

Cardiff Council

Draft Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2021/22

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1. Reason for this report

To report to the Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints procedure between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022. The statistics for corporate complaints are set out by service area.

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.”

Complaints recorded under the corporate complaints procedure do not include ‘first time’ representations which are effectively requests for a service and dealt with as such. A new report of a pothole or a missed bin for example, would not be registered as a complaint, but as a request for service. Of course, in the event that we failed to respond to the ‘request’ appropriately, then that may generate a complaint.

The number of compliments received and recorded during 2021/22 is also set out in this report. Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. We like to recognise compliments alongside any complaints. It is good for us to say ‘thank you’ to our teams and staff too.



2. Our complaints procedure

The Council's complaints procedure reflects guidance given in the Welsh Government Model Policy and Guidance Paper for Handling Complaints. This was further supported by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Complaints, comments and compliments can be made face-to-face or by telephone, email, letter or by using the online form found on the Council's website.



Complaint received. A complaint can be registered via any Council venue and once received, should be forwarded to the Service Area Complaints Manager. Every Council service area has a lead officer for complaints. The Complaints Manager will ensure complaints are acknowledged and recorded and facilitate the investigation of the complaint in accordance with the corporate complaints procedure.

Acknowledgment. The Complaints Managers will aim to acknowledge complaints within 5 working days. At this stage, we can let the customer know who is dealing with their complaint and our understanding of what the customer's complaint entails. We can also let the customer know that a full response will follow within 20 working days of our receipt of the complaint.

Full response. At the end of an investigation, a response should be produced depending on how a customer has indicated they prefer to be contacted. The response should include the outcome of the investigation as well as any necessary action taken for service improvement. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales states that the aim of every formal investigation should be to "investigate once, investigate well". Advice will also be included on the full response on what the complainant should do if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome – to contact the Ombudsman.

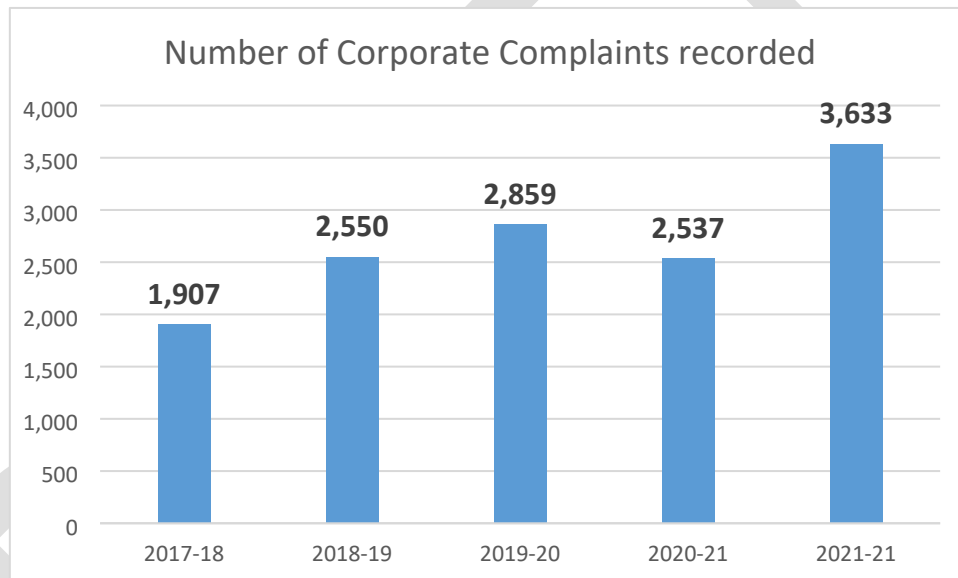
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Complaints that progress to the Ombudsman will have been thoroughly investigated by the service area. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, it is for the Ombudsman to assess whether there is any evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the Council.



3. Complaints for Cardiff Council in 2021-22

A total of **3,633** complaints were recorded during 2021/22. This is an 43.2% increase from the previous year, when 2,537 complaints were recorded.

Year	Number of complaints
2021-21	3,633
2020-21	2,537
2019-20	2,859
2018-19	2,550
2017-18	1,907



4. Complaints breakdown for Cardiff Council

A total of 3,633 complaints were recorded during 2021/22. This is an 43.2% increase from the previous year, when 2,537 complaints were recorded.

A breakdown of the number of complaints received by service area can be found below.

Service Area	Number of complaints 2020/21	Number of complaints 2021/22
Waste Collections	1,479	2,089
Housing & Communities	433	655
Customer & Digital Services	66	179
Traffic & Transportation	105	184
Finance	103	152
Parks & Harbour Authority	129	85
Environmental Enforcement	60	57
Highways Maintenance	42	56
Economic Development	25	48
Planning (including Building Control)	23	48
Education	39	37
Bereavement & Registration (including Cardiff Dogs Home)	25	27
Governance & Legal Services	2	12
HR	6	4
Total	2,537	3,633



5. Compliments breakdown for Cardiff Council

As an organisation, we receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide. Knowing where things are working well and are appreciated is as important to capture as knowing where things are perhaps not working. We therefore keep a record of the compliments we receive as well as the complaints. Good practice and learning can then be circulated across the Council.

A breakdown of the number of compliments received by service area can be found below. We have also provided examples of the types of compliments received throughout the report.

Service Area	Number of compliments 2020/21	Number of compliments 2021/22
Housing	703	tbc
Waste Collections	394	tbc
Customer & Digital Services	274	tbc
Economic Development, Parks & Harbour Authority	213	tbc
Environmental Enforcement	138	tbc
Planning, Transport & Environment	117	tbc
Bereavement & Registration Services	72	tbc
PPE	49	tbc
Track, Trace & Protect	3	tbc
Finance	1	tbc
Education & Lifelong Learning	0	tbc
Governance & Legal Services	0	tbc
Total	1,964	tbc



6. Complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2021/22

A key indicator of how satisfied complainants are with the standard of investigation and the fairness of outcomes is the number of complainants that escalate their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Ombudsman closed **159** cases involving Cardiff Council compared to 100 cases in 2020-21. The Ombudsman received 40 premature complaints (defined as when the Council has not had a reasonable opportunity to deal with the complaint itself).

A further 50 cases were declined because the Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by the Council. 39 cases were closed by voluntary settlements during 2021/22. These are redress proposals (an apology / change of process / time and trouble payment) which enable cases to be closed without the need for full investigation. Of the 159 cases, just 6 proceeded to investigation during 2021-22.

The Ombudsman closed the cases for the following reasons:

	2020-21	2021-22
Complainants had not exhausted the Council's complaints process - they were referred back to the Council	25	40
Cases closed by the Ombudsman after initial consideration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. no evidence of maladministration or service failure no evidence of hardship or injustice suffered by the complainant little further would be achieved by the Ombudsman pursuing the matter 	33	50
Cases declined because Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by Council (Quick-Fix / Voluntary Settlement)	23	39
Cases out of Ombudsman's jurisdiction	16	24
Cases withdrawn by complainant	0	0
Complaint led to an Ombudsman's report	3	6
Total	100	159



Ombudsman Complaints - a yearly comparison

The table below shows the total number of complaints made to the Ombudsman regarding Cardiff Council over the last five years.

Year	
2021-22	159
2020-21	100
2019-20	120
2018-19	110
2017-18	123

Investigations leading to reports

The Ombudsman issues a report if he finds that a complainant has suffered hardship or injustice through the Council's maladministration or service failure.

Under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005, the Ombudsman can issue one of two types of report following an investigation into a complaint by a member of the public: Section 16 and Section 21.

Section 16 Report

The first type of report is known as a Section 16 report. This is issued when the Ombudsman believes that the investigation report contains matters of public interest. The Council is then obliged to publicise the report at its own expense. The Ombudsman issued 5 Public Interest Reports against Cardiff Council during 2021-22.

Section 21 Report

The Ombudsman can issue a Section 21 report if the Council agrees to implement any recommendations he has made and if he is satisfied that the case does not raise matters of public interest. The Ombudsman issued 1 Section 21 reports during 2021-22.



7. Learning from complaints

Complaints provide valuable feedback and are viewed by our staff as a positive opportunity to learn from experiences in order to drive continual organisational improvement and prevent similar things happening again.

Our complaints handling procedure helps us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and may also prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from arising again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the customer's views and experience, and resolving complaints early saves resources and creates better customer relations.

Every Council Service Area has a lead officer for complaints and Corporate Complaints Workshops have been set up to look at common issues relating to complaints handling, including standardising responses to customers, collecting customer views and developing templates.

Some of the actions we take in response to complaints might appear to be small but they can make a big difference. Examples - big and small - of what we have done as a result of learning from complaints can be found throughout the report.

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8. Complaints by area

Waste Collections

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Waste Collections	1,479	2,089
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	921 (62.27%)	1,469 (70.3%)

Total complaints closed within timescales					Complaint outcome	
Service Area	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Waste Collections	1469	566	41	13	2052	37

Environmental Enforcement

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Environmental Enforcement	60	57
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	44 (73.33%)	33 (57.9%)

Total complaints closed within timescales					Complaint outcome	
Service Area	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Environmental Enforcement	33	22	2	0	57	0

2021/22 has been another challenging year when considered within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the shortage of HGV drivers intensified by Brexit and city-wide operational changes to the shift patterns of all waste collection staff. These 3 main factors have all had a significant impact on the running of the waste collection service.



During the week commencing 22nd February 2021, a new way of working was introduced with collections now taking place across 4 days on a single shift between 6am and 3:45pm. The service had anticipated an increase in complaints during this period as this change 'bedded in' and crews became familiar with their new rounds. When considering the monthly data, missed collection complaints peaked in May and June of 2021 but had settled back down by August. These months are largely responsible for the increase in complaints recorded during 2021/22.

In the first two quarters of 2021/22, due to HGV driver shortages, garden waste collections were regularly disbanded or delayed and recollected on weekends, prompting complaints.

Following an increase in missed assisted lift complaints, a service review was undertaken in March 2022, which included survey results from service users. Based on this feedback an action plan was devised and as part of the review, several actions have been implemented:

- Customer service improvements with a designated Correspondence Officer to try and resolve repeat complaints.
- Digital changes to in-cab devices so drivers have sight of easily accessible information and able to confirm collections made at each assisted lift property.
- Increased workforce training.
- Supervisor monitoring.
- Regular reviews.

Going forward, it is anticipated that the following actions will assist in reducing missed collections, and therefore the number of complaints received:

- To continue the rolling replacement of our vehicle fleet with access to newer and more reliable vehicles.
- To maintain the distribution of clear and concise information to residents in relation to any disruption or change to service.
- To utilise our back office waste management technology 'Collective' to effectively manage collection schedules. This, in turn, will provide up to date real-time information to residents via the App and Web on the status of their waste collections.
- In-house training for drivers to build resilience.

When considered relative to the number of waste collections that are carried out across the city every year, maintaining services during a global pandemic, and introducing a new way of working, the number of complaints received is considered to be extremely low. At present, the Council provides waste collection services for over 175,000 properties. In 2021/22, 25,307,248 collections took place and 16,895 were reported as missed. Therefore, the amount of non-collections relates to less than 0.07% of the collections made during this period.



Planning, Transport & Environment

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Highway Maintenance	42	56
Planning (including Building Control)	23	48
Traffic & Transportation	105	184
Total	170	288
Number / Percentage of complaint responded to on time	134 (78.82%)	229 (79.5%)

Service Area	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Highway Maintenance	40	12	3	1	16	40
Planning (including Building Control)	43	5	0	0	tbc	tbc
Traffic & Transportation	146	28	7	3	43	141

The number of complaints received during 2021/22 (288) has seen an increase of 118 compared to 2020/21 (170). This is an increase of 69.4% and was anticipated due to the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions, and also that certain enforcement functions have transferred to the Planning, Transport & Environment directorate (such as abandoned vehicles and illegal advertising).

Highway Maintenance received 56 complaints for 2021/22 which is an increase of 12 on the previous year. The majority of complaints were received as follows:-

The highest number of complaints related to Asset Management where 25 complaints were received for 2021/22. The largest area of complaints were concerning carriageway/footway defects where 12 complaints were received for the delay in the repair of carriageway/footway defects, and also 13 for the quality of the repair itself.

It should be noted that although interim repairs may not look aesthetically pleasing, they are effective in making the area safe until permanent repairs can be undertaken.

Resurfacing works received 8 complaints. The majority of complaints were regarding vehicles being removed so that works could be undertaken (advance warning is given when works are



being undertaken in an area), or the cancellation/delay in works being carried out, which is usually due to adverse weather conditions.

Maintenance Operations received 14 complaints. It should be noted that once a blocked drain has been reported, a drainage crew will attend the location and cleanse/flush the drain accordingly. Also, when there are torrential downpours, the cause of flooding can sometimes be attributed to the drain reaching its capacity and not any actual blockages to the drain.

Traffic & Transportation received 184 complaints for 2021/22 which is an increase of 79 on the previous year. As mentioned previously, a major factor in this increase has related to Highway Licensing and Streetworks Enforcement complaints (67 complaints). These complaints cover a range of functions from table & chair licences, vehicle crossovers, abandoned vehicles, to skip licences, and can be quite emotive.

Officers endeavour to be as accommodating as possible, but have to work with a legal framework when considering the issues. However, it should be noted that this area also received the highest number of compliments (22).

Road Safety / Transport Schemes received 40 complaints, and this can be attributed to the huge implementation of schemes which are currently being undertaken. Although these comments are logged as complaints, essentially the information is classed as feedback to the scheme and included as part of the post-scheme monitoring process. These comments are a valuable aid when assessing if any adjustments are required to a scheme.

The Civil Enforcement Team received 38 complaints for 2021/22. The majority of these complaints were regarding parking enforcement which can be expected due to the relaxing / removal of restrictions and the increase in commuter travel.

Compliment

- ✓ “That's great thank you so much XXXX! All your hard work it very much appreciated. I am sorry for the constant e-mails, but as you can imagine we are keen to get the outside area up and running again.”

Learning from complaints

- ✓ A review of complaints received established that the Directorate has received complaints concerning the criteria for highway licensing. People reported that it was confusing trying to find the relevant information in regards to areas such as skip licences and table and chair licenses. This problem has been alleviated to a certain extent with the introduction of a dedicated web page/portal where all the relevant information can be found in one place and the appropriate application can be made.



Bereavement & Registration

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Bereavement & Registration	25	24
Cardiff Dogs Home	0	3
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	25 (100%)	27 (100%)

Service Area	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Bereavement & Registration	24	0	0	0	13	11
Cardiff Dogs Home	3	0	0	0	1	2

Bereavement and Registration Services recorded 24 complaints during 2021/22, a small decrease from 2020/21 (25 complaints). Bereavement and Registration Services actively encourages the bereaved and all Registration Service users to contact them should they experience any issues with any burial, cremation, marriage, or registration service as these are such significant events where there can be no errors.

Complaints are received by email, via C2C, in writing and via Bereavement Services' reception area where service monitor forms are completed. All complaints are recorded on a database and dealt with as soon as possible and always within the timescale. Service Provision Questionnaires are sent to all those who use Bereavement and Registration Services which provides an additional avenue for people to advise us of any issues with the services they have received.

It is important to note that due to the high number of visitors to the service – with over 4,000 funeral services per annum, approximately 500,000 visitors to our sites, 9,000 registrations for births and deaths, and 1,500 marriages – the complaints are very minimal. Furthermore Citizenship Ceremonies are also organised by the Register Office.

Bereavement and Registration Services is a 'right first time' service in which our customers, the bereaved, or those carrying out life changing events are our ultimate priority. Customer requests and comments via service monitor forms and questionnaires are scrutinised and service standards have been developed to inform the public. From these standards, monthly



performance data is monitored to ensure that we are meeting our commitments to Cardiff's citizens. Annually our level of customer satisfaction averages 99%.

Bereavement Services' complaints reported would equate to under 0.01% of all visitors and service users to our offices and sites. Visitors often come to us in quite a vulnerable state which can mean that small issues may become of increased importance to them. Service Monitor Forms are then monitored via our monthly statistics and at operational meetings. Trends in service requirements are then considered at this point as well. Where an error has occurred, we will also proactively apologise in writing to the family concerned to try and stop an issue escalating or a complaint being received.

Registration Services is also an area in which our citizens are undertaking life changing events and as such we must respond to their needs with sensitivity and understanding. We also register deaths at University Hospital of Wales and work with the team there to ensure that any issues are dealt with in a timely manner. Again, questionnaires are sent out to all service users to proactively seek their comments. All life events can prove challenging for those undertaking the registration of a death or birth or arranging a marriage.

Nearly all the positive comments and feedback concerning the services received at the Register Office are based around ceremonies. These can be ceremonies at Approved Venues, Register Office ceremonies and Citizenship ceremonies. Here the comments are all praising the staff; their knowledge and experience and the way that those interacting with the service are put at ease especially at such life changing moments. The work of the staff and their understanding make these days truly special and memorable. Similarly positive feedback concerning public interactions with staff is also apparent in Bereavement Services where staff often go the extra mile to ensure that a funeral or service that is delivered is done so in a sympathetic and understanding way.

Compliment(s)

- ✓ Can I say that all your team have been outstanding during the pandemic – patients (in very difficult circumstances) have been very complimentary about the service and have said that everything has gone very smoothly. We've been very grateful for your support. From the team here, thank you very much!
- ✓ In fact the empathy and support of everyone we dealt with (the cremation service), without exception, reminded us that there are many good people out there, helping to raise our spirits during what could have been a very trying time.

Learning from complaints

- ✓ In October 2021, a major investment in the audio-visual technology was undertaken at both crematorium chapels and the Register Office. Within Bereavement Services, this new offering has included the re-positioning and increased size of the monitors which show the visual tributes. A new contract for the provision of audio-visual services at both venues has improved what is available to the public and as such these measures have seen a marked decrease in the complaints received concerning audio-visual aspects of a cremation service.



Education & Lifelong Learning

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Education	39	37
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	35 (89.7%)	27 (72.9%)

Service Area	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Education	27	10	0	0	11	26

The **Education and Lifelong Learning** Directorate received 37 formal complaints via the Council’s Corporate Complaints procedure in 2021/2022. This is a small decrease from the 39 recorded during 2020/21.

The Directorate responded in full to 73% of the complaints received within 20 working days of receipt. The remaining 10 cases were responded to within 3 months. Within this, a number of 2021/2022 complaint cases are returning cases, wherein the complainant was not satisfied with the LA’s response or added additional complaints to their existing case. This can explain, in part, the reason for the number of cases that exceeded the 20 working day response period. These cases have now been satisfied and further procedures have now been implemented to prevent extension and reopening of cases, for example, liaising with Corporate Complaints for their guidance where a case is considered closed.

The most common category that complaints fell into was Schools Catering, which made up 27% of all complaints received. Most of these complaints occurred as a consequence of lessening of COVID restrictions and the want to return to pre-COVID meals within schools, including where there have been periods where hot meals have not been provided, greater variety and more nutritious.

The category and nature of Admissions complaints - as the category with the most complaints the previous year and the second highest for this year – can mostly be attributed to school placement, either a lack of or non-preferred placement, rather than of the Admissions process and functionality itself.

We will continue to improve the management of complaints over the next year to support good customer service in the Directorate. This includes systematic review at Education Management Team meetings to ensure that timescales are met. We will consider complaints alongside correspondence and freedom of information requests to identify areas of



improvement for Education. There is also a need to review capacity to support school complaints and investigations, as well as ensuring we have a child friendly complaints procedure in line with ambitions to embed children's rights.

It is important to note that under Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002, governing bodies of all maintained schools are required to establish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school or to the provision of facilities or services. The Local Authority does not have a role in investigating or resolving complaints about schools. The Welsh Government has issued guidance to support schools in dealing with complaints entitled Complaints Procedures for School Governing Bodies in Wales (Welsh Government circular no 011/2012). Within the guidance, it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to satisfy itself that all schools it maintains have adequate complaints procedures in place and that these are published. A governing body complaints procedure may, with the agreement of the local authority, include a stage for the local authority to consider the complaint. However, the statutory responsibility for dealing with a complaint remains with the governing body.

Compliments

The Directorate received a number of compliments from a range of service users via email, telephone and social media channels but unfortunately these were not formally tracked and monitored during 2021-22. However, the team has put processes in place so that the good service provided by Education staff can be represented in future reports.

- ✓ I think you and your team are doing an amazing job at a time when more and more pressure is put upon systems, and the teams responsible for the systems and demand for complex reports has increased exponentially. I feel that the response time to my queries is quick and always friendly and explanatory. Even if something isn't easily solved i feel I'm kept updated ... I feel your team doesn't always get the acknowledgement deserved for the essential work you do. Thank you"
- ✓ The Cardiff Commitment team is an exemplar of good practice in relation to the links developed between Schools and Settings and Industry. There is a clear ambition to ensure that careers education is embedded across all areas of the curriculum through the provision of a wide range of relevant work-related learning experiences and environments. This will help prepare Learners for the challenges and opportunities of further learning and the ever-evolving world of work.

It can also be noted that in 2021-22, the Local Authority's Education Service was inspected by Estyn. The report identifies three areas of excellent practice in supporting children and young people – Cardiff Commitment, support for asylum seekers and transforming youth work.



Economic Development

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Economic Development	25	48
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	21 (84%)	42 (87.5%)
Parks & Harbour Authority	129	85
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	94 (72.86%)	65 (76.5%)

Service Area	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Economic Development	42	6	0	0	23	25
Parks & Harbour Authority	65	16	3	1	33	52

During 2021/22 **Economic Development** received 133 complaints which comprise of 7 for City Centre Management, 4 for Strategic Estates, 8 for Venues and Tourism (this includes Cardiff Castle, the Events team, Cardiff Caravan Park and the Norwegian Church), 9 for Economic Development, 7 for Major Events, 13 for Property Services (previously Facilities Management) and 85 for **Parks**.

There has been a slight decrease in complaints for Economic Development, however we have had a big decrease in complaints for Parks during the year - it was realised that many of the complaints for Parks were actually requests for services (such as grass cutting) and therefore are now being treated as such in the first instance.

A review of complaints received by Parks and applying the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy more stringently has resulted in a large decrease in complaints received. It was established that many of the complaints for Parks were actually "requests for service" (such as grass cutting) and therefore are now being treated as such in the first instance. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response from Parks to their grass cutting request, they are then able to make a formal complaint.

Compliments

- ✓ Economic Development - "I attended the event at Cardiff Castle on Sunday evening and wanted to compliment the Council, Fuel and all others involved for a very well organised event. The venue and facilities were perfect along with three of my



favourite bands performing it made for a fantastic evening. After the event I walked back through the city centre to my hotel alone yet felt very safe particularly due to the visible police presence and the number of venues with door staff. It was my first visit to Cardiff and it definitely won't be my last, the city is very visitor friendly, has a vibrant night life and I would consider attending similar events in future. Thank you”.

- ✓ Parks – “Thank you for your email and to everyone else in this email trail, I am truly blown away by the kindness and work everyone has put into returning this precious bear to my grandson and very excited to see the reunion take place tomorrow! My father is going to be delighted to hear this news as it was him who originally gave the bear to XXXX after he was born, his first great grandchild, hence the additional poignancy and sentimentality of this story! You have all gone above and beyond!!”

Learning from complaints

- ✓ Economic Development received a complaint regarding road closures due to filming around Cardiff Bay and the lack of warning about disruptions at the bus stops prior to the filming. We apologised to the complainant and explained that discussions would be taking place with Cardiff Bus to ensure that in future the bus stops would contain clear accurate information regarding any road closures/disruptions to service.

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Revenues

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Revenues	103	152
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	80 (78%)	145 (95.4%)

Total complaints closed within timescales					Complaint outcome	
Service Area	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Revenues	145	7	0	0	43	109

The number of complaints recorded by **Revenues** during the financial year increased from 103 in 2020/21 to 152 in 2021/22 (around a 48% increase). Though this represents an increase, the volume of complaints is considered similar to the volume received pre-pandemic and can mostly be attributed to the reintroduction of recovery action, which was paused during the pandemic.

The percentage of complaint responses being issued within corporate timescales has increased significantly to 95%, whereas this has previously been 80% (in 2019/20) and 78% (2020/21). This increase can be attributed to the filling of a long term vacant post (where the previous incumbent was also on long term sick leave), along with improved working practices and complaint management.

Compliment

- ✓ “Hi all, I made an online payment for my council tax and then filled out the form to have my remaining instalments. I completed the form at about 8 am Monday morning. Within a few hours I had someone call me to explain what my new payments would be and generate a new bill. I don’t remember his name unfortunately but he was friendly, helpful and I was just so surprised to get a call so quickly. I’m really grateful for how the council have handled this, especially at a time where I am sure your staff are very stretched and working in some difficult circumstances. Thank you :)”



Customer & Digital Services

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Customer & Digital Services	66	179
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	66 (100%)	124 (69.3%)

Service Area	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Connect to Cardiff (C2C)	42	0	0	0	25	17
Rent Smart Wales	77	52	0	0	31	98
24/7 Services	5	2	1	0	0	8

Connect To Cardiff (C2C) received 42 complaints during 2021/22 which represents an increase of 75% compared to the 24 received during 2020/21. In respect of that total, 17 complaints were not upheld. Of the 26 remaining complaints, the main contributor to the increase when compared to the previous year is down to an increased time taken by officers to answer calls.

Over the course of the year, C2C has experienced challenges:

- Staff numbers – C2C has experienced challenges with resource, often resulting in several posts being vacant due to the volatile employment market facing many organisations throughout the UK but also an increase in sickness, COVID and non-COVID related.
- Wait Times – impact of the staffing numbers/recruitment challenges and driven by activities in Service Areas which has meant realigning resources in C2C to meet areas of greatest pressure which has led to higher wait times for some services.
- Staff challenges – a dispersed workforce has created its own issues and impacted on the performance of the contact centre – this is being resolved by returning officers to the office so we can provide greater support.

Many established members of staff have rightfully remained working to support public health efforts in Cardiff Council hosted services such as Track and Protect and the replacement of their expertise is a gradual process, at times creating vacancies further down the chain which has impacted on frontline resource.



With C2C being the first point of contact for the council, performance is directly affected by other services demands, projects and communications to the public and where other services are experiencing challenges, this has also impacted C2C.

Following investigation of each upheld complaint that was not related to the wait time, full feedback and (where necessary) refresher training was carried out to enhance the services we provide. C2C are constantly striving to provide a fully rounded customer journey for every customer whether it be via the telephone or our multiple digital channels. It should be noted that no C2C complaints were escalated to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and were completed entirely within Cardiff councils internal process which is indicative that responses were thorough and meaningful.

Customer & Digital Services continues to promote Customer Service throughout the council and the impacts it can have on the customer journey when interacting with the council and how it can aid complaint handling. C2C's in-house coaches deliver Customer Service Training, which is offered to all council staff, providing attendees with the skills they need to effectively deliver services with the customer at the forefront of service delivery. Our in-house coaches have also worked with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to create a bespoke Complaints Training program for all staff with the aim of further enhancing complaint handling when things do go wrong.

Compliment

- ✓ Had the need and the luck to contact @cardiffcouncil C2C service this evening. Got supported by one of the nicest and most helpful contact centre people I have ever spoken to. Anywhere. Well done Cardiff Council. Do look my details up and (thank) him if you can.

In June 2021, **Rent Smart Wales** entered its five-year renewal period, which resulted in a 138% increase in customer contact across the 2021-2022 period. This increase generated a backlog of emails and Contact Us forms leading to customer replies being delayed. Some customers also experienced difficulties with the Rent Smart Wales website, with some being logged out and slow loading of webpages. These factors have contributed to an increase in complaints during 2021/22, with 129 complaints being recorded.

Customer complaints received were generally about service provision during the peak renewal period, the tone of renewal correspondence, and the fees charged by Rent Smart Wales for renewal.

Since March 2022, service standards/targets for dealing with correspondence have been met and the backlog has been cleared. As a result, the number of complaints has correspondingly declined.



Rent Smart Wales is in the process of reviewing the renewal processes, related automated communications and the complaint management procedure with a view to securing future improvements and specifically more efficient complaint handling.

24/7 Services received 8 complaints during 2021/22 which is a 50% reduction compared to 2020/21 when 16 complaints were received. The number of complaints concerning the Meals on Wheels service has decreased and this can be attributed to improved communication and working practices. This can also be evidence by our increase retention of customers for the service.

With regards to our Telecare service, just 2 complaints were received. A dedicated Customer Care Team Leader is now in place. This has now enabled a review and update of a number of processes providing consistent support to the team to enhance performance.

Governance & Legal

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Governance & Legal	2	12
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	2 (100%)	12 (100%)

Service Area	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Governance & Legal	12	0	0	0	3	9

Of the 12 complaints recorded for **Governance & Legal Services** during 2021/22, 8 were for Electoral Services with one upheld, two partially upheld and the remaining five not upheld. Six complaints were received in relation to the combined poll in May 2021 for the Senedd Cymru and Police and Crime Commission Elections, these elections were delivered facing several challenges including the franchise change for votes at 16 and qualifying foreign nationals, a combination poll with different franchises, a cross boundary poll and the requirement to deliver the poll under Covid-19 restrictions. That said most complaints received were not upheld as the processes undertaken were correct and in line with legislation.

The remaining two complaints related to electoral registration and access to the electoral register, although the elector raised concerns the processes followed were legislatively correct



Housing & Communities

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Housing & Communities	433	655
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	392 (90.5%)	127 (19.4%)

Service Area	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Housing	127	502	26	0	271	384

Housing & Communities experienced an increase in complaints during 2021/22 as 655 complaints were recorded, compared to 433 in 2020/21

The knock-on effects of the pandemic and its related restrictions contributed to an overall increase in complaints related to Cardiff Council’s Repair Service. As routine and non-emergency jobs/inspections were delayed during periods of restrictions, there has been a long-lasting backlog of repair jobs which has continued to add to the delay of pre-existing jobs and the responses to newly raised jobs. A noticeable surge in complaints related to these delays has been evident.

The impact on housing and the temporary ban on evictions initially contributed to a decrease in housing/homelessness complaints during 2020/2021. However, the uncertainty of the newly ratified legislation, the Renting Homes Act, and the lifting of the temporary ban seems to have contributed to an increase of complaints regarding private landlords, eviction notices and the reactions of homelessness/housing services in Cardiff Council.

2021/2022 has been a challenging year for many complainants. During the tail-end of the year, with uncertainty and concern regarding the continued widespread cost of living crisis, we have started to see many complainants refer to these challenges as they look to Cardiff Council for support. The Housing & Communities directorate has a dedicated team dealing with complaints and remains committed to learning from complaints and improving the service for all its customers.

