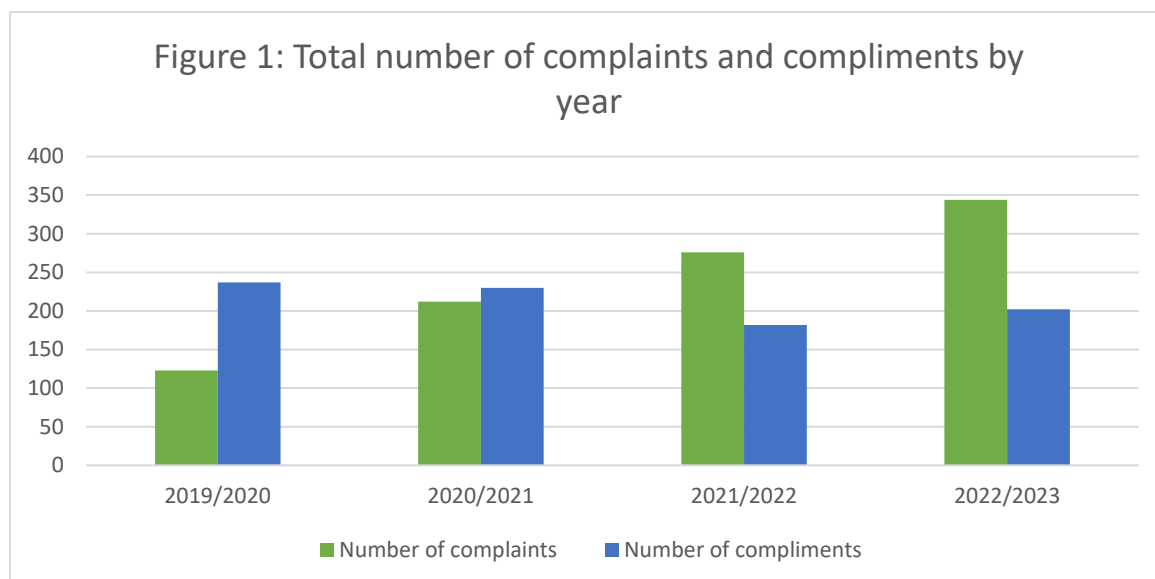


More complaints regarding actions of staff. (36 compared to 23 in 2021/22)



More complaints regarding excessive time taken to complete housing repairs. (51 compared to 32 in 2021/22)

3. OVERVIEW



In 2022/23, the overall number of complaints received by the Council increased by 25%, going from 276 in 2021/22 to 344. As you can see from Figure 1 the total number of complaints for 2022/23 is the highest we have seen in the last 4 years.

The Council provides a wide variety of services to over 97,200 residents. In this context, 344 complaints are only a fraction of the number of customer interactions occurring each year (for example, the Council's Customer Service team received 112,820 customer interactions alone in 2022/23).

The number of compliments recorded by the Council also increased, from 182 in 2021/22 to 202 (an increase of 11%). Improved efforts by Council departments to capture more of the positive feedback of residents is reflected in this increase. There is clearly better engagement of staff in the process of recording the compliments they receive.

It is recognised that both compliments and complaints procedures need to be easy and accessible for customers to allow them to provide valuable feedback and this is something we continue to work towards as advised in the introduction of this report with the changes we have made recently.

Most Council departments saw an increase in complaints from the previous year.

A breakdown on the numbers received and how much they changed, by department is as follows:

- The largest percentage increase was in Housing Commercial Services from 48 to 92, an increase of 91%
- In terms of the total number of complaints received Housing Services increased the most from 94 to 140, a percentage increase of 48%.

- Planning and development services increased from 19 to 29 a percentage increase of 53%
- Revenues and Benefits increased from 21 to 25 a percentage increase of 19%

The following diagrams show the breakdown of complaints and by service in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

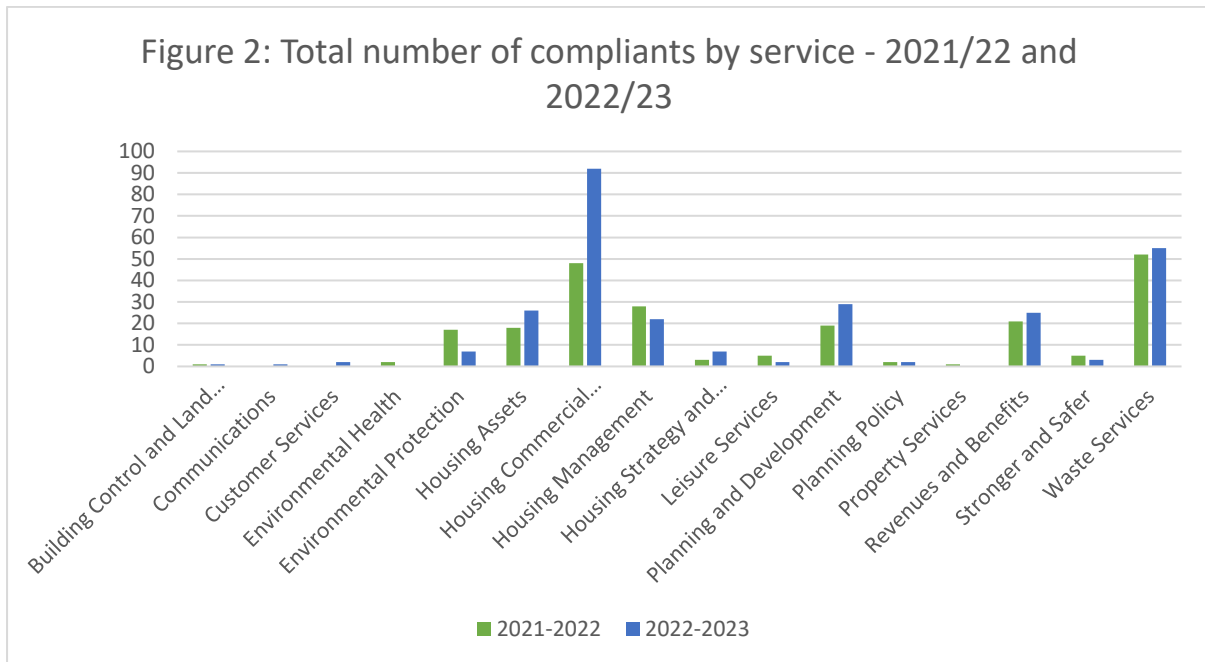
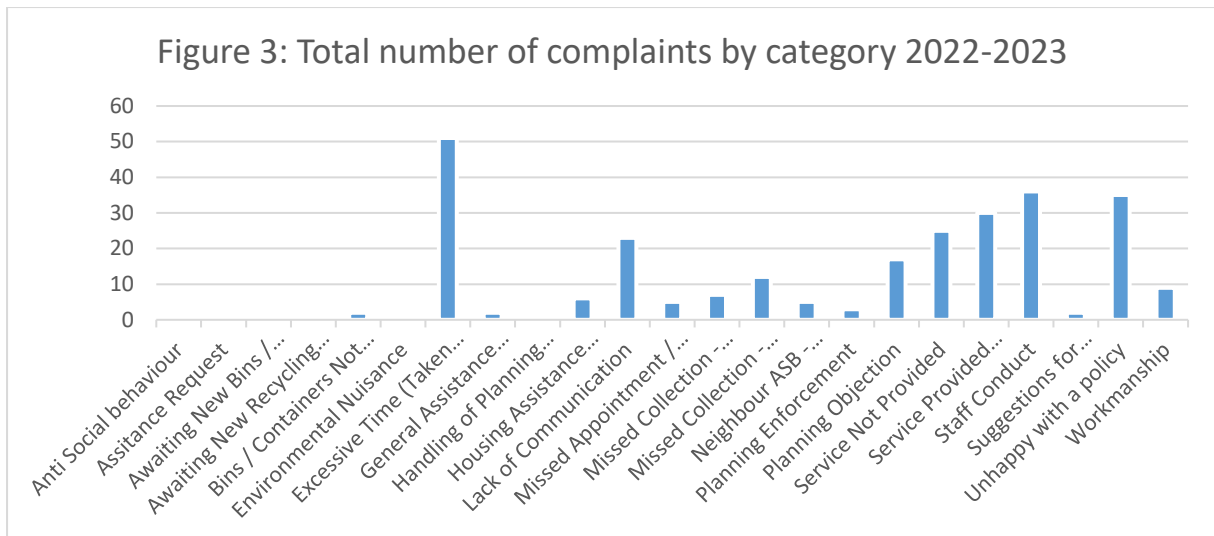


Figure 2 shows that the two highest areas for complaints were Housing Commercial Services and Waste Services. This is consistent with previous years' figures, as these areas typically receive the highest volume of complaints. They deal with the largest number of customers and are responsible for a high number of service transactions over the year.

The number of complaints received tends to correlate with the number of customers that are served by the directorate. Therefore, a directorate receiving a higher volume of complaints is not necessarily reflective of poor performance and should be understood within the context of services provided.

As part of the process of monitoring and handling customer feedback, the Complaints Team is responsible for categorising complaints based on the subject matter. The following diagram outlines the categories of complaints received in 2022/23:



51 (15%) of all complaints were categorised as excessive time taken to carry out a service. Complaints within this category have increased from 32 in 2021/22. (an increase of 37%)

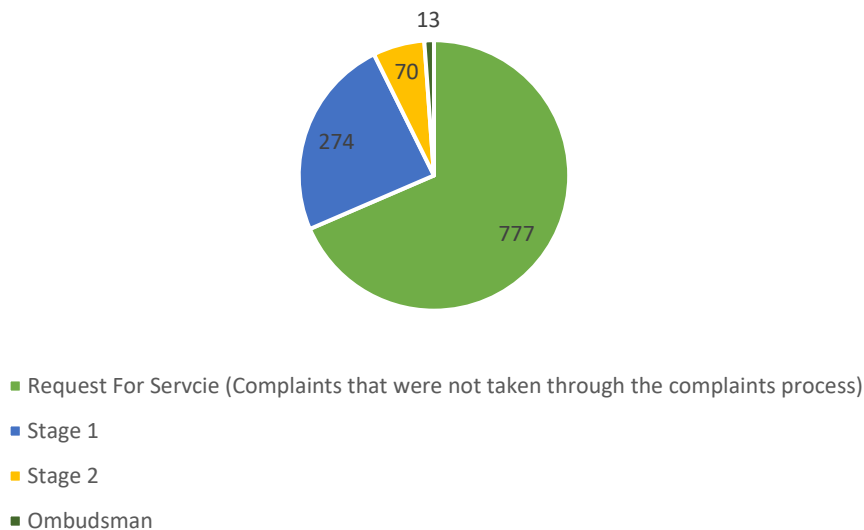
Staff conduct accounted for the second highest category of complaints, with 36 complaints (or 11%)
 Complaints within this category have increased from 23 in 2021/22.

Although the numbers of complaints in the categories of excessive time taken and Staff conduct were seen as reasons across all services, the majority of the complaints categorised as excessive time taken were again within Housing Commercial Services, with 40 of the 51 complaints in this category. Housing Services is undergoing strains on its service and is working on how to address these.

4. Dealing with Complaints

The diagram below outlines the number of complaints that reached the various stages of the complaint's procedures. The extent to which complaints escalate through the complaints' procedure is an important measure, as it is preferable to find resolutions for customers at the earliest possible stage. As shown in figure 4, the majority of complaints received by feedback do not make it to the corporate complaint process as they are resolved by a 'request for service'. Of those that did make it to a corporate complaint 79% were resolved at stage 1 (only 70, 21% of all complaints, were escalated to stage 2).

Figure 4: Percentage of complaints escalating through the complaints procedures



5. Local Government/Social Care and Housing Ombudsman

If complainants are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint as investigated through the Council's complaints' procedures, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or the Housing Ombudsman if the complaint is from tenants regarding social housing.

Figure 5 shows the total number of complaints submitted to the relevant Ombudsman's over the last 2 years.

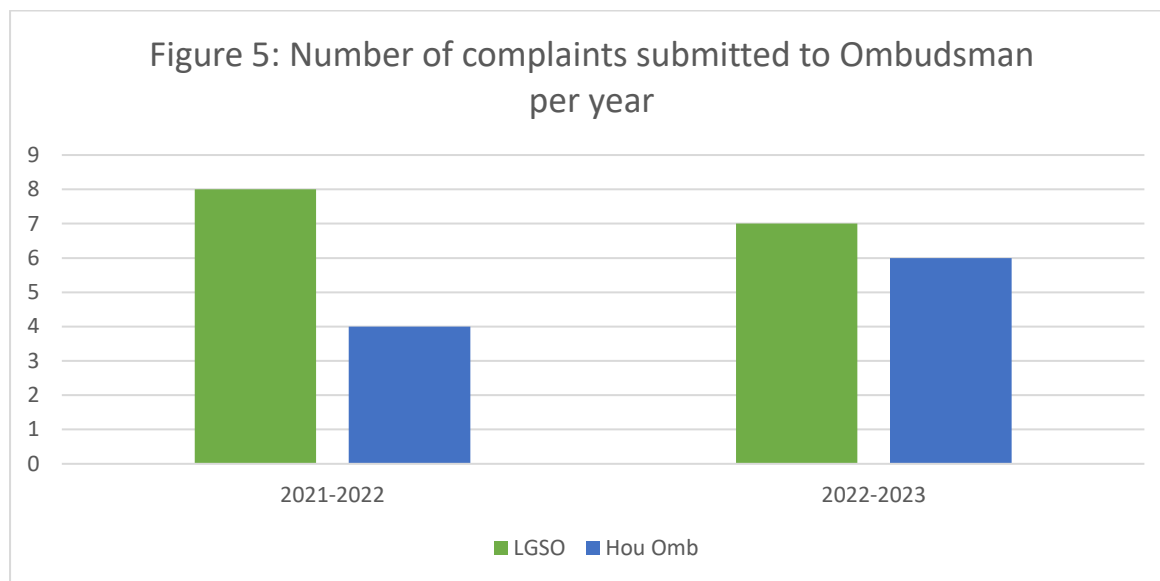
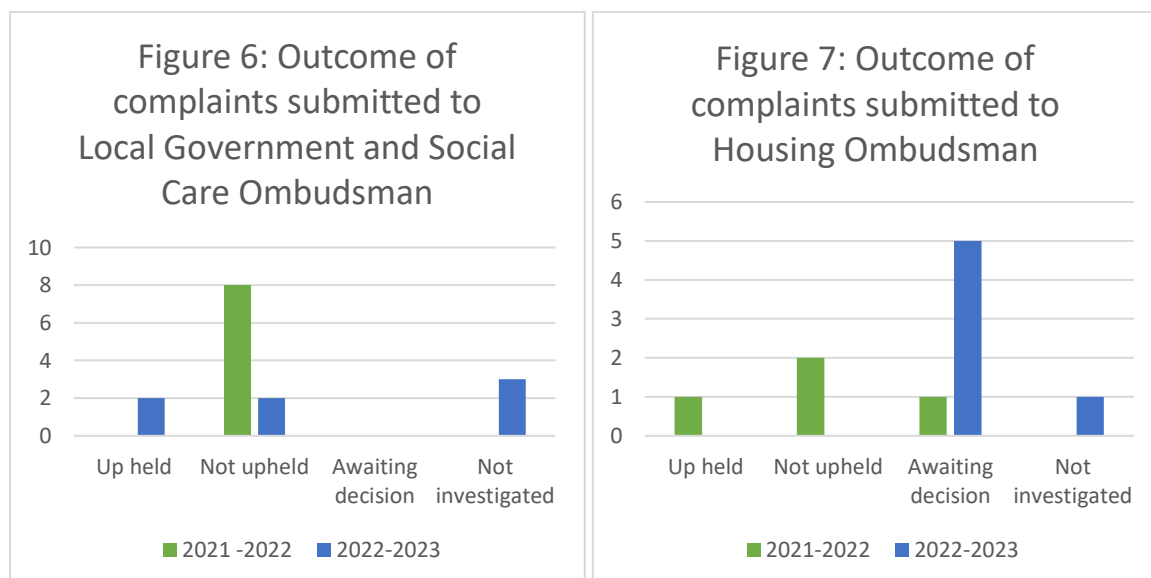


Figure 6 and 7 (see below) provides some context; there have been 25 complaints investigated by the LGSCO and Housing Ombudsman between the financial years of 2021/22 and 2022/23 these show the outcome of these.

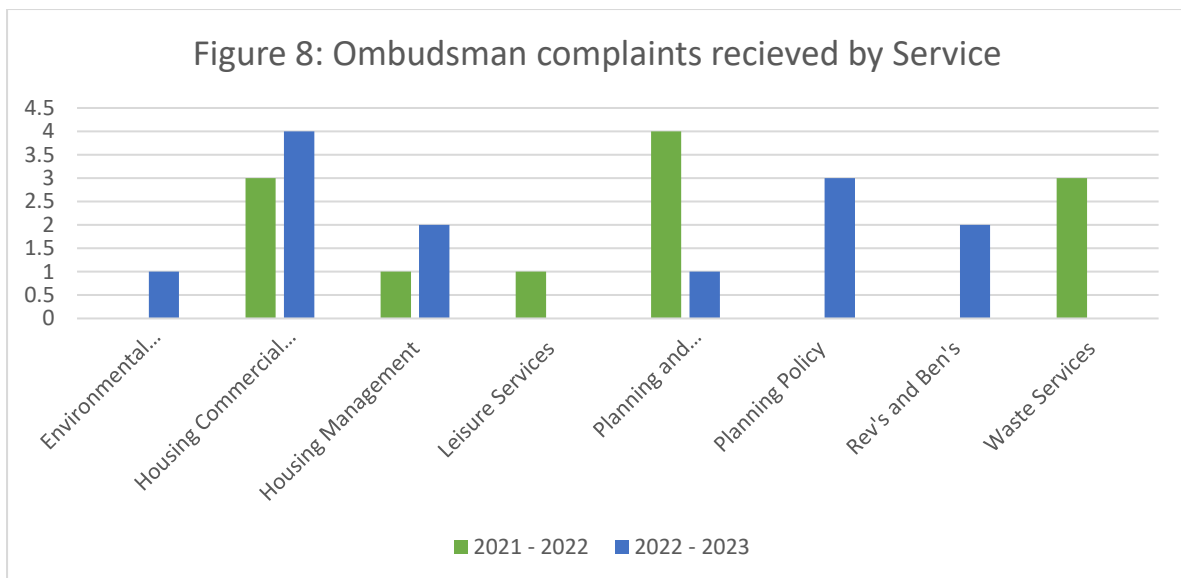


In 2022/23, more complaints were upheld by the Ombudsman than in previous years with 2 out of the 9 that were investigated upheld. This equates to an upheld rate of

22% , which is in line with the Ombudsman’s figure of the average uphold rate from previous years. Our upheld figure may change as we currently have 5 complaints awaiting a decision with the Housing Ombudsman who have a backlog due to recent events in social housing with damp and mould.

In 2022/23, more complaints were submitted to the Ombudsman compared to 2021/22 however it should be noted that 4 of these were deemed invalid or incomplete, referred back for local resolution or closed after initial enquiries. This along with the relatively low number of investigations reflects positively that the Council’s complaint’s procedures are working effectively to find fair and appropriate local resolutions.

Figure 8 (see below) shows the breakdown per service of the complaints submitted to the Ombudsman for 2021/22 and 2022/23. Housing Commercial Services received the majority of Ombudsman complaints in 2022/23

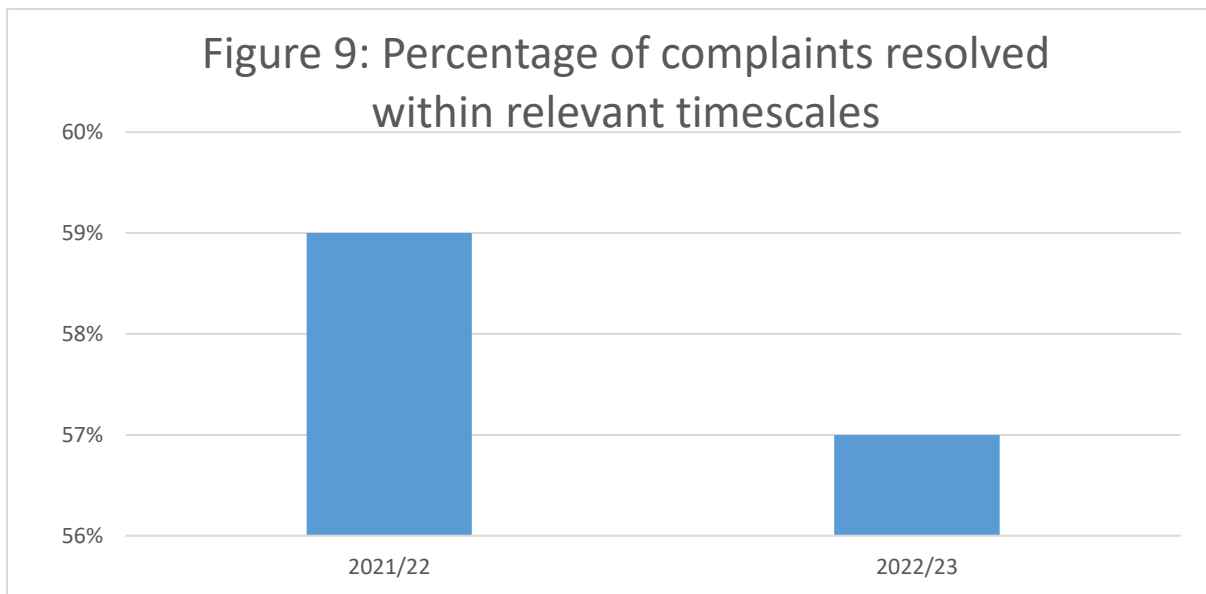


6. Performance

6.1 Performance Overview

Performance against the time allowed by the formal complaint procedure is monitored through regular (monthly) performance reports presented to teams as part of monthly meetings held between services, Customer Experience Team and Customer Services.

The following graph compares the overall Council performance against timescales for the past two years:



Performance has decreased slightly at 57% of complaint responses within target timescale. Although this performance is below what we would expect it should be noted that all complainants whose complaints were not resolved within the time scale received a holding letter from the feedback team advising them of the delay.

There has been and will continue to be effort made across all council services to improve performance to timescales and the changes put in place from January 2023 with Director/ Chief Executive sign off should help improve this further.

6.2 How we are improving.

Improving the way that complaints are dealt with requires a whole council approach, with services prioritising complaints and making improvements based on the feedback from customers. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every service to make responding to complaints and learning from customer feedback a priority.

A number of service improvements have been made over the year based on feedback from our customers. Key themes of service improvements have included the training and performance management of staff; reviews of processes and policies and the revision of digital forms.

The changes made from January 2023 have so far shown that the quality of responses are improved and the number of holding letters having to be sent due to late responses has reduced for stage 1 by 7% and stage 2 by 47% but there is still a long way to go on this aspect.

7. Next Steps 2023/24

During 2022/23 the numbers of complaints increased demonstrating the challenges facing the council and the pressures on the delivery of services, as services normalised following the pandemic.

The need to provide excellent customer services that are efficient and cost effective is fundamental to the management of the council. Therefore, it is vital that complaints are responded to in a timely manner and the complaints procedures work effectively for both customers and staff.

The following are the planned actions in 2023/24 to ensure that the way the Council deals with complaints and responds to customer feedback continues to improve.

Key actions include:

- Ongoing complaints training for staff. Continue to seek ways to deliver training to front line staff to allow them to understand the role and purpose of the complaint procedures.
- Work with service meetings in all departments to create a better learning from complaints. That all learning reported is considered and the impact of service improvement is understood and recorded.
- Ensure remedy requests by the Ombudsman are completed within required timescales and that senior managers are involved at all stages of the enquiry process, including the revised sign off process for stage 1 and 2 complaints.
- Work to improve performance to complaint procedure timescales.
- Working on the quality of responses with the use of templates and the additional sign off Stage 1 complaints by directors and Stage 2 complaints by the Chief Executive
- Increase the number of compliments recorded