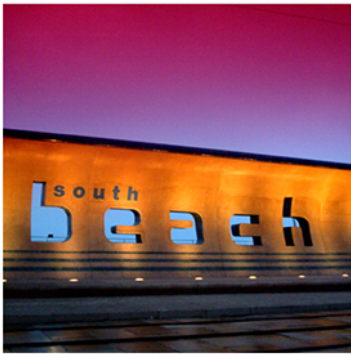


Annual Customer Feedback Report 2015/2016

Blackpool Council



Annual Customer Feedback Report 2015/2016

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1. OVERVIEW

This report provides an overview of customer feedback received during the period 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016.

There are three main types of customer feedback – comments, compliments and complaints. The table below shows a breakdown of the feedback received during the year.

Department	Comments	Compliments	Complaints	Total
Adult Services	12	556	80	648
Chief Executive's Office	0	0	0	0
Children's Services	9	58	91	158
Community & Environmental Services	149	60	272	481
Deputy Chief Executive's	12	5	7	24
Governance & Regulatory Services	3	2	18	23
Places	50	41	87	178
Public Health	2	0	0	2
Resources	17	31	142	190
	254	753	697	1,704

The following sections of this report will analyse the data for comments, compliments and complaints in more detail. An overview of complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman is included in section 5.

2. COMMENTS

Comments are equally as important as complaints as they can help to shape and improve the quality of the services we provide. The following table shows the number of comments received for each department:

Department	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Adult Services	3	0	4	5	12
Chief Executive's Office	0	0	0	0	0
Children's Services	0	4	3	2	9
Community & Environmental Services	41	26	41	41	149
Deputy Chief Executive's	4	3	1	4	12
Governance & Regulatory Services	1	0	2	0	3
Places	14	15	11	10	50
Public Health	0	0	0	2	2
Resources	7	2	4	4	17
Total	70	50	66	68	254
<i>Total 2014/2015</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>204</i>
<i>Total 2013/2014</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>159</i>

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There has been a further increase in the number of comments received during 2015/2016. The department that received the most comments during the period was Community & Environmental Services, the vast majority of which (74%) were requests for service. The three main themes across all comments received were Request for Service (51%), Request for Information (11%), and Suggestions for Improvement (10.6%). Below are some examples of comments received during the year:

*I drove to Blackpool in my electric vehicle and was very disappointed with the lack of charging points. Considering Blackpool is a tourist hotspot and visitors arrive from all over you would have expected charge points readily available along the promenade or nearby (**Tourism**)*

*I would like to see wildflowers planted in a ribbon stretching from Uncle Tom's Cabin to Anchorsholme Park along the side of the tram tracks. It will be a stunning habitat for wildlife and would be a colourful addition to the landscape giving tram travellers something wonderful to see. Please make this a community project that the whole of Blackpool can be proud of (**Parks & Open Spaces**)*

*I thoroughly enjoyed the air show yesterday and must compliment Blackpool for organising it. But what was inadequate, were the public toilet facilities. What I would suggest for big events like this would be to install a number of portaloos along the front that visitors can use throughout the event (**Facilities Management**)*

3. COMPLIMENTS

Compliments are extremely important and help to highlight the areas we are improving in or maintaining levels of high quality service. Therefore, all compliments are passed on to the relevant staff member(s) and service manager to ensure that good practice is commended and to help boost staff morale. The table below shows a breakdown of the compliments received during 2015/2016:

Department	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Adult Services	154	211	127	64	556
Chief Executive's Office	0	0	0	0	0
Children's Services	10	18	10	20	58
Community & Environmental Services	17	24	11	8	60
Deputy Chief Executive's	4	1	0	0	5
Governance & Regulatory Services	1	1	0	0	2
Places	2	4	4	31	41
Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Resources	3	5	10	13	31
Total	191	264	162	136	753
<i>Total 2014/2015</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>154</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>539</i>
<i>Total 2013/2014</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>212</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>475</i>

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The number of compliments received has continued to increase in 2015/2016. Nearly three quarters of the compliments received during the year were for Adult Services (73%). Across the rest of the Council, Community & Environmental Services received the most compliments. The Places department also saw a large increase in compliments in Quarter 4 due to the introduction of overnight parking provision for motorhomes.

The lower level of compliments for other departments is not necessarily representative of poor quality service in these areas. Feedback for Adult Services is dealt with by the Customer Relations Team which has ensured that positive feedback from service users is captured and reported on a regular basis. Combine this with the nature of the services provided and this leads to a much higher number of compliments than for other departments.

The two most common compliment themes were Quality of Service and Staff Conduct / Treatment of Customer. Below are some examples of compliments received during this period:

*I would like to say a big thank you for clearing my tenant's arrears and I would like to thank your staff for the support they gave me during this situation. Fortunately with your intervention no further legal action is required. Thank you again for your assistance in resolving this situation (**Housing Options**)*

*Words cannot display the gratitude I have for the help I have been given over the past 6 weeks. Every member of the team has been kind in helping me in all the ways needed. I could not have managed without them (**Adult Social Care**)*

*Thank you to the drainage team for the efficient manner in which they unblocked the gully outside my home. They tried to do the job on Saturday but there was a car parked over the gully so they returned first thing Monday morning, for which I am very grateful (**Highways & Transport**)*

*I was really impressed with the two guys who came today from the bulky matters service. Friendly and efficient, they deserve every credit for a job well done (**Waste & Recycling**)*

4. COMPLAINTS

4.1 Types of Complaint

The Council has a three stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1** Investigation by the service
- Stage 2** Review by the relevant Director / Assistant Director
- Stage 3** Review by the Complaints Panel on behalf of the Chief Executive

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The table below shows the number of complaints logged for each stage during the period.

Stage	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
Stage 1	197	176	147	158	678	97.27%
Stage 2	2	7	1	5	15	2.15%
Stage 3	0	1	0	3	4	0.57%
	199	184	148	166	697	

There has been a reduction in the number of complaints received this year when compared with 2014/2015. The number of Stage 1 complaints received is relatively consistent across the year. The low numbers of Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints received suggests that the majority of Stage 1 complaints are dealt with effectively, therefore preventing complaints from escalating.

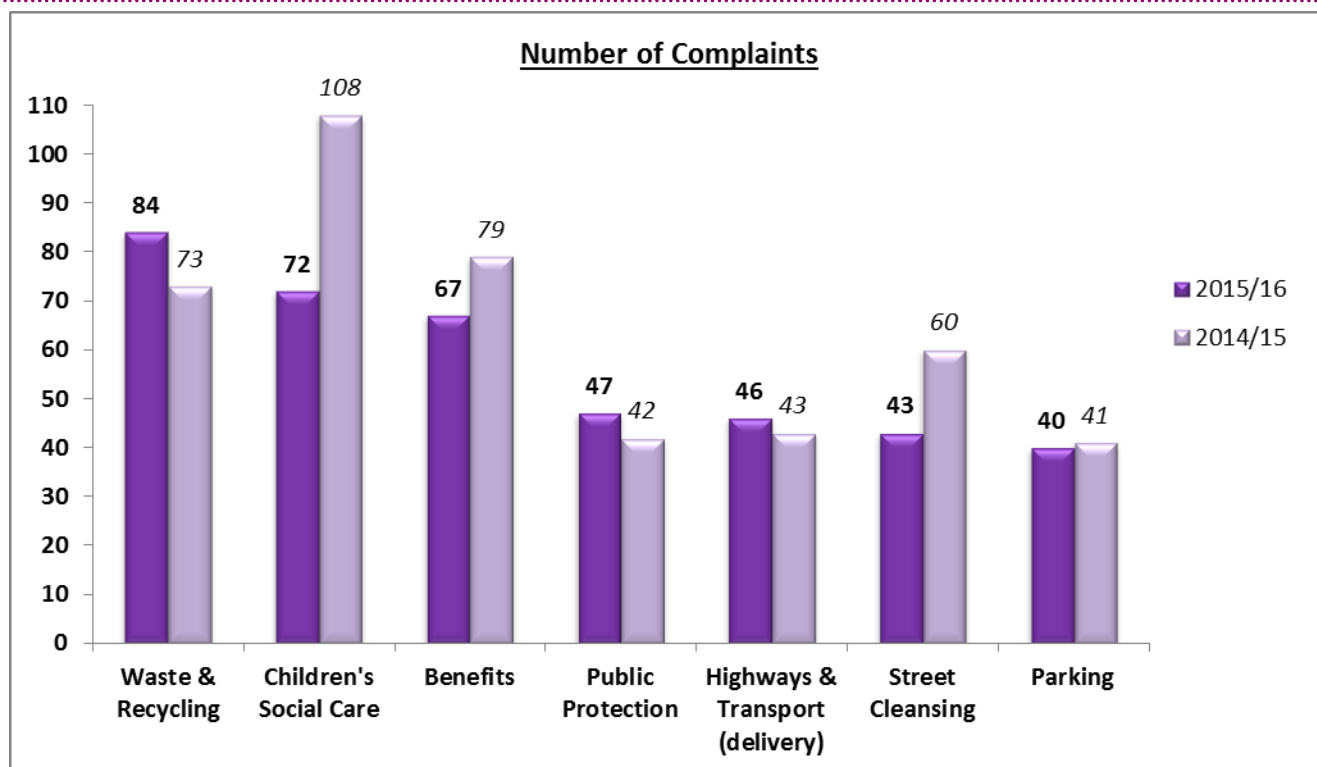
4.2 Departments & Service Areas

Department		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Adult Services		20	22	21	17	80
Chief Executive’s Office		0	0	0	0	0
Children’s Services		22	20	22	27	91
Community & Environmental Services		82	71	52	67	272
Deputy Chief Executive’s		3	2	2	0	7
Governance & Regulatory Services		10	3	1	4	18
Places		18	32	20	17	87
Public Health		0	0	0	0	0
Resources		44	34	30	34	142
	Total	199	184	148	166	697
	Total 2014/2015	192	213	205	210	820
	Total 2013/2014	n/a	178	127	164	469

A further breakdown of the number of complaints received by service area can also be found in [Appendix A](#).

Over half of all complaints received (57%) during this period relate to seven service areas. These were Waste & Recycling, Children's Social Care, Benefits, Public Protection, Highways & Transport (delivery), Street Cleansing and Parking.

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There has been an increase in complaints in a number of service areas during 2015/2016, most notably Waste and Recycling and Parks and Open Spaces. This is likely to be attributable to service changes introduced during this period such as the introduction of a subscription charge for green waste collections and the reduction in the level of grass cutting.

There was a significant reduction in complaints relating to Children's Social Care in 2015/2016. There were also reductions in the number of complaints for Council Tax, Benefits and Customer First which may be the result of ongoing channel shift work.

4.3 Complaint Themes

The table below highlights the main complaint themes. As in 2014/2015, the majority of all complaints received (85%) relate to the following four themes:

Theme	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
Quality of Service	59	62	46	50	217	↓
Council Action	39	32	31	38	140	↓
Lack of Action	42	39	20	36	137	↓
Staff Conduct / Treatment of Customer	26	35	19	25	105	↓
					599	

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By far, the most common complaint theme was Quality of Service. Almost half of complaints within this theme relate to the following areas – Waste and Recycling (22.6%), Benefits (11.9%), Customer First (8.8%) and Street Cleansing (6%). Encouragingly there has been a 35% reduction in complaints about staff conduct / treatment of customers with 56 fewer complaints being received in 2015/2016 than the previous year.

As our emphasis shifts to building more resilient communities that can help themselves, it is anticipated that there will continue to be a high number of complaints about the quality of services and lack of action. However, the continued work of the Strategic Customer Services Group will ensure that the Council has a coherent and focused approach to how it supports its customers and service users through this transition so that the best possible outcomes are delivered given the resources available.

4.4 Ward Breakdown

The table below provides a breakdown of complaints by ward based on the address of the complainant. It should be noted that not all complainants provide their postal address and therefore the ward cannot be determined for 301 complaints.

Ward	No.	%	Ward	No.	%
Outside Blackpool	47	6.7%	Victoria	15	2.1%
Talbot	37	5.3%	Squires Gate	13	1.9%
Bloomfield	35	5%	Anchorsholme	11	1.6%
Claremont	28	4%	Clifton	11	1.6%
Bispham	23	3.3%	Highfield	11	1.6%
Stanley	22	3.1%	Layton	11	1.6%
Brunswick	20	2.8%	Marton	11	1.6%
Waterloo	19	2.7%	Norbreck	11	1.6%
Warbreck	17	2.4%	Greenlands	9	1.3%
Tyldesley	16	2.3%	Park	9	1.3%
Hawes Side	15	2.1%	Ingthorpe	7	1%
			Total	398	

The wards generating the most complaints were Talbot, Bloomfield and Claremont which is similar to the pattern in 2014/2015. A breakdown of the types of complaints received in these wards can be found in [Appendix B](#).

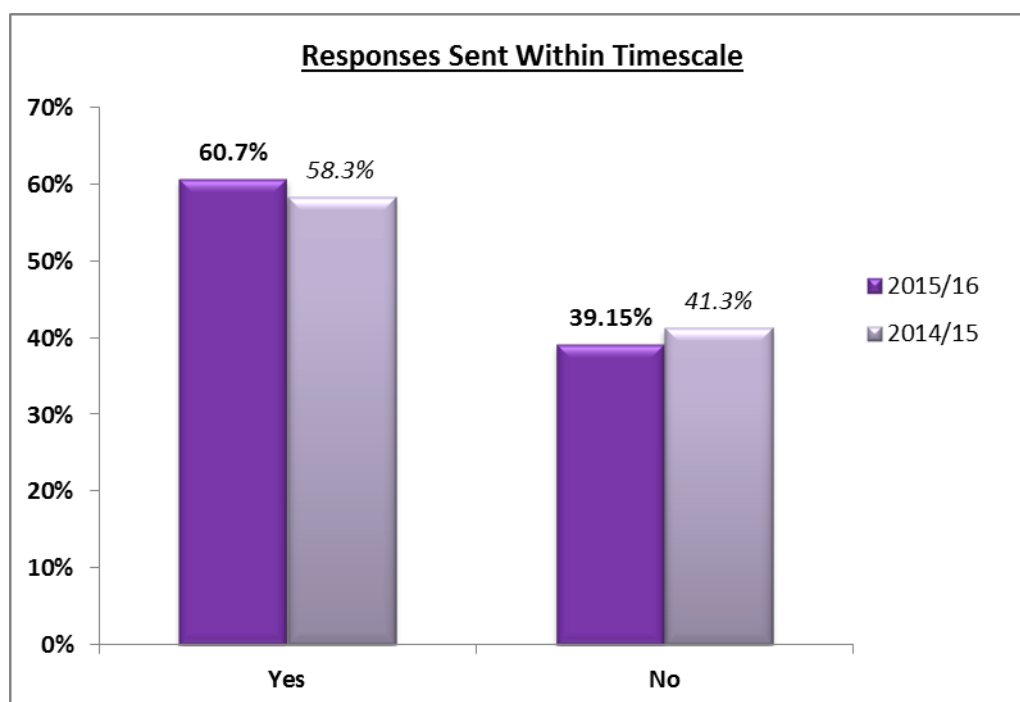
Although the majority of complaints are made by Blackpool residents, a large proportion were received from people residing outside of Blackpool (a mixture of Fylde Coast residents and visitors to Blackpool).

4.5 Response Timescales

We aim to respond to the majority of complaints within 5 working days. Where complaints are relatively easy to resolve this would mean that a full response is issued to the complainant within 5 working days. For more complex complaints which take longer to investigate it is more appropriate to allocate a longer response timescale. Therefore in these instances we aim to contact the complainant within 5 working days to acknowledge

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their complaint and explain when they can expect a full response. Complaints relating to Adult Services and Children's Services are covered by separate statutory legislation and therefore the timescale for responding to these complaints is extended to 15 working days.



The chart above shows that in 60.7% of cases a response was sent to the complainant within timescale which is an improvement on the previous 2 years. General reasons for timescales not being met include:

1. Key members of staff being unavailable to respond to complaints due to sickness or annual leave;
2. Senior officers being unavailable to sign off responses;
3. Increasing workloads on restricted resources means that it is not always possible to prioritise complaint responding / investigation within some service areas;
4. Complex investigation work required, which may include multi-agency communication, can prolong the time it takes to respond to complaints;
5. Multiple complaints from the complainant regarding the same or different matters can cause delays in the investigation process; and
6. Difficulties in being able to contact complainants using the contact details they have provided can sometimes mean that we are unable to inform them of the outcome of their complaint.

However, further work needs to be undertaken to try and improve compliance with response timescales.

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4.6 Outcomes

The table below details the outcomes of the complaints received during this period. It should be noted that the figures in the table do not include complaints which are on hold or in progress.

Outcome	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	%	DoT
Upheld	56	22	12	15	105	15.1%	↓
Partially Upheld	19	24	22	18	83	11.9%	↑
Not Upheld	46	41	34	42	163	23.4%	↓
Explanation Provided	69	95	72	87	323	46.3%	↑
Complaint Withdrawn	6	1	5	2	14	2%	↓
Not Recorded	3	1	3	2	9	1.3%	↓
					697		

In the majority of cases the outcome was to provide an explanation to the complainant of the reasons why the Council has done something. For example, changes to benefits due to government legislation. The proportion of complaints which were upheld or partially upheld has reduced compared to the previous year which is encouraging. There has also been a decrease in the proportion of complaints where no outcome was recorded.

A few of the general reasons for complaints being upheld over the year are shown below:

1. A lack of action and / or long delays in delivering a service following a request from a customer;
2. Errors in service delivery, such as failing to follow correct policies and procedures;
3. Failure to communicate with customers, for example, not informing them of a change of policy or action that has been taken in response to a previous request;
4. A combination of minor issues, which have overall resulted in a poor experience for the customer; and
5. Staff attitude / behaviour towards customers, ranging from poor customer service to the use of rude or abusive language.

4.7 Lessons Learned

Officers are encouraged to identify lessons learned from complaints in order to improve the services we deliver as well as share best practice. It should be noted that not all complaints produce lessons learned, however each case should be reviewed to ensure that any learning points are recorded and actioned where applicable.

Of the complaints received during 2015/2016, lessons learned have been logged for 187 complaints (26.9%). This represents a slight decrease when compared with 2014/2015, however it is in line with the proportion of complaints which were upheld or partially upheld this year.

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Examples of learning obtained from complaints during this period include:

1. Consideration of additional lighting in Cedar Square to prevent tripping accidents at night caused by street furniture.
2. Signage within Bickerstaffe House reviewed to ensure that it is accessible to all visitors and staff.
3. Identification of issues with group mailboxes caused by the transition to Office 365 for all Council staff, resulting in automatic acknowledgements not being sent to customers upon receipt of their emails.
4. Rotas for carers reviewed to ensure they are able to attend appointments with service users on time.
5. Staff reminded of the importance of driving responsibly in Council vehicles whilst carrying out their duties.
6. Out of date policies removed from the Council's website to ensure that conflicting information is not provided to the public.
7. Specific services reminded of the importance of following the complaints process to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays in dealing with complaints at the appropriate stages.

We will continue to encourage the review of complaints to ensure that we learn from the feedback provided by our customers. However, the ability of services to take the time to review complaints and implement changes to improve services will be continually inhibited by the increasing demand on services and the pressure on existing resources.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN (LGO)

5.1 Complaints Received by the LGO

Complaints & Enquiries Received	2011/2012	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	DoT*
Adult Care Services	6	10	17	9	↓
Benefits & Tax	5	8	6	6	↔
Corporate & Other Services	6	3	2	6	↑
Education & Children's Services	3	8	10	10	↔
Environment Services	13	9	3	6	↑
Highways & Transport	12	4	2	2	↔
Housing	12	11	5	3	↓
Planning & Development	5	3	6	5	↓
	62	56	51	47	

* Direction of travel compared to 2014/2015.

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The table above shows the number of complaints received by the LGO in 2015/2016 broken down by service area. There has been a slight increase in the numbers of complaints relating to Corporate and Other Services and Environment Services. However, the overall number of complaints received by the LGO has continued to decrease.

When compared to other unitary authorities in England, the Council received a below average number of LGO complaints in 2015/2016 (the average number of complaints was 68).

5.2 Decisions Made by the LGO

The table below shows a breakdown of the decisions made by the LGO during 2015/2016. **Appendix C** contains a definition of the types of decision made.

Decision Type		No. of Complaints	
		2014/2015	2015/2016
Complaints investigated by LGO	Complaint upheld	9	7
	Complaint not upheld	7	9
Complaints not investigated by LGO	Advice given	2	0
	Closed after initial enquiries	12	12
	Incomplete / invalid	1	4
	Referred back for local resolution	20	18
		51	50

As in 2014/2015, the majority of complaints received by the Ombudsman were referred back to the Council for local resolution. Of the 50 complaints received by the LGO, only 16 progressed on to the formal investigation stage. The percentage of complaints upheld following an investigation has reduced when compared with the uphold rate in 2014/2015. When compared with the uphold rates of other unitary authorities in England, there

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has been a considerable improvement with Blackpool's ranking changing from 13th highest out of 55 authorities in 2014/2015 to 41st.

The LGO has the powers to recommend remedies where a fault or maladministration by the Council has caused injustice to a complainant. Remedies were recommended and implemented for all 7 of the upheld complaints in 2015/2016:

Service Area	Remedy
Adult Care Services	Apology and procedure change
Adult Care Services	Apology and new appeal / review
Adult Care Services	Apology and other remedy
Adult Care Services	Apology and financial redress
Education & Children's Services	Apology, financial redress and procedure change
Corporate & Other Services	Satisfactory remedy by local authority
Adult Care Services	Apology, financial redress and training

It would be beneficial to review these cases to explore the reasons why the complaints have been upheld and identify any actions that can be taken to reduce the number of upheld complaints in the future. As the majority of remedies were recommended by the LGO, it would also be useful to explore whether the Council missed opportunities to resolve complaints through the use of remedies at an earlier stage in the complaints process.

6. NEXT STEPS

There are a number of actions arising from the review of customer feedback in 2015/2016:

1. Work with departments to encourage all services to follow the Council's complaints procedure and improve their complaint handling, particularly across those services which have changed due to restructures or where officers designated to deal with customer feedback have left the authority.
2. Improve compliance with response timescales.
3. Encourage services to capture and act upon learning from complaints where appropriate so that services can be improved as a result.
4. Review upheld LGO complaints to identify whether remedies could have been used by the Council to resolve complaints at an earlier stage.

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There has been limited capacity within the Corporate Development team to undertake these actions in 2015/2016. However, the arrangements for overseeing the corporate complaints process will transfer to a central Customer Relations Team within the Governance and Partnership Services department from November 2016. This will provide a good opportunity to reinforce the importance of effective complaint handling amongst senior managers and services, review existing arrangements for complaints handling within departments and explore ways in which insight gained from customer feedback can be used to improve services.

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APPENDIX A – BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS BY SERVICE AREA

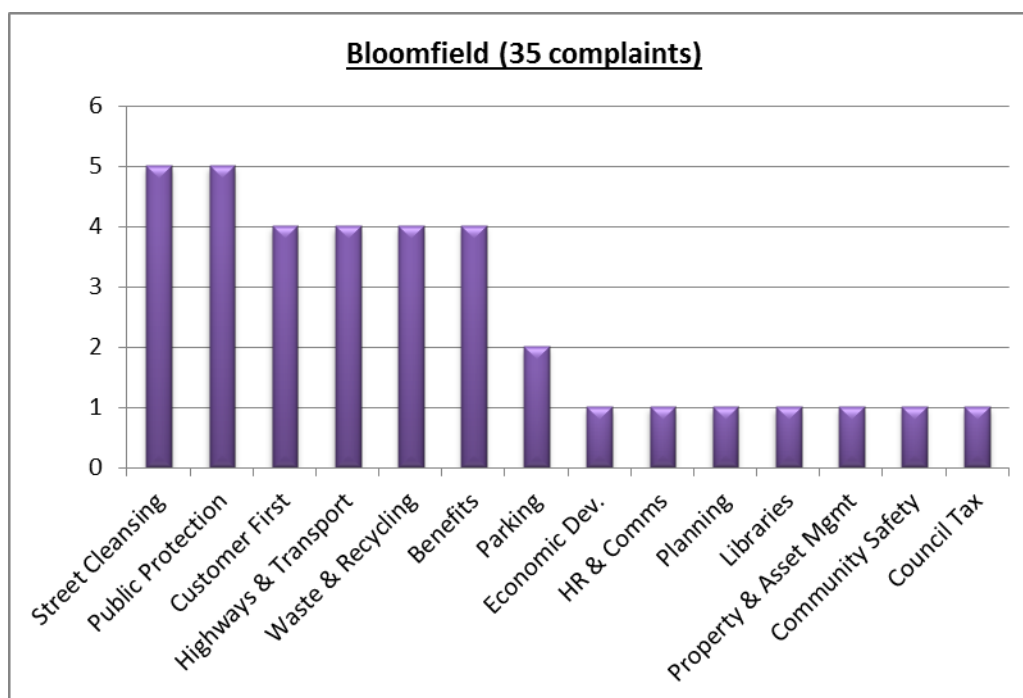
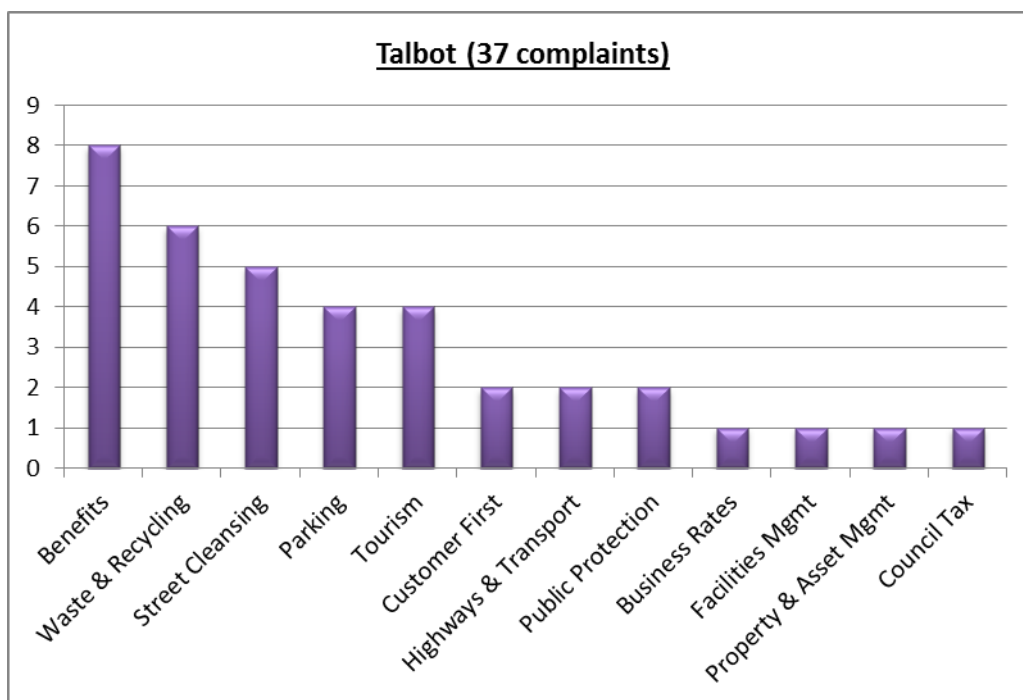
KEY: ■ Same / Reduction ■ Increase <10 ■ Increase >10

Department	Service	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
Adult Services	Adult Social Care	9	9	10	6	34	■
	Business Support & Resources	2	2	0	0	4	■
	Care & Support	1	0	2	0	3	■
	Commissioning	8	11	9	11	39	■
Children's Services	Children's Social Care	17	13	19	23	72	■
	Early Help for Children & Families	1	6	0	1	8	■
	Education	4	1	3	3	11	■
Community & Environmental Services	Facilities Management	0	6	2	0	8	■
	Highways & Transport (delivery)	14	12	11	9	46	■
	Integrated Transport	2	1	0	0	3	■
	Leisure Centres	3	2	6	4	15	■
	Parks & Open Spaces	12	6	5	3	26	■
	Public Protection	10	10	12	15	47	■
	Street Cleansing	16	15	0	12	43	■
	Waste & Recycling	25	19	16	24	84	■
Deputy Chief Executive's	HR, Comms, Engagement & ICT	1	2	2	0	5	■
Governance & Regulatory Services	Cemeteries & Crematorium	6	2	1	2	11	■
	Democratic Services	3	0	0	2	5	■
	Licensing	1	1	0	0	2	■
	Registrars	0	0	0	0	0	■
Places	Community Safety	3	0	2	4	9	■
	Culture	0	0	0	0	0	■
	Economic Development	1	0	0	1	2	■
	Highways & Transport (policy)	0	0	1	0	1	■
	Housing (non-BCH)	1	0	0	0	1	■
	Housing Options	1	1	0	1	3	■
	Libraries	1	3	0	1	5	■
	Parking	7	12	12	9	40	■
	Planning	0	5	0	1	6	■
	Tourism	4	11	5	0	20	■
Public Health	Public Health	0	0	0	0	0	■
Resources	Benefits	20	16	17	14	67	■
	Business Rates	1	1	0	0	2	■
	Council Tax	9	4	9	10	32	■
	Customer First	10	8	3	7	28	■
	Debtors & Creditors	1	0	0	0	1	■
	Finance	0	0	0	1	1	■
	Legal	0	2	0	0	2	■
	Property & Asset Management	3	2	1	2	8	■
	Risk & Insurance	0	1	0	0	1	■
Unknown*	Unknown	2	0	0	0	2	■
		199	184	148	166	697	

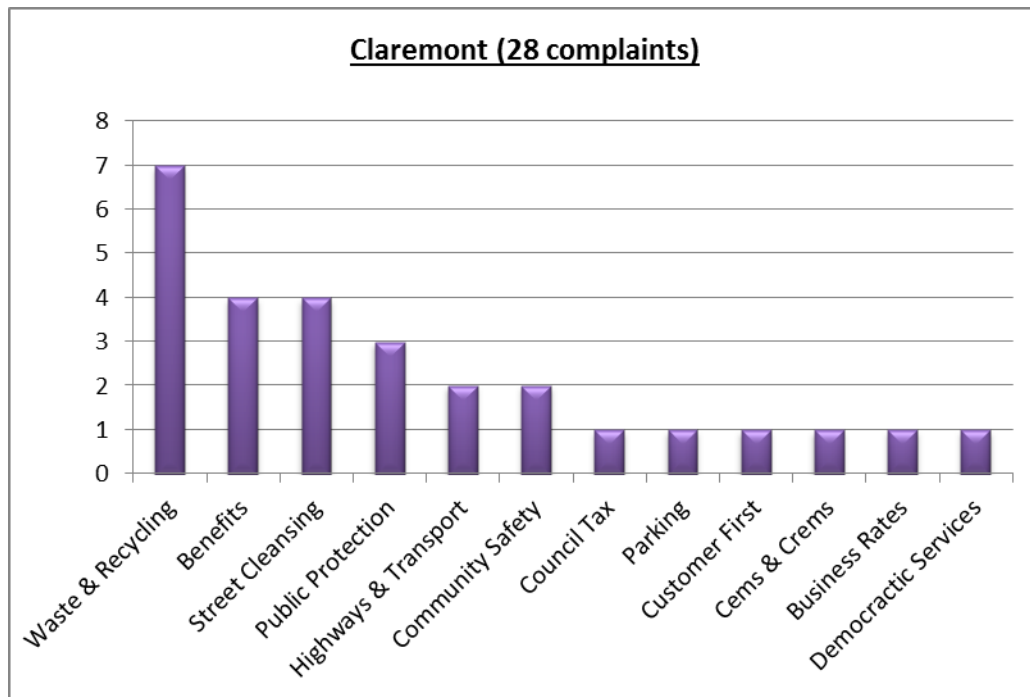
* Unknown complaints - complainants did not provide enough information for the Council to investigate the complaints.

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APPENDIX B – BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINT TYPES BY WARD



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APPENDIX C – DEFINITION OF DECISIONS MADE BY THE LGO

Decision Made	Explanation
Upheld	Where the LGO has decided that the council is at fault in how it acted and that this fault may or may not have caused an injustice to the complainant, or where the council has accepted that it needs to remedy the complaint.
Not upheld	Where the LGO has investigated a complaint and decided that the council was not at fault.
Advice given	Where the LGO advises a complainant that their complaint does not fall within their jurisdiction or where the complaint has already been investigated by the LGO and therefore cannot be investigated again.
Closed after initial enquiries	Where the LGO has made an early decision that they could not or should not investigate a complaint, or where there is little or no injustice to a complainant that would necessitate an LGO investigation of the matter, or where an investigation could not achieve anything, either because the evidence shows at an early stage that the council was not at fault or the outcome a complainant wants is not one the LGO could achieve.
Incomplete / invalid	These are complaints where the complainant has not provided the LGO with enough information to be able to decide what should happen with their complaint, or where the complainant no longer wishes to pursue their complaint.
Referred back for local resolution	These are complaints which have been referred back to the council by the LGO because the council has not had an opportunity to resolve the issues through its own complaints procedure.