

**Corporate Complaints
&
Compliments**

Annual Report 2018 - 2019

CONTENTS

1. Purpose of Report.....	3
2. Background.....	3
3. Corporate Stage One Complaints 2018/ 19.....	6
4. Corporate Service Performance	10
4.1 Customer & Neighbourhood Services.....	10
4.2 Health & Wellbeing.....	12
4.3 Business, Development & Employment.....	13
4.4 Finance & Human Resources.....	14
4.5 Commercial Services.....	15
5. Timescales for Responses at Stage One.....	17
6. Corporate Stage Two Complaints.....	18
7. Learning from Corporate Complaints.....	19
8. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Enquiries.....	21
9. Performance Summary of Corporate Complaints.....	21
10. Corporate Compliments 2018/19.....	22
11. Oversight and Support provided by Customer Relationship Team	24
12. Customer Relationship Team priorities for 2019/20.....	24
13. Concluding Comments.....	24

1. Purpose of the report

To report statistical information to Members and Officers detailing Telford and Wrekin Council's corporate complaints and compliment activity from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

To provide an open resource to anyone who wishes to scrutinise local services.

To outline the key developments and planned improvements to the complaints processes operated by the Council.

To consider how some of the learning from complaints and compliments can be used to improve the overall customer experience.

2. Background

The Customer Relationship Team manages and co-ordinates complaints relating to 3 separate complaints processes, they are: –

i) Adult Social Care statutory process

ii) Children's Social Care statutory process

iii) Corporate Complaints process – these are complaints relating to other services provided by the Council where there is no access to a statutory complaints procedure.

In addition, the team deals with a wide range of interactions with customers that do not go on to become formal complaints. These include general enquiries, MP Enquiries, comments and suggestions as well as any matters which are exempt from consideration under our complaints policies.

We recognise that our customers have a range of experiences when contacting us, working with us and using our services. Some of these experiences are positive, and we want to recognise where good practice is evident, while others fall short of our standards, and it is essential that we learn from them. As an organisation, we provide people with a mechanism to feed back to us both positive and negative experiences and encourage a culture of learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Where possible, we take immediate action to put things right at the first point of contact, and where this is not possible, we operate a robust complaints procedure.

Above all the way we deal with complaints will be based on;

- Customer focus – listening to what people tell us
- Responsiveness – acting on what people say to us
- Promptness – making sure people get answers in good time
- Transparency – dealing openly and honestly with problems
- Proportionality – making sure that the resolution fits the complaint
- Learning – making sure complaints result in changes and improvement

Our policies are published on the Telford and Wrekin website:

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/complaints>

A complaint is defined within the Council’s Corporate Complaints procedure as:

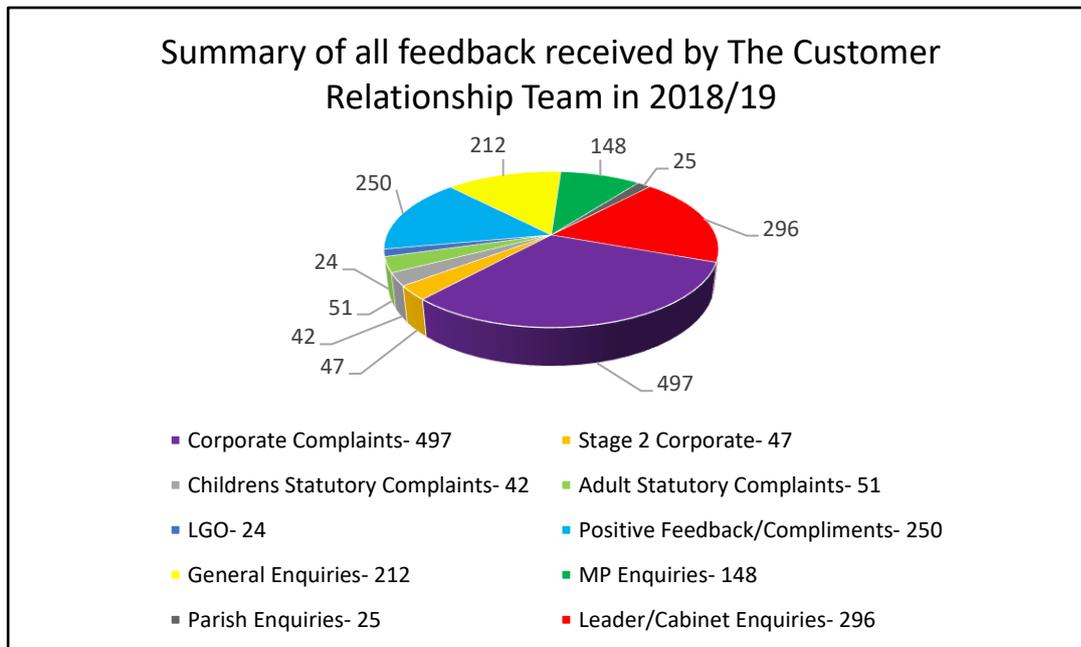
‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standards of service, action or lack of action or decisions taken by the Council, or the way in which council employees carry out their duties’

Complaints recorded under the formal procedure (and dealt with in this summary report) do not include those ‘first time’ representations which were effectively requests for a service and dealt with as such. Accordingly, a new report of a missed bin, or a broken swing, for example, would not be registered and dealt with as a complaint, but as a request for action, or a service request. Of course, in the event that the Council failed to respond to the ‘request’ appropriately, then that may generate a complaint.

Appeals against decisions that have a separate appeals routes will not be dealt with as complaints.

The chart below shows the volume of feedback received by the Customer Relationship Team in 2018/19.

Table 1: Summary of all Feedback by The Customer Relationship Team 2018/19



The volume of contacts received by the team totalled 1592 in 2018/19. The team also took a total of 3345 telephone calls over this period. This is very small number of contacts in comparison to the thousands of interactions and contacts across the Council.

Setting the Scene

Telford and Wrekin Council is a growing borough which has seen its population increase from 171,159 in June 2015 to 175,768 in June 2017 (up to date figures are not yet available for June 2019).

Our Waste Services emptied approximately 5.9 million refuse bins across the borough in 2018/19.

Leisure Services received over one million visitors to its top leisure centres which include, Wellington and Civic Leisure Centre, Telford Ice Rink and Oakengates Leisure Centre.

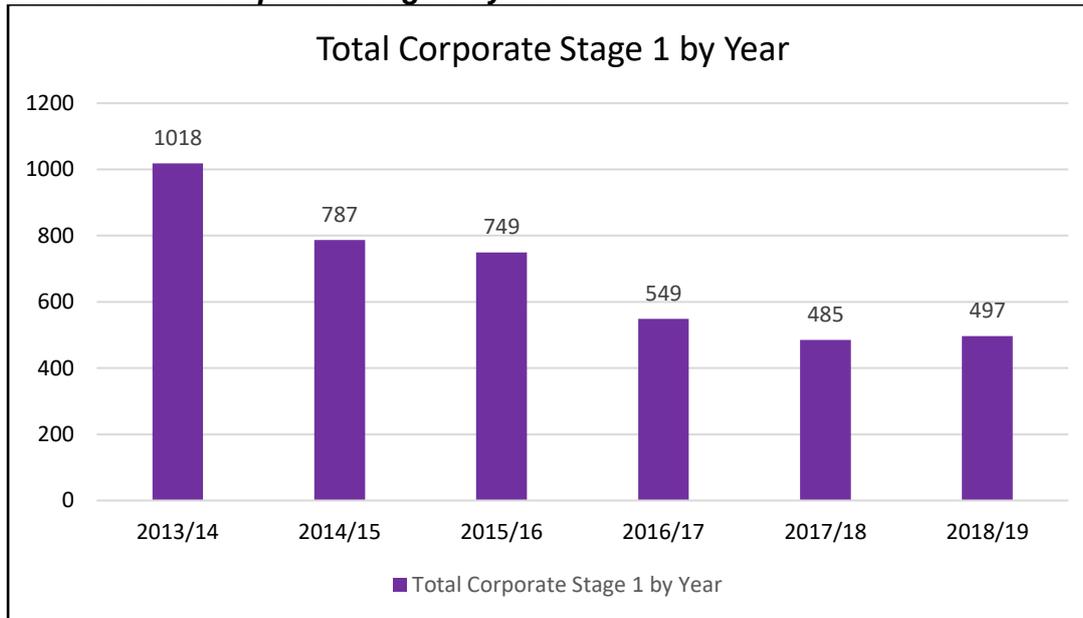
The total number of customer contacts received and dealt with by our Corporate Contact Centre in 2018/19 totalled 566,675.

In this reporting year the Council also celebrated Telford's 50th Birthday with thousands of residents and visitors attending the events held throughout the year.

3. Corporate Stage One Complaints 2018/19

In the year 2018/19 there were 497 service level stage one complaints (those dealt with by more than one service at the same time are counted as one complaint). In 2017/18 we received 485 and in 2016/17 we received 549. Whilst the number of complaints received in 2018/19 has increased slightly the number has remained relevantly stable despite the ongoing financial challenges faced by the council due to major cuts in government funding. This year also saw the borough celebrate Telford 50, which saw additional events and activities provided by the Council, throughout the year. The table below shows comparisons of the number of complaints over the last 6 years.

Table 3: Total Corporate Stage 1 by Year



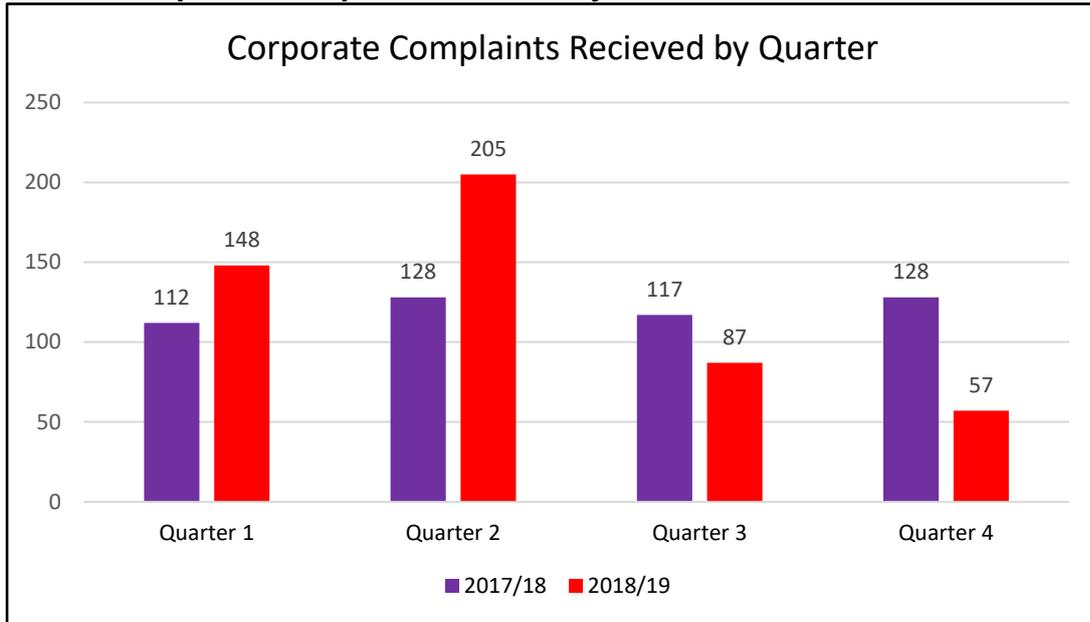
It is pleasing to report that the number of complaints continues to remain at a reduced level when compared to the numbers received in 2013/14 which saw complaints rise to over 1000.

From these 497 complaints, 47 were escalated to Stage Two of our procedure and 24 were the subject of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries.

Stage	Number of Complaints
1	497
2	47
LGO	24

When reviewing the numbers of complaints received it is useful to establish if there are any trends in the numbers received by quarter. The table below reflects this.

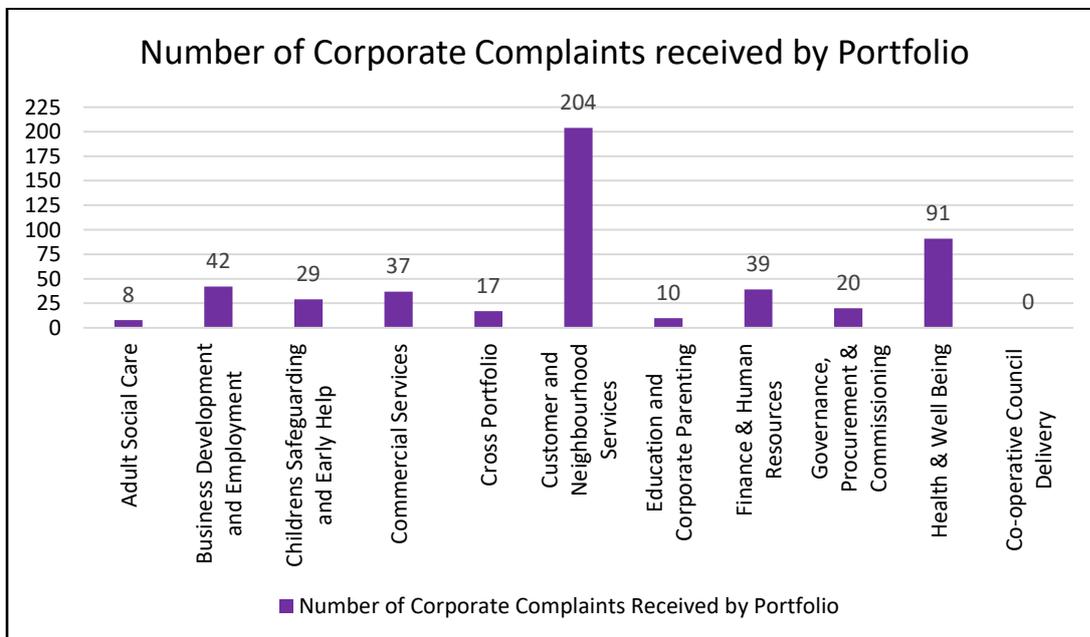
Table 4: Corporate Complaints received by Quarter



When examining the figures across the year it is clear that the last two quarters saw a significant improvement, especially in comparison with the numbers received in 2017/18 which were consistent across all quarters.

However, it should be noted that the number of complaints increased significantly in the second quarter, this was in the main due to the number of complaints that were received regarding the big top events, which were held over the Summer to celebrate Telford 50.

Table 5: Number of Corporate Complaints received by Portfolio



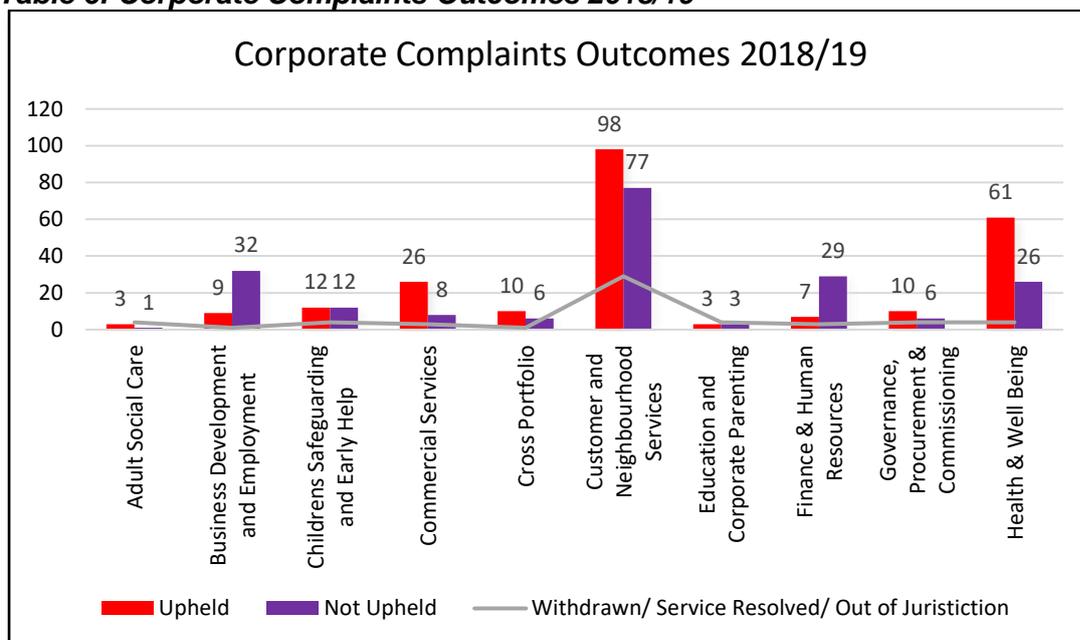
The portfolio that received the highest number of complaints was Customer and Neighbourhood Services at 204, however given the number of customer interactions that take place through the corporate contact centre, waste, highways, grounds maintenance, public protection, community safety and enforcement this is to be expected.

The second highest number of complaints were received in Health and Wellbeing at 91, of these 79 complaints related to the Telford 50 Big Top events.

For further analysis see Corporate Service Performance 2018/19.

Of the 496 Stage One complaints that have been completed, 48% (239) were upheld. This is an increase on numbers upheld in 2017/18, which saw 42% upheld. 40% (200) of the complaints were not upheld, 11% (57) of the complaints were either withdrawn, out of jurisdiction or resolved by the service.

Table 6: Corporate Complaints Outcomes 2018/19



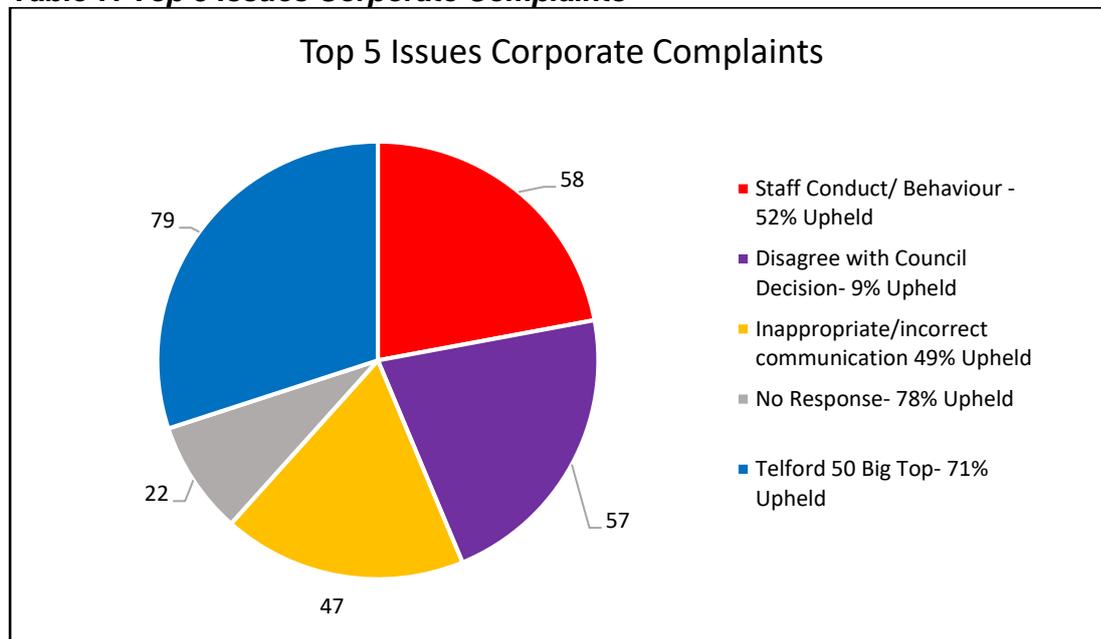
The most upheld complaints are within Customer and Neighbourhood Services and Health & Wellbeing based on numbers. However when looking at the percentage of upheld complaints against number of complaints received this shows that based on the number of complaints received Commercial Services had the highest number upheld at 70%.

Portfolio	Percentage of complaints upheld
Commercial Services	70%
Health & Wellbeing	67%
Cross Portfolio	59%
Governance, Procurement & Commissioning	50%
Customer & Neighbourhood Services	48%
Children's Safeguarding and Early Help	43%
Adult Social Care	37%
Education and Corporate Parenting	30%
Business, Development and Employment	21%
Finance and Human Resources	18%

Issues for 'Upheld' complaints at Stage One:

The top 5 issues identified corporately were;

Table 7: Top 5 Issues Corporate Complaints



These areas also saw the most upheld complaints.

Staff Conduct/Behaviour- Staff conduct and behaviour covers a variety of concerns including lack of support from individual officers, No identification shown when attending a property, how a member of staff has spoken to a customer and general behaviour of staff both face to face and over the telephone. In the cases upheld an apology was given and the officers were spoken to by their line managers and additional training given.

Disagree with Council Decision- This included complaints raised against decisions for Adult Care Finance, parking issues/ permits, street works, education transport and admissions, the remedies for these complaints were often improved service provision and an apology for any error that had taken place.

Inappropriate/incorrect communication- This issue again crossed many different services, generally the concerns raised involved records not been updated correctly which resulted in notices being issued. Services not making contact with customers to provide an update and not returning calls.

No response- This is occasions where the customer complained because they had received no response, there were no trends in service areas for this concern and it cut across all portfolios.

Telford 50 Big Top- Complaints in this area included where seating plans, accessibility and failure of performances resulted in customers complaining.

4. Corporate Service Performance 2018/19

The portfolio's within the Council that received the most complaints included, Customer & Neighbourhood Services, Health and Wellbeing, Finance and Human Resources, Business, development and Employment and Commercial Services.

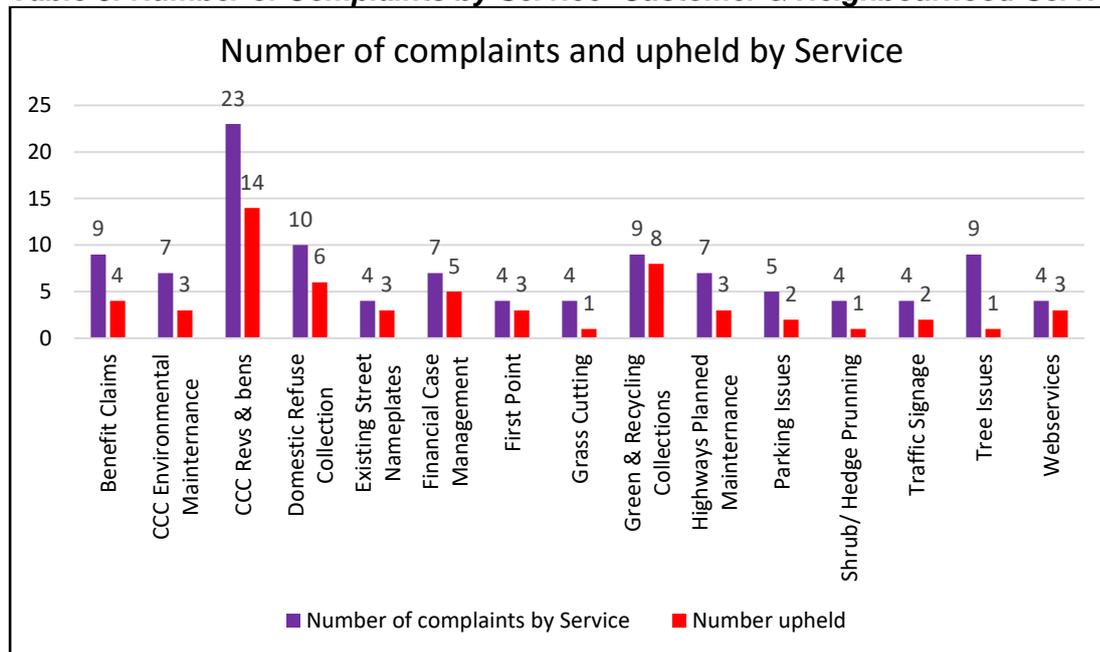
It is to be expected in the main for Customer & Neighbourhood Services to receive the highest number of complaints given the number of customer interactions it receives throughout the year. It should be noted that given the high number of interactions experienced by Commercial Services the number of complaints that has been received a minimal.

However, we should not be purely looking at numbers although they do provide an overall picture of the services. We should be focusing on the learning we have taken from these complaints.

4.1 Customer & Neighbourhood Services

Customer & Neighbourhood Services received a total of 204 complaints of which 48% (98) were upheld. The chart below provides the number of complaints received by service where over four complaints have been received against the number upheld.

Table 8: Number of Complaints by Service- Customer & Neighbourhood Services



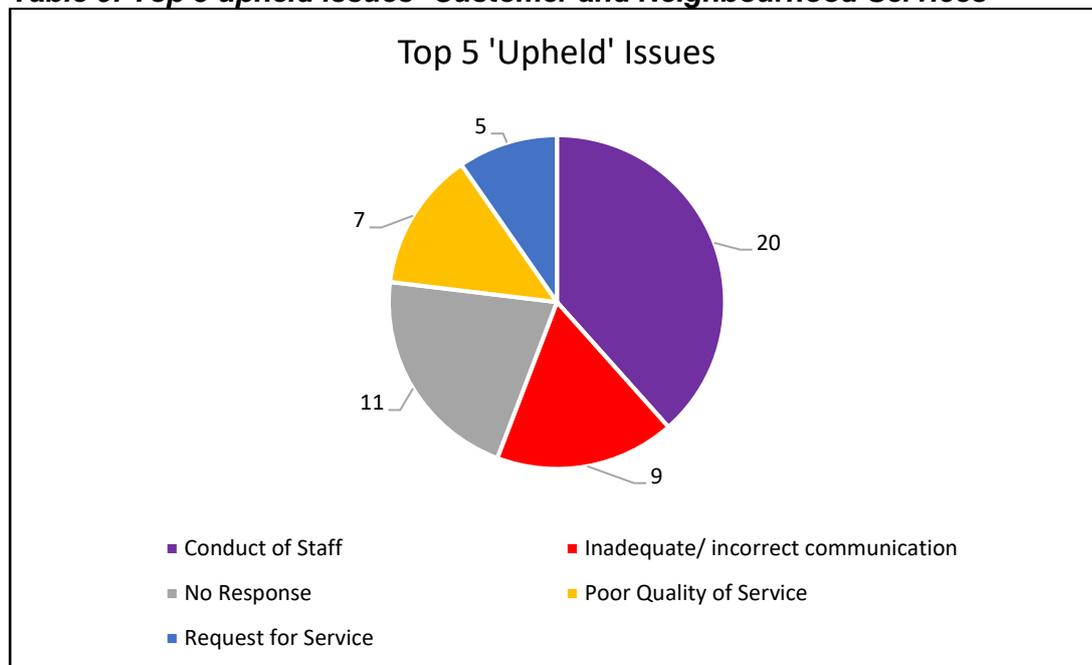
Of the upheld complaints the main service areas concerns were the customer contact centre who had 14 complaints upheld. 10 of which were related to staff conduct and behaviour, which included lack of support, 2 were related to a delay in payments, and 1 due to lack of action and no response being given.

Recycling and Collections received 9 complaints, 8 of which were upheld, this was due to a variety of issues including failure to respond, Whole Street missed collection, Spillage of Refuse and incorrect or inadequate communications.

Financial Case Management received 7 complaints 5 of which were upheld, these were related to a variety of issues including two relating to the level of charge/fee where customers were not happy with the level of assessment, delay in response, no response and staff conduct.

The 5 main 'Upheld' issues for Customer and Neighbourhood Service account for 52 complaints were as follows;

Table 9: Top 5 upheld issues- Customer and Neighbourhood Services



The majority of Customer and Neighbourhood Services are customer focused front line services who have millions of interactions with customers during the year. Whilst 48% (98) of complaints were upheld this is extremely low compared to interactions that took place

It should be noted that 20 complaints that were upheld related to staff conduct/ behaviour, this in the main was focused on the Contact Centre, which accounted for 10 of these complaint, where officers tone with customers was deemed to be not that which would be expected. The Contact Centre has been working hard to eliminate these concerns and has developed service standards for telephone calls and given officers additional training. Team Leaders have been working closely with the officers involved to prevent reoccurrences going forward which often just requires some guidance on how to deal with customers in certain often challenging situations.

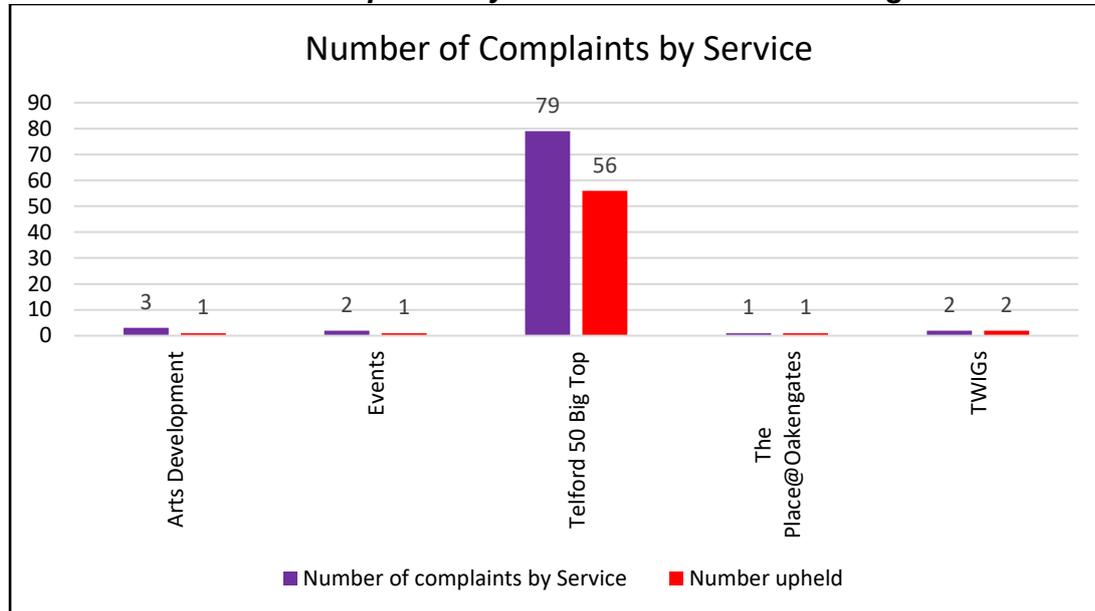
Customers receiving 'No response' is also highlighted, this is clearly another area that requires monitoring. If officers state that they are going to respond they should respond. Officers should be putting the customer at the centre of what they do and getting it right first time. The Contact Centre and Customer Relationship Team have learned from these complaints and have reinforced the emphasis of 'getting it right first time'.

The average number of days to respond to complaints across Customer & Neighbourhood Services was 14.70 days, this is within the Stage One time scale of 15 days. There were a number of complaints that exceeded the 15 working days, these complaints tended to be in Financial Case Management, Highways, Woodland Services and Web Services.

4.2 Health & Wellbeing

Health & Wellbeing received a total of 91 complaints of which 67% (71) were upheld.

Table 10: Number of Complaints by Service- Health & Wellbeing



The majority of the complaints were related to the Telford 50 Big Top for which 79 complaints were received and 56 were upheld.

Whilst the big top events were one offs for the Telford 50 celebrations, the main issues raised were around seating with an obstructed view, acts not taking place, and delayed event starts. Customers were provided with a remedy for these complaints in the form of an apology, including refunds and vouchers for future events.

There were no further trends related to this portfolio.

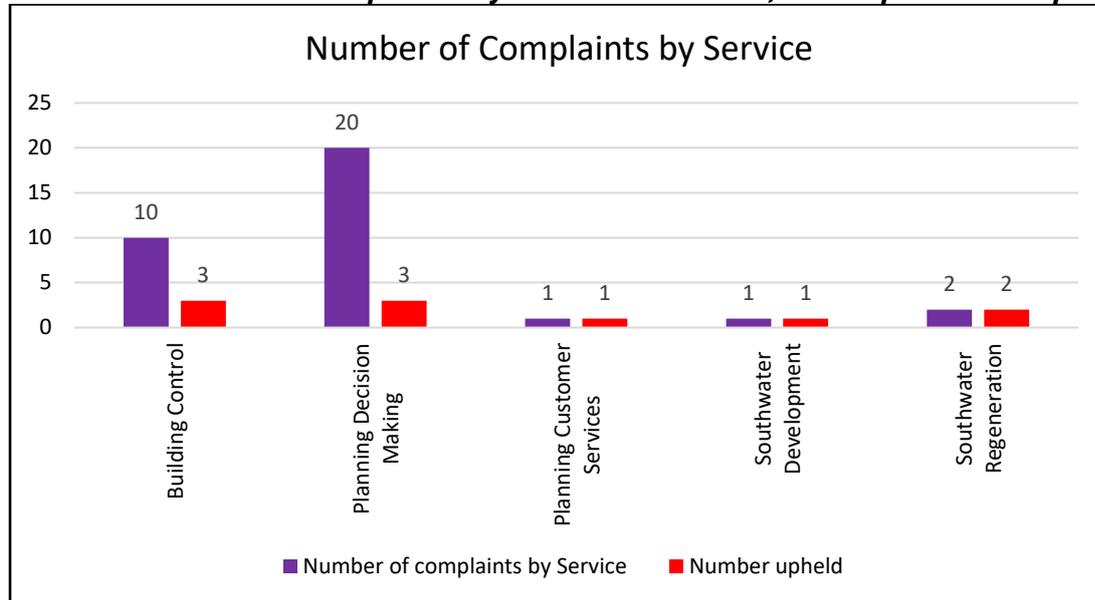
Learning should, however, be taken from these complaints should similar future events take place.

The average number of days to respond to complaints within Health and Wellbeing portfolio was 8.63 days, which is well within the corporate time scales.

4.3 Business, Development & Employment

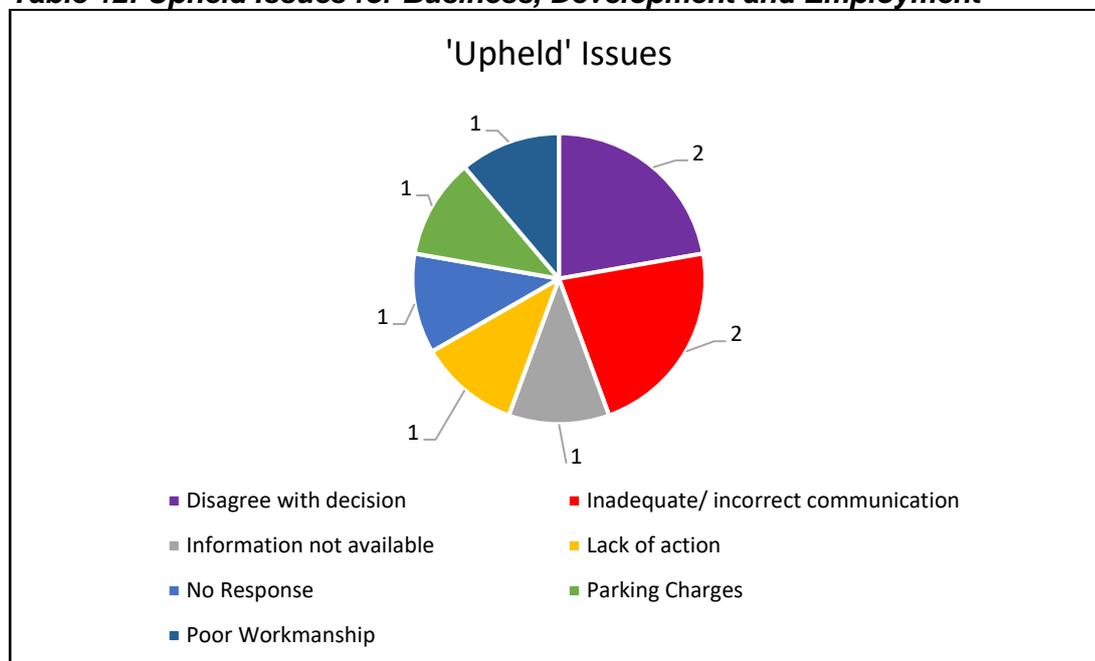
Business Development & Employment received 42 complaints of which 21% (9) were upheld. The majority of the complaints were related to planning decisions and customers raising concerns regarding the process and procedures that lead to the decision.

Table 11: Number of Complaints by Service- Business, Development & Employment



Only 9 of the complaints were upheld;

Table 12: Upheld Issues for Business, Development and Employment



Whilst this service has a number of complaints raising concerns regarding planning decisions only two complaints were upheld, on closer examination of the complaints the reasons that they were upheld was in the main due to a delay in responding or actioning correspondence.

Other issues included an email address that was input on the system incorrectly, emails were not received by the customer and email enquiries were not dealt with.

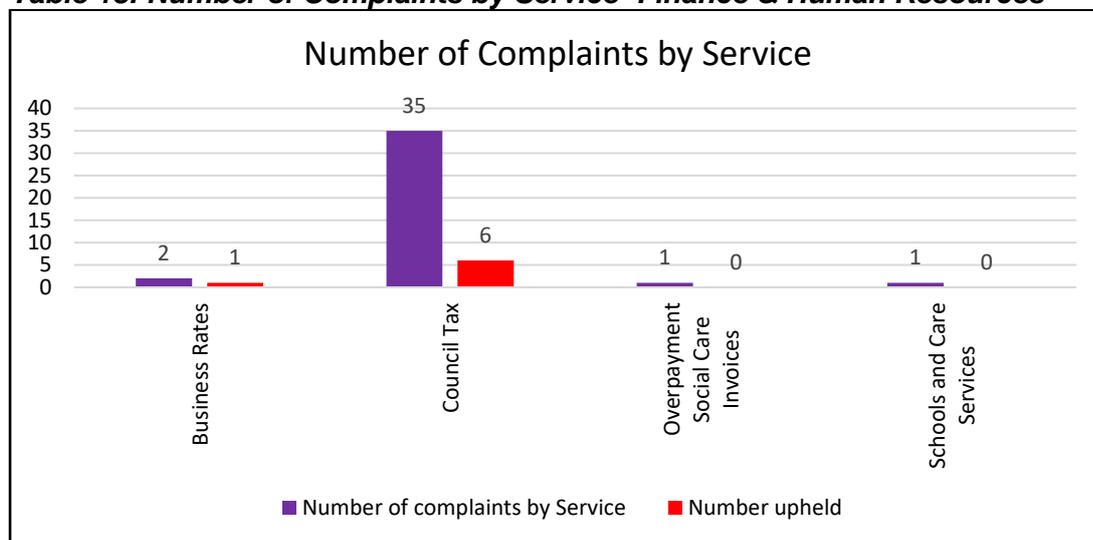
There were no clear trends in this area.

The complaints received by Business, Development and Employment were responded to in an average of 12 working days, which is below the 15 working day time scales.

4.4 Finance & Human Resources

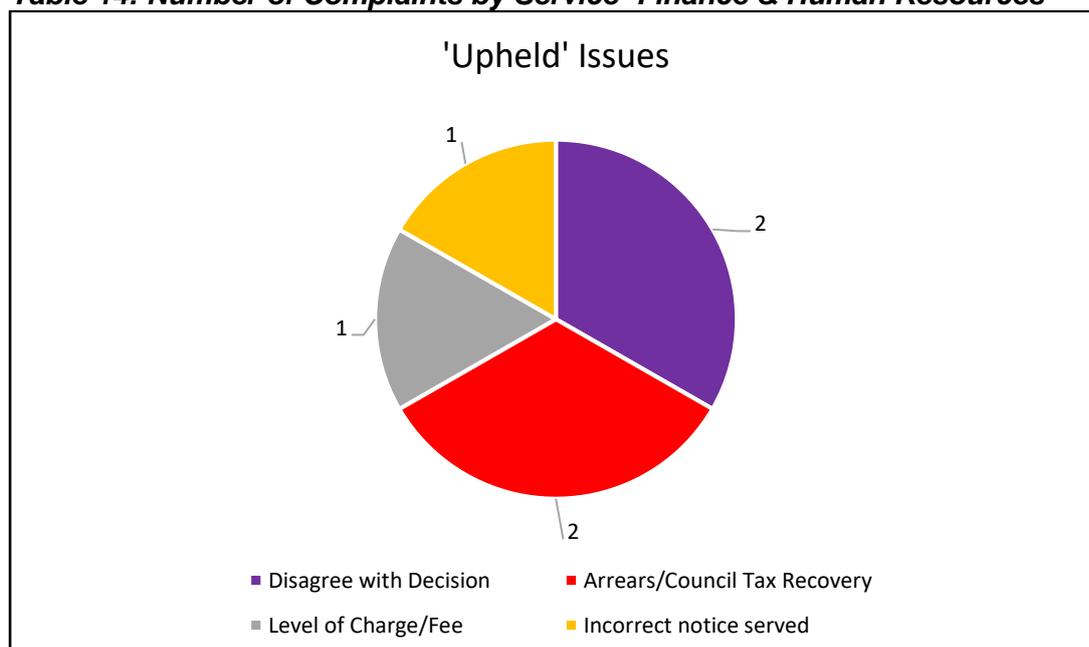
Finance & Human Resources received a total of 39 complaints of which 18% (7) were upheld. All the complaints received related to the Revenues Service. With the majority of complaints related to Council Tax.

Table 13: Number of Complaints by Service- Finance & Human Resources



Of the 39 complaints 6 were upheld, one for business rates and 6 for Council Tax.

Table 14: Number of Complaints by Service- Finance & Human Resources



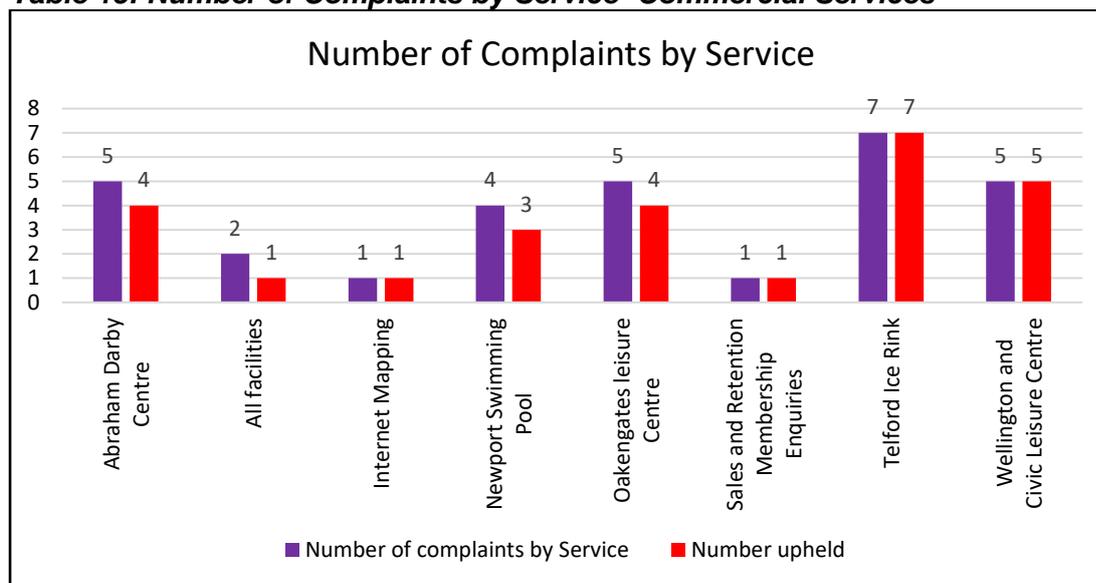
There were no clear trends in this area.

The complaints received by Finance & Human Resources were responded to in an average of 9 working days, which is below the 15 working day time scales.

4.5 Commercial Services

Commercial Services received a total of 37 complaints of which 70% (26) were upheld. The majority of the complaints related to Telford Ice Rink and Wellington and Civic Leisure Centre, both saw all complaints upheld.

Table 15: Number of Complaints by Service- Commercial Services



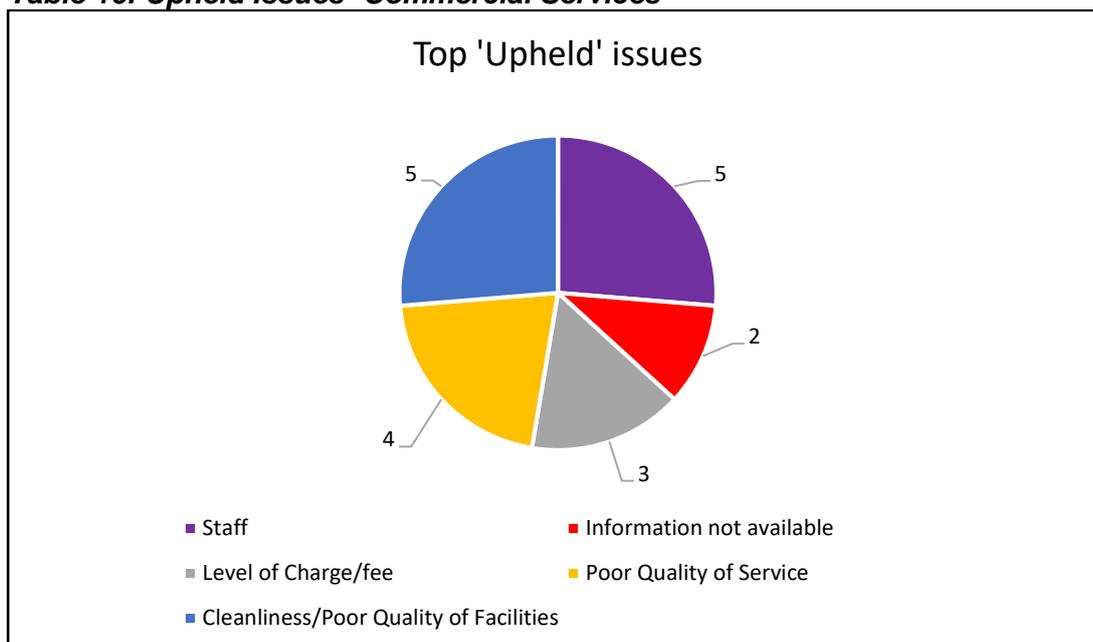
There were a number of issues raised at Telford Ice Rink and Wellington and Civic Leisure Centre.

Concerns regarding the Ice Rink varied including Café go and information held on the website.

In the main the concerns raised regarding Wellington and Civic Leisure Centre related to cleanliness of the facilities, cancellation of memberships and the quality of the teaching staff and updating of the swim clarify home portal.

The top five 'upheld' issues for the portfolio were as follows;

Table 16: Upheld Issues- Commercial Services



There were five instances of staff conduct or behaviour upheld in this portfolio each incident was investigated and responded to by the line manager. Staff conduct has been raised with each member of staff and training provided.

There were a number of concerns around cleanliness and poor quality facilities raised and whilst two incidents were for Wellington and Civic Leisure Centre, concerns were also raised at Abraham Darby and Newport Leisure Centre. Cleaning rota's have been reviewed and are being monitored closely.

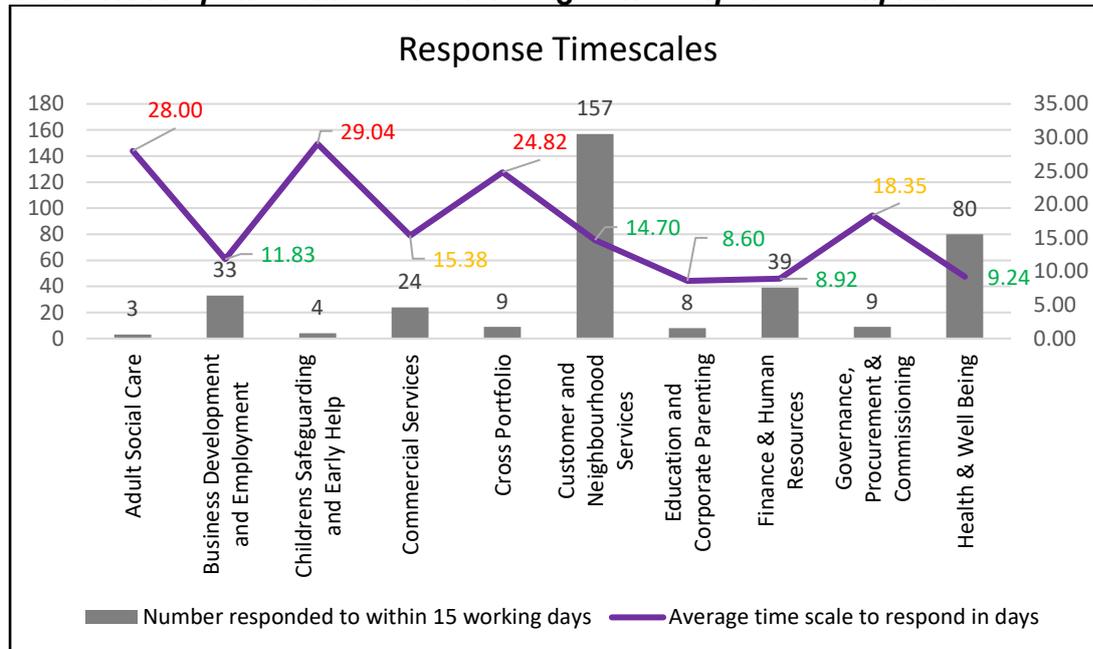
The instances recorded for poor quality service for this vary and there is no clear trend as the concerns span a number of facilities.

The complaints received by Commercial Services were responded to in an average of 15.38 working days, which is just outside the 15 working day time scale.

5. Timescales for Responses at Stage One

The Councils Corporate complaints policy states that Stage 1 Corporate complaints should be responded to within 15 working days. This may be extended in exceptional circumstances by a further 5 days. The following chart shows the number of complaints responded to within 15 working days by portfolio and also the average number of days for each service to respond to corporate complaints at stage one.

Table 17: Response Timescales for Stage One Corporate Complaints



The data indicates that in the main portfolios are managing to meet the corporate time scales.

However, Adult Social Care and Children’s Safeguarding and Early Help each have a high average timescale to respond to complaints which is well over the corporate time scale of 15 working days, 28 days and 29 days respectively.

The average of cross portfolio was also pushed up by one complaint taking over 116 days respond to, this was a particularly complex case, and was one of a number of complaints from a particular customer.

The overall percentage of stage one responses sent within 15 working days was 74% in 2018/19, this is an improvement on 71% achieved in the second half of 2017/18.

However, response times in an area that the Customer Relationship Team will be focusing on in the next year, both by progress chasing responses in a timely manner and escalating to more senior managers within the respective service areas where needed.

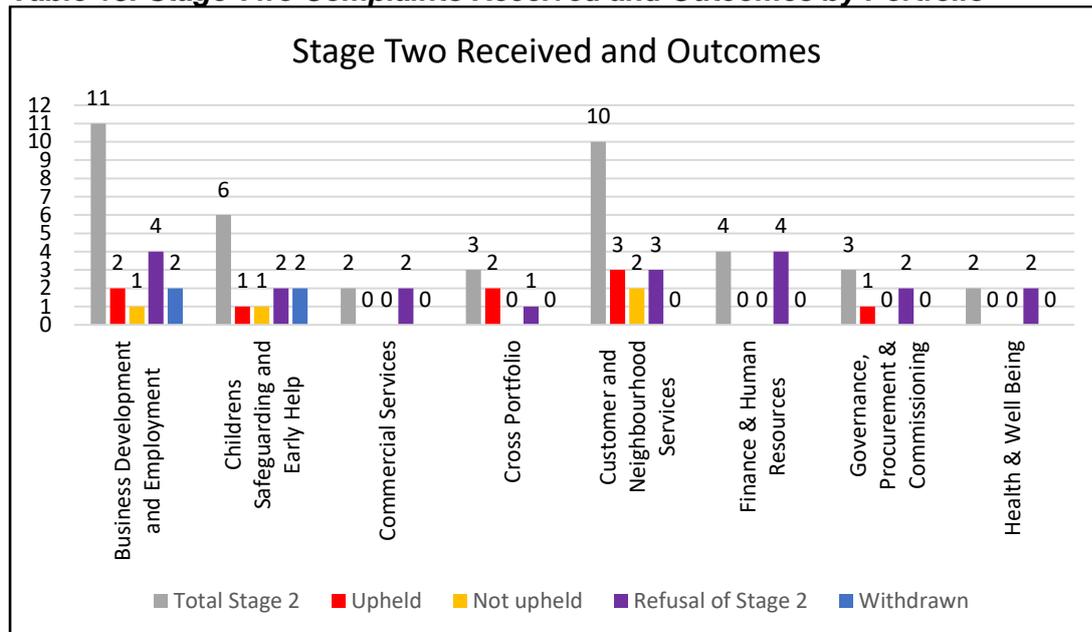
Whilst there are areas for improvement the Council is managing to respond to corporate complaints within an average of 14.45 days, which is within the 15 working day timescale.

6. Corporate Stage Two Complaints 2018/19

During 2018/19, 47 (9%) Corporate Stage One complaints progressed to Stage Two of the process.

A higher volume of stage two's were seen in Business Development and Employment and Customer and Neighbourhood Services, however both saw two and three complaints upheld respectively.

Table 18: Stage Two Complaints Received and Outcomes by Portfolio



We currently have two Stage Two Investigations that are in progress. An Independent Investigator is reviewing both complaints as they are regarding the same planning related issue under the Business Development and Employment Portfolio.

Out of the 47 complaints 17 resulted in full investigations, 30 were dealt with as Stage Two refusals, these are cases where errors have been identified and a remedy offered at Stage One. There would be no added value in taking the complaint through to a full Stage Two investigation.

Of the 17 investigations 4 were responded to within the 25 working day target and 6 were responded to within the 65 working day target. This did mean that 7 Stage Two investigations did exceed the 65 working day time scales. The Customer Relationship Team took advice from the Local Government Ombudsman in these cases and offered an appropriate remedy to customers who experienced unacceptable delays in their Stage Two complaints in 2018/19.

The timescales on Stage Two complaints has already improved and since January 2019. Every Stage Two investigation has been completed and responded to in less than 35 working days, the average for this period is 25 working days which is within the initial time scale of 25 working days. As a new Customer Relationship team we are constantly working to improve the service we provide to customers.

7. Learning from Corporate Complaints

Complaints are a valuable source of information which can help to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. We know that numbers alone do not tell everything about the attitude towards complaints and how they are responded to locally. Arguably of more importance is to understand the impact those complaints have on people and to learn the lessons from complaints to improve the experience for others.

Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld but also in some instances where no fault was found but the Authority recognises that improvements to services can be made.

Occasionally during the course of an investigation issues will be identified that need to be addressed over and above the original complaint. The Customer Relationship Team will work with services to ensure that they see the “bigger picture” to ensure that residents receive the best possible service from the Council.

Remedial actions taken from resolved complaints at Stage One 2018-19

All of the 239 complaints where fault has been found have been reviewed by the Customer Relationship Team to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault, and any wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future. Remedial action typically consists of both individual redress (e.g. apology, carrying out overdue work) and wider actions that may affect many. On occasions, fault has already been remedied so the complaints process is used to re-assure that appropriate action has been taken.

Positive Improvements:

Below are examples of positive changes that have resulted from learning from Stage One complaints;

- Reminder to Highway Inspection Team to wear identification at all times when on site.
- Additional training to officers regarding communication over the telephone.
- Reminder to officers regarding procedures for printing and sending Neighbourhood Notification letters.
- Increased staff awareness of circumstances where customers should not have to queue and can be shown straight to their skating lesson.
- Staff made aware of correct information to provide customers regarding swimming lessons and where parents can watch the lessons.
- Cleaning rotas and techniques have been reviewed at leisure facilities and continue to be monitored.
- The Council's Leisure websites are being reviewed and refreshed to ensure that they are clearer, easily navigated and contains up to date information.
- When there is a transport contract change affecting vulnerable children sufficient notice will be provided to customers to enable them to prepare the children for the change.

- The website and insurance claim form to be updated to ensure that the maximum size limit for an email is stated.
- Staff have been instructed to let customers know when they telephone the TWIG's Service that they are unable to take any new referrals to manage customer contact and expectation.
- In order to tackle some concerns raised regarding large groups of young people entering the library. Groups will now be monitored when using the facility. At least one member must have a library card so that they or family can be contacted of any issues.

Below are examples of positive changes that have resulted from learning from Stage Two complaints;

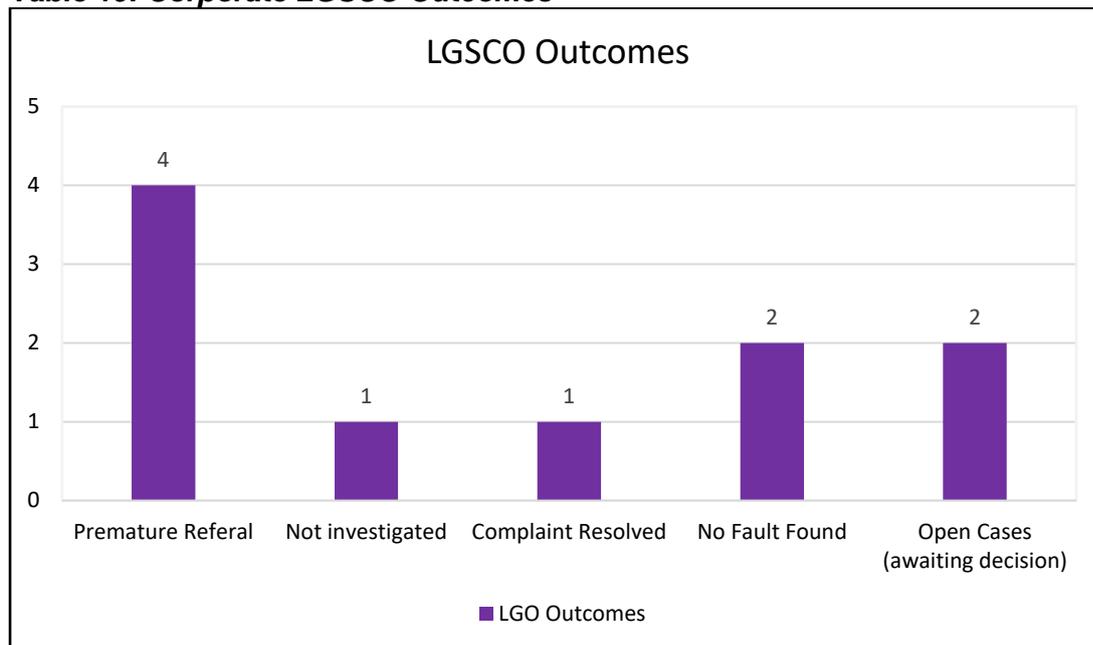
- When there is major change to landscaping in the borough, a letter drop to residents will take place to make them aware and informed of the actions that are going to be taken.
- Procedure for notification of Direct Payment Suspensions to be reviewed.
- Improved communication between services when safeguarding concerns have been raised.
- A review of procedure to ensure that Case Closure letters are sent.
- The Council is in the process of putting a document on its website setting out the good practice guidelines it uses (with images) relating to separation distances between houses which was originally set out by the Building Research Establishment. A link to the Council's own Local Plan will also be provided.
- Reviewed alternative ways of handling customer enquiries when customers object to providing their full name.
- Closer oversight on school Transport contracts to ensure there are no issues experienced at school pick up times.

8. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) has authority to investigate when it appears that our own complaints process has not resolved the complaint. Complainants can refer their complaint to the Ombudsman at any time, although they will generally refer all complaints back to us, if they have not been through the complaints processes first. In exceptional circumstances the Ombudsman will look at things earlier; this is usually dependant on the vulnerability of the person concerned.

During this period 23 complaints were forwarded to the LGSCO, 10 related to corporate complaints.

Table 19: Corporate LGSCO Outcomes



Of the 10 complaints 2 are still open awaiting a decision.

No findings of fault have been found for corporate complaints referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2018/19.

9. Performance Summary for Corporate Complaints

When considering the total number of transactions received by the Council over the year it clearly shows that the number of complaints received against transactions falls well within the accepted customer service industry standards and well under 1% of all transactions at 0.18%.

The percentage responded to within 15 working days is a cause for concern, however this is something that should continually improve going forward. The Customer Relationship Team will proactively work with services to ensure that complaints are responded to within timescale, this includes where possible progress chasing the responses at the beginning of the week in which they are due.

Whilst there has been a reduction in Service Managers our customers should be our priority and each service must have a robust way to ensure that complaints are prioritised to both

ensure that our customers receive a response within our timescales but that each service has used each complaint to inform continued service improvements.

Whilst the number of complaints received is small in comparison to the number of transactions we need to learn from any errors that have been made.

Each complaint should be considered to see if the customer’s journey could have been improved in order to prevent future complaints.

All complaints are an opportunity to learn and improve the service we provide.

Every upheld complaint should have organisational/ resolution actions, Services should be actively looking for these when investigating. The Customer Relationship Team will be monitoring these actions going forward in order to ensure that positive changes are made to the customer’s experience when doing business with the Council.

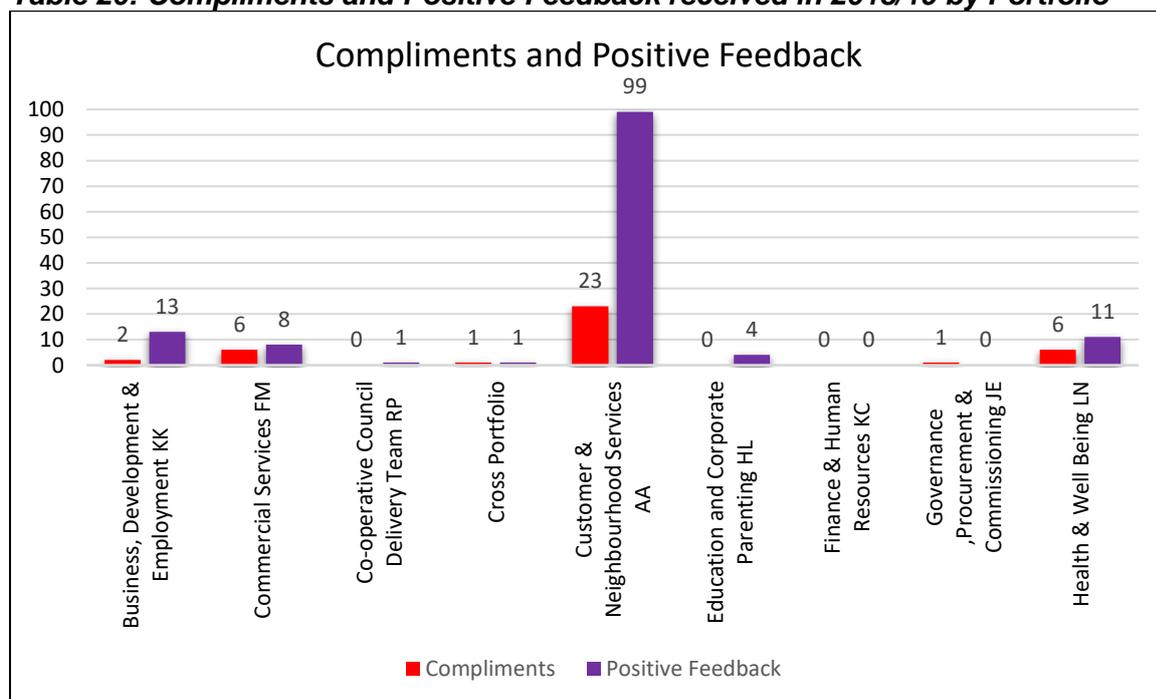
10. Corporate Compliments 2018/19

A compliment is only logged where a service or officer has gone **‘above and beyond’** their role.

We have received a total of 39 formal compliments in 2018/19. This is a decrease on the number received in 2017/18 as it reflects the new process that was introduced in 2017 where compliments which are a simple ‘thank you’ for providing a service are now sent to the employee and their line manager and not logged as a formal compliment. As these are high in volume, they are now logged as positive feedback only.

We have received a total of 137 instances of positive feedback in 2018/19, which is excellent and not surprising that Customer & Neighbourhood Services received the most due to the front line nature of this service area.

Table 20: Compliments and Positive Feedback received in 2018/19 by Portfolio



Please find below some examples of positive feedback received during the year.

1. I would like to thank all the staff at Phoenix last Sunday who made our Tournament a huge success.

Steph and her team, as well as the catering staff, did an amazing job. There were a lot of people there and they worked extremely hard in a very professional manner always with a smile on their faces. They are a credit to the centre.- **Commercial Services- Phoenix**

2. The enquiry was handled with Andy's usual efficiency and we had all the information we required in around five minutes.

Without our agreement with T&W (and Andy's immediate help – I understand he's working alone at the minute and could have needed some time to ascertain the results we needed) we would have had to submit a DPA to the DWP, which would likely have been a two, or three day turnaround. It goes without saying that this assistance is of great help to our department and would ask if it is possible to feedback our gratitude to T&W, but Andy in particular?- **Governance, Procurement & Commissioning**

3. I am writing to You to ask if You would mind passing on both Myself and My Wife's gratitude and thanks to your Social Services and Building work departments. Mark from the buildings department got involved and again his professional and friendly manner made what is some major works very easy and the Contractor used were first class.- **Cross Portfolio**

4. My refund was dealt with very quickly and the customer care shown was first class. Thank you to everyone involved.
I would also like to say WELL DONE to all involved in the 50th celebrations. As a town we have been extremely lucky with the different types of entertainment put on that not only did you pay for but so much free too! The quality has been outstanding.- **Health and Wellbeing**

5. I am a global customer service trainer. During the last two weeks I have made three calls to the contact centre to get help with a collection of a piece of furniture. The service I have received has been truly 'world class'. Extra mile, helpful, considerate, easy and generous. Remarkable in fact from the two ladies and one gentleman that I spoke to. My apologies for not getting and mentioning their names. Well done and thank you! This just shows what's possible with good people and processes.- **Customer & Neighbourhood Services**

6. I just wanted to thank you for making my son's experience of your theatre so good... You were so understanding and despite there being many other people around, your words of encouragement and your calm approach made him announce, "Just do it" and he did. He thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience and is now eager to buy tickets for another performance in the near future. Could you also pass on our thanks to the young lady who allowed my husband to have a peep at the auditorium and his seats before the performance? A truly caring approach at a very busy time.- **Health and Wellbeing**

11. Oversight and support provided by Customer Relationship Team

The Customer Relationship Team continues to support service areas to both manage and learn from complaints. The key services offered by the team are;

1. Complaints Advice and support.
2. Quality Assurance of complaint responses.
3. Acting as a critical friend to challenge service practice.
4. Support with persistent and unreasonable complainants.
5. Assistance in drafting comprehensive responses to complaint investigations.
6. Continue to escalate overdue complaints to Assistant Directors.

12. Customer Relationship Team priorities for 2019/20

During 2019/20 the Customer Relationship Team will focus on a number of key priorities;

- Review all complaint policies to ensure that they are robust and up to date.
- Introduce a customer insight programme with the view to proactively prevent complaints.
- Help to improve the Councils record in timely complaint responses.
- Upgrade our case management complaint system
- Continue to improve and add to the resources available for managers, when responding to complaints and other correspondence and encourage self-help.
- Review the vexatious and persistent policy.
- Develop some online 'Ollie' complaint handling training for staff.
- Work to maintain low levels of maladministration findings by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- To develop a dashboard for quarterly reporting providing Assistant Directors with quarterly data so that improvement can be driven forward continuously during the year.

13. Concluding comments

This annual report shows that the number of Corporate Complaints received has remained static in 2018/19, however over the last 5 years the number of complaints received has reduced significantly this is notable given that over the last 5 years we have seen approximately 1,300 officers leave the authority who have not been replaced and having delivered over 110million in savings following major cuts to Government funding of local authorities. We have also experienced some significant changes to the way that we run our services in order to respond to the economic climate in which we now operate. The Council continues to manage complaints well and is committed to putting right anything that has gone wrong.

With effect from 1 April 2019 a number of new contracts commenced, particularly in respect of grounds and cleansing and highways. It is hoped that the move to the new contractors will lead to fewer complaints due to the reduced turnaround times agreed in the contracts. The new contractors also have the latest technology which will enable them to pick up jobs immediately and respond in a timely manner.

The Customer Relationship and Welfare Service is constantly evolving and working hard to transform the way that we do business with our customers and will be introducing a customer insight programme in 2019, which will review different council services including the introduction of a mystery customer programme, which customers will be able to take part in. This is being introduced to be more proactive in the hope that we can identify and remedy concerns before a customer has to complain.

In 2018/19 a full review of the Council's website has taken place to ensure that all the information held is up to date. A full review and rebranding of the Council's Leisure websites is also underway. This will make information more readily available to customers going forward.

Despite the ongoing pressures on service delivery, there has been no impact on responsiveness to complaints and the Council on average is achieving against target in this area, at 14.57 working days.

The absence of any significant findings of fault by the Ombudsman suggests that complaints are being dealt with in line with the Council's values of openness, honesty, fairness and respect.

However, it is vital that managers remain equipped and committed to responding effectively and that the organisation is able to draw the learning for future cases.

Notwithstanding this, there remain clear opportunities to improve in a number of areas and the Customer Relationship Team will continue to work with senior leadership teams to effectively utilise complaints intelligence to support positive improvements to service delivery.