

Cardiff Council

Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2022/23



1. Reason for this report

To report to the Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints procedure between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023. The statistics for corporate complaints are set out in the report by service area.

A complaint is defined within Cardiff Council as:

An expression of concern or dissatisfaction made by one or more members of the public regarding Cardiff Council's actions, or lack of action, or the standard of service it provided following an initial request for service.

A complaint is not:

- *A first-time report of an occurrence that needs Cardiff Council's attention or an initial request for service.*
- *A formal review or appeal against a decision.*
- *A way of asking for a change to legislation or a policy decision.*
- *A means for lobbying groups/organisations to promote a cause.*
- *A broad and general expression of dissatisfaction with little to no specifics or that does not relate specifically to Cardiff Council's actions, or lack of action, or the standard of service it provided.*

As noted, 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 2022/23 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. Once received (via either of the contact methods above or a customer-facing venue), the complaint should be forwarded to the designated service area contact for complaint administration. This contact will ensure complaints are acknowledged and recorded and facilitate the investigation of the complaint in accordance with the corporate complaints procedure.

Acknowledgment. The responsible officer within the service area 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. Our policy states that we aim to provide a response to a customer's complaint within 20 working days of our receipt of the complaint. If a complaint is particularly complex, the responsible officer will let the customer know that it may take longer to investigate their complaint and when they should expect to receive a response.

Full response. At the end of an investigation, a response should be issued 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.

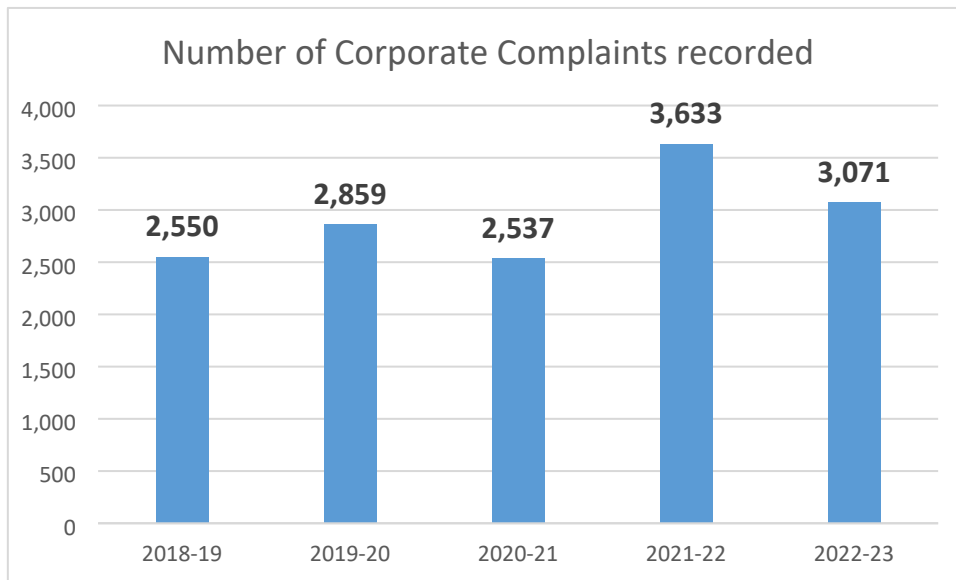
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Complaints that progress to the Ombudsman will have been thoroughly investigated by the service area. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, it is for the Ombudsman to assess whether there is any evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the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



3. Complaints for Cardiff Council in 2022-23

A total of 3,071 complaints were recorded during 2022/23. This is an 15.5% decrease from the previous year, when 3,633 complaints were recorded.

Year	Number of complaints
2022-23	3,071
2021-22	3,633
2020-21	2,537
2019-20	2,859
2018-19	2,550



4. Complaints breakdown for Cardiff Council

A total of 3,071 complaints were recorded during 2022/23. This is an 15.5% decrease from the previous year, when 3,633 complaints were recorded.

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

Service Area	Number of complaints 2021/22	Number of complaints 2022/23
Waste Collections	2,089	1,267
Housing & Communities	655	934
Traffic & Transportation	184	241
Finance	152	174
Customer & Digital Services	179	142
Education	37	89
Environmental Enforcement	57	58
Highways Maintenance	56	54
Economic Development	48	33
Parks & Harbour Authority	85	30
Planning (including Building Control)	48	28
Bereavement & Registration (including Cardiff Dogs Home)	27	11
Governance & Legal Services	12	8
HR	4	2
Total	3,633	3,071

This report does not consider Social Services complaints.

Complaints for Social Services are recorded under their statutory complaint's procedure. However, a breakdown of the number of complaints received by Social Services can be found below.

Service Area	Number of complaints 2021/22	Number of complaints 2022/23
Adult Services	116	126
Children's Services	247	236



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 as understanding where things are not working. We therefore also keep a record of the compliments we receive as good practice and learning can then be circulated across the Council.

A total of 1,265 compliments were recorded during 2022/23. This is an 14.9% decrease from the previous year, when 1,487 compliments were recorded.

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 2021/22	Number of compliments 2022/23
Housing	544	329
Waste Collections	372	308
Customer & Digital Services	255	302
Economic Development, Parks & Harbour Authority	144	118
Bereavement & Registration Services	84	79
Planning, Transport & Environment	81	121
Finance	3	3
Education & Lifelong Learning	2	3
Governance & Legal Services	2	2
Total	1,487	1,265

This report does not consider Social Services compliments. However, a breakdown of the number of compliments received by Social Services can be found below.

Service Area	Number of compliments 2021/22	Number of compliments 2022/23
Adult Services	189	195
Children's Services	152	180



6. Complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2022/23

Though a customer can approach the Ombudsman at any time, the Ombudsman would usually expect a customer to have exhausted the Council’s complaints procedure before approaching her office.

Therefore, 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. **During 2022-23, fewer complainants escalated their complaint to the Ombudsman compared to the previous year - as the Ombudsman closed 143 cases involving Cardiff Council compared to 159 cases in 2021-22.**

We can also consider the cases themselves as an indicator of how well the Council handles complaints. **Of the 143 cases, just 23 were identified as requiring further action by the Council as an Early Resolution Settlement.** 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 143:

- 30 were closed by the Ombudsman as premature – that is, the Council had not had a reasonable opportunity to deal with the complaint itself.
- 71 cases were closed as the Ombudsman was satisfied with the action taken by the Council.
- 23 cases were closed by voluntary settlements during 2022/23. 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.
- 19 cases were considered by the Ombudsman to be ‘out of jurisdiction’ and
- **0 cases proceeded to investigation during 2022-23.**

The Ombudsman closed the cases for the following reasons:

	2021-22	2022-23
Complainants had not exhausted the Council's complaints process - they were referred back to the Council	40	30



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 	50	71
Cases declined because Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by Council (Early Resolution Settlement)	39	23
Cases out of Ombudsman's jurisdiction	24	19
Cases withdrawn by complainant	0	0
Complaint led to an Ombudsman's report	6	0
Total	159	143

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	
2022-23	143
2021-22	159
2020-21	100
2019-20	120
2018-19	110

Investigations leading to reports.

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

Legislative changes to the powers of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales came into force as a result of the Public Services Ombudsman Act 2019, giving the Ombudsman greater investigative powers.

0 complaints were taken into investigation during 2022-23 and 0 reports were issued against Cardiff Council which is a strong indication that the ethos of 'investigate once, investigate well' is embedded in our processes.



7. Learning from complaints

Complaints provide valuable feedback and should be viewed as an opportunity to learn from experiences and drive continual organisational improvement to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Our complaints handling procedure helps us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and may also prevent the same problems 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 quarterly to look at common issues relating to complaints handling, including complaints data, timescales and learning from complaints. The meetings are chaired by the Corporate Complaints team and attendance from each service area is compulsory, enabling officers to learn from the Complaints "Group" and receive peer support.

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.



8. Complaints by area

Waste Collections

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Waste Collections	2,089	1,267
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	1,469 (70.3%)	960 (75.8%)

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
2021-21	1469	566	41	13	2052	37
2022-23	960	286	21	0	1197	70

Environmental Enforcement

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Environmental Enforcement	57	58
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	33 (57.9%)	39 (67.2%)

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
2021-22	33	22	2	0	57	0
2022-23	39	19	0	0	43	15



Waste Collections continue to adopt a positive, constructive approach to complaints and positive strides have been taken to reduce the number of formal complaints received about the service. This is reflected by a 39% decrease for the service (1,267 complaints recorded in 2022/23 compared to 2,089 in 2021/22).

This decrease can be attributed to the following reasons:

- ✓ The 4-day working single shift pattern introduced in 2021/22 has now ‘bedded in’ and crews are familiar with their new rounds.
- ✓ A combination of Cardiff and the Vale College and in-house HGV training has helped to reduce the driver shortage levels experienced by the Council in 2021/22.
- ✓ Following a review of the “Assisted Lift” scheme in March/April 2022, several improvements were made, including:
 - The appointment of a designated Correspondence Officer to try and resolve repeat complaints.
 - Digital changes to in-cab devices so drivers have easily accessible information and are able to confirm collections to be made at each assisted lift property.
 - Workforce training
 - Supervisor monitoring

These improvements are being reviewed on a quarterly basis, with further controls being implemented.

Complaint trends have been analysed and it has been noted that, throughout the summer months of 2022/23, the Council still experienced some disbanded or delayed garden waste collections. This could be attributed to an increase in tonnage, lack of HGV drivers, demand for annual leave and an increase in short-term sickness absence in June and July. These properties were recollected on weekends as quickly as possible though unfortunately still prompted complaints.

When considered, relative to the number of waste collections that are carried out across the city every year, 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 2022/23, 25,642,468 collections took place and 16,580 were reported as missed. Therefore, the amount of non-collections relates to less than 0.07% of the collections made during this period.

Compliments

- ✓ *Waste – A resident visited the Recycling Centre at Bessemer Close three times over one weekend and wanted to say what an excellent group of people are working there. They were all, without exception, kind, helpful and cheerful. They were all working hard, and nothing was too much trouble for them. The resident has been a manger in the NHS for over thirty years and she said she has appointed various*



people over the years. She said she would be happy to have any of them as a member of her team. They are an asset to the Council, please pass on her thanks.

- ✓ *Enforcement - Resident emailed to say they wanted to say a massive thank you for sorting the rubbish issues with their neighbours. They recently saw two gentlemen taking to their neighbours, then later that day their neighbour was outside their property, sweeping, picking up and sorting out their bins. Every bit of rubbish was picked up, resulting in the flats looking clean and tidy.*

Planning, Transport & Environment

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Highway Maintenance	56	54
Planning (including Building Control)	48	28
Traffic & Transportation	184	241
Total	288	323
Number / Percentage of complaint responded to on time	229 (79.5%)	254 (78.6%)

Service Area & Financial Year	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 2021-22	40	12	3	1	16	40
Highway Maintenance 2022-23	44	8	2	0	16	38
Planning (including Building Control) 2021-22	43	5	0	0	2	46
Planning (including Building Control) 2022-23	7	17	2	2	0	28



Traffic & Transportation 2021-22	146	28	7	3	43	141
Traffic & Transportation 2022-23	203	24	11	3	35	206

The number of complaints received during 2022/23 (295) has seen an increase of 55 compared to 2021/22 (240). This is an increase of 18.6% and could perhaps be expected due to the complete normalisation of the duties and functions of the directorate following on from the restrictions that had been in place.

Highway Maintenance received 54 complaints for 2022/23 which is a decrease of 2 on the previous year. Of the 54, 24 complaints related to Asset Management. Complaints were received concerning carriageway/footway defects including alleged delays in the repair of carriageway/footway defects and also for the quality of the repairs themselves..

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 9 complaints with the majority of complaints being regarding vehicles being removed so that works could be undertaken (advance warning is given when works are undertaken in an area), or the cancellation/delay in works being carried out, which is usually due to adverse weather conditions.

Maintenance Operations received 11 complaints. In all cases, 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 241 complaints for 2022/23 which is an increase of 57 on the previous year.

Of the 241 complaints, 90 were for Transport Policy & Projects and Road Safety Schemes and this can be attributed to the large increase in schemes and initiatives which are currently being implemented across Cardiff. Although these comments are logged and treated 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.

There was a significant decrease in Highway Licensing and Streetworks Applications and Enforcement complaints this year (40 reduced from 67). This decrease in complaints can be contributed to businesses and the general public being more aware of the licensing criteria for areas such as table & chair licences, vehicle crossovers, abandoned vehicles, and skip



licences. This information is readily available on the Council website and allows businesses / residents to make an informed decision before making any appropriate application or report.

The Resident Parking Permit Team received 45 complaints, and the majority of these complaints related to the legislation governing the permit scheme, and in particular the criteria regarding permit eligibility.

Finally, the Civil Enforcement Team received 38 complaints for 2022/23. The majority of these complaints were regarding the perceived lack of enforcement in certain areas. It should be noted that all enforcement reports received are collated and used to enable the Civil Parking Enforcement Team to prioritise problems and tackle specific areas of concern whilst officers are undertaking their patrols.

The **Planning Service** received 28 complaints in total for 2022/23. This is a notable decrease from the previous year where 48 complaints were recorded. These complaints covered a range of issues relating to planning applications, the planning consultation process, planning decisions and compliance with Building Regulations.

That so few complaints were received should be considered positively in terms of the complexities of the planning service provided. Firstly, discussing the sheer volume of public comments, numbering in the tens of thousands, highlights the active engagement and interest of the community in local planning decisions. Managing this level of public input requires careful consideration and organization. These comments can range from detailed suggestions to passionate objections, reflecting the diverse perspectives and concerns of the community.

Moreover, during 2022/23, the Planning Service has transitioned to a fully paperless / digital system which presents its own set of challenges. Moving away from traditional paper-based processes involves not only technological adaptation but also changes in workflow and mindset among staff. Training resources have needed to be allocated to ensure everyone is proficient while also ensuring the security and privacy of digital data is paramount, requiring investments in robust cybersecurity measures.

In the context of resources and pressures, it's crucial to emphasize the constraints faced by staff. The workload associated with processing public comments, managing the digital system, and addressing the concerns of the community can be difficult. Furthermore, these challenges significantly increase the likelihood of complaints. When the process is complex, and there are potential delays or misunderstandings, it's natural for stakeholders to express their dissatisfaction. Managing these complaints effectively requires a delicate balance of addressing concerns promptly, maintaining transparency, and demonstrating empathy towards community members' viewpoints. With all of the above challenges in mind, it is especially pleasing to see a 41.7% decrease in complaints over the last financial year and this reflects positively on the dedication and commitment of staff within the Planning service.



Compliment

"I would like to personally thank (Council officer) for his help in resolving a problem with new lighting. We found that the new light illuminated our garden and conservatory which made our property insecure. Mr Jones acknowledged our problem and I am pleased to say that the problem has been rectified in a short space of time. Excellent service, thank you."

Learning from Complaints

A large number of complaints have previously been received concerning the criteria for abandoned vehicles. Although a vehicle may be parked in a location for a certain length of time, it does not necessarily mean it is abandoned. This can result in complaints being made against the Council as residents are not aware of the legislation that has to be followed before a vehicle can be considered abandoned. This issue has been alleviated to a certain extent with the introduction of a dedicated web page for abandoned vehicles, where all the relevant information (for what is classed as an abandoned vehicle) can be found.

Bereavement & Registration

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Bereavement & Registration	24	11
Cardiff Dogs Home	3	0
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	27 (100%)	11 (100%)

Service Area & Financial Year	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 2021-22	24	0	0	0	13	11
Bereavement & Registration 2022-23	11	0	0	0	6	5



Cardiff Dogs Home 2021-22	3	0	0	0	1	2
Cardiff Dogs Home 2022-23	0	0	0	0	0	0

There were 11 complaints for **Bereavement and Registration** in 2022/23 compared to 24 in 2021/22. 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. Death registration appointments are now being offered at Thornhill Cemetery Enquiries Office which has been welcomed by service users as a convenient alternative to registering deaths at City Hall. 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.

Cardiff Dogs Home:

There were **no** recorded complaints for Cardiff Dogs Home which again is a front line service.

Learning from Complaints

The service area is still recovering from the pandemic. The register office has moved to registering deaths at Thornhill Bereavement Services Office following public requests to register elsewhere than City Hall and to have direct access to staff in Bereavement Services. This has been widely appreciated by those who wish to access the service and the response has been incredibly positive.

Education & Lifelong Learning

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Education	37	89
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	27 (72.9%)	74 (83.1%)

Financial Year	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
2021-22	27	10	0	0	11	26
2022-23	79	10	0	0	4	80



The **Education and Lifelong Learning** Directorate received 89 formal complaints in 2022/2023. This is an increase from the 37 recorded in 2021/2022, and more than three times the recorded number of 27 for 2019/20.

The Directorate responded in full to 89% of the complaints received within 20 working days of receipt. This compares to 73% in the previous year, a 16% increase in the number of responses made within the timeframe. The remaining 10 cases were responded to in under 3 months since initiated.

A number of the complaints received during 2022/23 can be classes as ‘returning cases’, wherein the complainant was not satisfied with the Local Authority’s response and 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 the 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 during 2022/23 was Admissions, which made up 38% of all complaints received. The vast majority of these cases can be attributed to school placement, either a lack of or non-preferred placement, rather than of the Admissions process and functionality itself.

The category of Transport - as the category with the most complaints in 2021/22 and the second highest in 2022/23 – can mostly be attributed to changes made by schools of their own transport policies, or road traffic accidents/damage made by a bus driver for example, rather than the Local Authority Transport department 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 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 receives a number of compliments from a range of service users via email, telephone and social media channels but these are not formally tracked and monitored as they should be. This will be a priority for the service in 2022/23. One of the compliments received in 2022-23 is for the Directorate’s Data team:

- ✓ *Hi, I would love to put a massive shout out to (members of staff). They took my daughter to a residential trip to Llangrannog and she missed our celebrations Diwali but they organise a massive event for it in the evening at Llangrannog they went above and beyond I would love this message to reach the Education Minister or the education department and not sure if Cardiff council education department recognise a staff for the well deserved hard work.*
- ✓ *I'd like to leave a compliment, it's for the miles project a staff member from there has helped me so much over the past couple of months, whether it's looking for work ...helping me with admin tasks such as benefits etc and helping me with getting ready for university. If it wasn't for your help getting me a laptop I wouldn't be able to study! it doesn't go unnoticed and I thought I'd just like to give a big thank you!!*

Economic Development

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Economic Development	48	33
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	42 (87.5%)	27 (81.8%)
Parks & Harbour Authority	85	30
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	65 (76.5%)	23 (76.7%)

Service Area & Financial Year	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 – 2021-22	42	6	0	0	23	25
Economic Development – 2022-23	27	6	0	0	16	17
Parks & Harbour Authority – 2021-22	65	16	3	1	33	52
Parks & Harbour Authority – 2022-23	23	7	0	0	13	17

During 2022/23, **Economic Development** received 63 complaints, a notable decrease from the 133 complaints received during 2021/22. The complaints comprised of 7 for City Centre Management, 1 for Strategic Estates, 15 for Venues and Tourism (including Cardiff Castle, the Events team, Cardiff Caravan Park and the Norwegian Church), 2 for Economic Development, 1 for Major Events, 7 for Property Services (previously Facilities Management) and 30 for Parks.

There has been a big decrease in complaints for Economic Development and this is mainly due to the continuation of a review of complaints received by Parks and, as a result, applying the Council’s Corporate Complaints Policy more stringently. For example, many of the complaints for Parks were actually classed as first-time requests for services (such as grass cutting) and therefore are now being treated as such in the first instance, rather than going through the complaints process. Economic Development also used to deal with complaints regarding road closures and / or car parking charges and these are now logged and recorded under Planning, Transport & Environment.

Compliment

- ✓ *This past weekend I visited Cardiff for the WWE show at the Principality Stadium. Being a Welsh football fan, this is my umpteenth time visiting the capital and I can only describe the past weekend as being amazing. The city is well kept, the transport was accurate, the vibe to the city was on another level, the wrestling fans made for a great day and the police were very good. They even mentioned how great the event was as they spoke to me about wrestling. If another WWE event was to be held in the U.K. then Cardiff is the place for it. Well done on organising such a well-run event. Thanks.”.*
- ✓ *“Trees in and around Roath Park - I just wanted to say thank you for responding to the first of these call outs. The team that attended were very professional, efficient and friendly and did a great job. They said the branches were hanging on by a few fibres and could have fallen anytime and it was right to call it in. I look forward to seeing them in our community again.”*



Learning from complaints

A complaint was received regarding the current telephone booking system run by the Caravan Park. Apologies were offered to the complainant and it was explained that we would explore updates that could be provided to the website and a possible online booking system.

Revenues

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Revenues	152	174
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	145 (95.4%)	173

Financial Year	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
2021-22	145	7	0	0	43	109
2022-23	173	1	0	0	46	128

The number of complaints recorded by **Revenues** during the financial year increased from 152 in 2021/22 to 174 in 2022/23 (a 14.5% increase). Although the number of complaints received by Revenues increased, there was a far larger proportion where complaints were either not investigated or discontinued. This is due to two factors, there was an increase in the number of complaints relating to policy or working procedures – notably with policy changing in relation to long term empty properties and the premium charge. Also, a change in working practices where such complaints are identified and responded to at an earlier juncture, whereas before they may have gone through the complaints process. The responses in such cases are both lengthy and informative.

Response rates have improved, with only one case being beyond the corporate timescale (this had unfortunately been passed to the wrong department and brought to the area's attention after the 20 days had passed). These figures were also achieved despite a key



member of staff being on sabbatical leave for four months and continues the trend over the past few years from and can be attributed to improved working practices and complaints management.

The number of complaints upheld increased slightly from 2021/22 (43 upheld in 2021/22 compared to 46 in 2022-23) and this would indicate a proportional reduction. However, when the complaints which were not investigated are stripped out, there is an increase from 29% to 35% upheld or partially upheld. This can mostly be attributed to increased backlogs in the Revenues Department, with the Council struggling with post-pandemic recruitment and retention of staff causing customer service issues.

Compliments

The Revenues Department received a few compliments through the year, mostly related to administering the cost of living payment – giving money away, rather than collecting it. See below for an example of a compliment where different services collaborated to resolve an issue effectively, demonstrating good knowledge, customer service and professionalism.

- ✓ *Hi there, I've just made the February payment for my Mother's Council Tax and it reminded me that I wanted to let you know about the excellent dealings I've had recently with two of your staff. Most notably (Council officer) in the Benefits team who was extremely helpful and courteous in helping me to update my Mother's details to include the Widows Pension from the Royal Mail that she receives following my Father's death. Second I spoke (Council officer) in the Council Tax Department but unfortunately I did not get his surname. He was a great help in enabling me to set up a payment plan for my Mother to repay her arrears as well as giving me valuable information regarding Disablement Relief and arranging for an Area Inspector to contact me. Well done to both for your professionalism and care and well done to Cardiff City Council. Many thanks*

Learning from complaints

In terms of learning from complaints, a lot of cases were isolated and attributed to human error. It was identified that a delay in processing Council Tax changes led to issues where customers were leaving Cardiff and had Direct Debit instruction in place. This link was established and information provided to C2C managers so that agents could competently handle such cases and customers could make informed decisions about whether they continue to pay whilst details of their vacation were waiting to be processed.



Customer & Digital Services

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Customer & Digital Services	179	142
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	124 (69.3%)	124 (69.3%)

Service Area & Financial Year	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) 2021-22	42	0	0	0	25	17
Connect to Cardiff (C2C) 2022-23	43	0	0	0	29	14
Rent Smart Wales 2021-22	77	52	0	0	31	98
Rent Smart Wales 2022-23	76	20	0	0	77	19
24/7 Services 2021-22	5	2	1	0	0	8
24/7 Services 2022-23	3	0	0	0	0	3

Connect To Cardiff (C2C) received 43 complaints during the 2022/23 period which has remained relatively static with the year before, when 42 complaints were received.

Of the 43 complaints received:

- ✓ All complaints were responded to within Corporate timescales
- ✓ 0 complainants proceeded with their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman of Wales. This is in line with our aim to 'investigate once, investigate well' and is indicative of the time taken to provide full and comprehensive responses by C2C.
- ✓ 14 of the 43 complaints were not upheld following investigation.
- ✓ To provide balance, 70 compliments were recorded for the same period.

Similarly to 2021/22, the main trend for complaints received related to a result of longer wait times to speak to a member of staff. The most significant challenge in addressing this feedback surrounds resource.



Whilst citizen demand via the telephone has reduced with the expansion of the councils digital offerings, volumes of contact via channels such as the 'contact us' webforms have in turn increased and the use of the C2C webchat facility increased by 50% over this review period.

As the C2C baseline of staff has reduced, resource requirements across all channels is further compounded by the difficulties experienced in filling vacant posts. Whilst 3 members of the C2C staff group that were quickly mobilised during the pandemic to assist in the setting up of the Cardiff and Vale Track, Trace and Protect service did return to C2C duties in this period, many key officers were successful in securing positions within the health protection field over the much longer term and upskilling other members of the team to their level of experience and skill is a gradual process and this is still to be considered as a rebuilding phase specifically for C2C.

Following investigation of each upheld complaint that was not related to the wait time, time was taken to speak to the relevant member of staff on a 121 basis and where needed, interventions in the form of refresher training and additional coaching were implemented as per the C2C Learning and Development and Communication strategies.

All staff within C2C are mandated to complete as a minimum Customer Service Level 1 training and Effective Written Communication training. However, we recognise that as this is the bedrock of what we do, we also undertake monitoring exercises to ensure these principles are being delivered consistently and effectively.

Compliment

- ✓ *Hello, I would like to leave a review for (Council Officer) I've just called to discuss an issue with my council tax - and was helped so much over the phone! He was very friendly and kind and explained everything very thoroughly and clearly! It's rare to find such good and helpful customer service! :) Thank you!*

Across the 22/23 period **Rent Smart Wales** was a challenging year for Rent Smart Wales who were dealing with its first renewal period. Issues with recruitment meant that the service was forced to close its contact centre for calls to ensure effective management of inbound communications and workloads. Alongside this, Rent Smart Wales was perceived by its customers as implementing the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 – in fact a piece of Welsh Government legislation which impacted on the Private Rented Sector.

Despite these challenges, the number of complaints received by the service reduced significantly (96 in 2022/23 compared to 129 in 2021/22). The closure of the Contact Centre for calls did lead to an increased number of complaints around customer service for Rent Smart Wales, however through clear communication this was able to be mitigated.



The 22/23 period also saw a reduction in the number of complaints about the tone of renewal correspondence, as following feedback from several complainants, steps were taken to review and update the content, while keeping the key enforcement messages.

Compliment

- ✓ *I must tell you what a pleasure it is to deal with RSW everyone I have dealt with has been a delight to talk to very polite and conscientious and could not do more to help me and my wife please pass my thanks on to your colleagues as well.*

24/7 Services received just 3 complaints during 2022/23, which is a 62.5% reduction compared to 2021/22 when 18 complaints were received. Of the 3 complaints, 2 related to our Telecare service and 1 for Meals on Wheels. Considering the level of coverage provided by these services, this is a positive result.

The low level of complaints received can be largely attributed to increased communication and working practices. Work has also taken place to proactively train our staff and we now have a new post which is for a dedicated trainer for Telecare and Meals on Wheels, in addition to our existing coach for the Alarm Receiving Centre. The trainer is working through all processes and procedures and looking at what new training is available and a gap analysis to ensure all staff are efficient and effective in their roles, including the handling of complaints if appropriate.

Housing & Communities

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Housing & Communities	655	934
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	127 (19.4%)	32 (3.4%)

Financial Year	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
2021-22	127	502	26	0	271	384
2022-23	32	283	613	6	326	608



Housing & Communities experienced an increase in complaints during 2022/23 as 934 complaints were recorded, compared to 655 in 2021/22.

The impact of the rising cost of living has been extremely noticeable, we believe that this has contributed to an increase in formal complaints. Customers are advising us of their struggles in their complaints and our contract holders are often looking to maximise their service charge. Customers expect to see it in action and when communal areas are not upkept to a high standard, or maintenance isn't carried out in a timely fashion, customers request an explanation or formal investigation.

Many of our customers have a history of making formal complaints. We believe that due to the overwhelming pressure that the Responsive Repairs Unit (and all other services in Housing) are under, customers are likely to approach us with a formal complaint as they see it as an alternative (faster) avenue for handling their concerns (we believe that this is because of largely positive experiences that they have had previously with our complaints process). We are consistently making recommendations to service areas to improve customer access and resolve concerns at the point of initial receipt, where possible.

Complaints regarding our homelessness service have also increased in volume - the service is under tremendous pressure, which has been heightened further due to the rising cost of living. Where the privately-rented sector (PRS) was a route that the service could previously assist customers in accessing, the increased rents and overall demand facing the sector has made it strikingly difficult to access. The Local Housing Allowance rates continue to fall short of rental prices and many private landlords, with broader options for selecting tenants, are more scrutinising of our customers.

Due to poor PRS availability and low social housing stock, the provision of temporary accommodation in Cardiff has also reached capacity. Many customers are being placed in hotel environments and this has become a frequent subject for formal complaint. It has become difficult to provide resolutions in these cases and it has become increasingly apparent that the housing crisis is having a tremendous impact on the volume of complaints we are receiving as a service.

Over the next financial year, we anticipate that complaints related to our Responsive Repairs Unit and Homelessness Service will reduce. Cardiff Council are looking to provide more in-house temporary accommodation and reduce/eliminate the amount of hotel placements that are needed, this rollout of accommodation is set to commence shortly. Similarly, the Responsive Repairs Unit is looking to expand further to meet the demand and eliminate its backlog of routine jobs, there is also an aim to provide a fully in-house service that no longer relies on contractors to fulfil the excess of jobs. This, coupled with an improved avenue to access and communicate with the service, should see customer satisfaction improve and formal complaints reduced.



Compliments

- ✓ A compliment received regarding Homelessness -
I would just like to say thank you to everyone who has helped me and my children so far. Especially with how quickly everything is coming together. (Council officer) has been fantastic in every phone call that i have received from her. She has always been very honest to the best of her ability. Through my recent struggle i didn't cry once and tried to stay positive and then after speaking with her it's like she understood everything I'm going through right now, I actually cried when talking with her and it really was what I needed at that point in time. I really felt better afterwards she has been truly amazing and truthful and I too understand that it's a very demanding time for everyone and I do genuinely feel for everyone at this point in time. On behalf of me and my children we would like to thank everyone involved in helping us, we honestly cannot thank you enough.

Learning from complaints

The Responsive Repairs Unit continues to be the Housing service that receives the most formal complaints. Many of these are often to do with delays, cancellations and accessing the service. Using feedback from our customers, the department has been working on setting up Housing Repairs Online Service where there will be an easier avenue to report repairs, communicate with the service and keep track of jobs/orders. This is planned to be rolled out later this year and is expected to relieve a lot of pressure that the Scheduling Team are under and relieve the long waiting times that customers experience on the phone. We anticipate that the amount of formal complaints will also plateau.

The national news report of Awabb Ishak in Rochdale, whose untimely passing was related to damp and mould conditions, has had an enormous effect on the volume of the complaints that we receive. Complaints related to damp and mould have become increasingly more common with customers rightly looking to safeguard themselves and their families. As a service, we look to resolve these complaints as quickly as possible and, to do so, the Responsive Repairs Unit have implemented a Damp and Mould team and co-ordinator, who are responsible for investigating these complaints and ensuring that the department is taking correct action.

