



**Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

Tuesday 25th June 2019

Annual Voice of the Customer Report 2018/19

Report by:	Mark Sturgess, Executive Director of Operations and Head of Paid Service
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Purpose / Summary:	<p>To summarise customer feedback from the year 2018/19 and analyse customer contact data to give a clear view of the voice of the customer.</p> <p>This report was requested by Challenge and Improvement Committee and will also be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>

RECOMMENDATION:

- **That Members note the content of this Voice of the Customer report.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:
None arising directly from this report.

Financial : FIN/28/20/TJB
None arising directly from this report.

Staffing :
None arising directly from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :
By understanding, in more detail about, how customers interact with the Council means we will be able to address issues that are preventing them from access services in an equal manner

Risk Assessment :
N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :
N/A

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
Customer Experience Policy 2018/19 – located on the WLDC website.
2018/19 Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports (circulated to Councillors via the Members Newsletter).

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman) **Yes** **No**

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications **Yes** **No**

**Annual Voice of the Customer Report
April 2018 to March 2019**

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1.0 Introduction

What is the Voice of the Customer?

- 1.1 The Voice of the Customer Report (formally known as the annual feedback report) not only looks at customer feedback but also takes into account a wider scope of customer views, expectations and opinions which are collected from a number of customer contact channels. These points include the data collected from day-to-day interactions as well as the compliments, comments and complaints received (customer feedback) and customer satisfaction survey responses. The focus is to turn these insights into actionable solutions to drive improvements and deliver a better service for our customers.

2.0 Customer Feedback

New Complaints Policy and Customer Feedback System

- 2.1 A new process for dealing with customer feedback was implemented in January 2018. Previously complaints were investigated at three different stages. Under the new Customer Experience Policy 2018/19 complaints process they are investigated by one independent officer, the Customer Experience Officer. This is easier for customers and staff to understand.
- 2.2 This is the first Voice of the Customer Report to include a full year's worth of data under the new process.
- 2.3 Since January 2018 all customer feedback has been logged on one central system allowing for easier and more specific reporting to take place.
- 2.4 The new system allows customer feedback to be recorded and categorised. All customer feedback is now logged by specific service and can be reported on by subject and issue. This makes it easier to identify trends and potential improvement actions.
- 2.5 Customer Satisfaction Surveys have been sent on a weekly basis to our customers who have either requested or received a service from us the previous week.
- 2.6 An improvement actions log has been created to feed back to the relevant teams the suggestions and required actions to be taken following analysis. Team Managers then report back to advise of the outcomes and improvements they have achieved once the actions have been implemented. This log also identifies wider areas for improvement which can potentially be built into projects that affect the Council as a whole.

Compliments

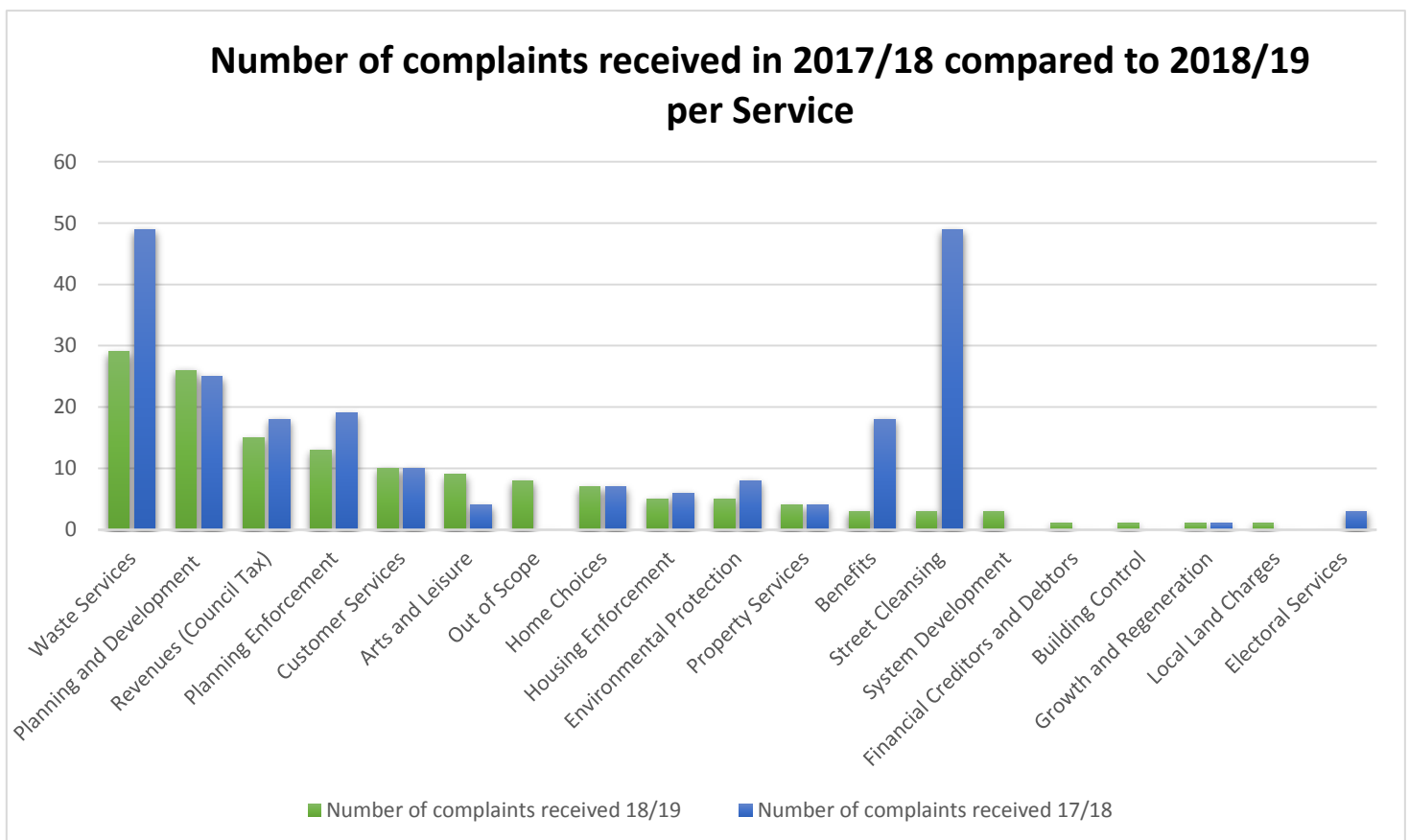
- 2.7 Compliments received allow us to identify what is working well and which aspects of our services our customers appreciate the most. These compliments are used to embed good practice across all Council services. Compliments received also encourage our officers to be the best they can be.
- 2.8 The Council received a total of 505 compliments between April 2018 and March 2019, this is an increase compared to the previous year where 402 compliments were received. More compliments have been recorded due to the proactive work undertaken by the Customer Experience Officer to promote to all staff the importance of capturing and recording customer feedback. The table in Appendix A illustrates how many compliments were received by each individual service.
- 2.9 Compliments received are generally regarding the speed, quality and the efficiency of the service received or regarding officer professionalism including politeness, patience, knowledge and willingness to help.
- 2.10 Further information on the compliments received throughout the year can be found in the previously published Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports for 2018/19.

Comments

- 2.11 Comments are important feedback, whilst they may not be praising our services or making a complaint they provide useful insight and suggestions that may help to improve the services and experiences we provide.
- 2.12 The Council received a total of 139 comments between April 2018 and March 2019, this is an increase compared to the previous year where only 79 comments were received. Since the implementation of the new process which incorporates comments now being recorded and responded to an increase has been seen. The table in **Appendix B** illustrates how many comments were received by each individual service.
- 2.13 The nature of comments received can vary, this year has seen a rise in comments relating to the Green Garden Waste Service and for Systems Development relating to the quality of the Council website and planning portal. Several comments have also been received regarding town centre development and car parking issues. A lot of comments are received in relation to Council policies and processes.
- 2.14 Further information on the comments received throughout the year can be found in the previously published Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports for 2018/19.

Complaints

- 2.15 Whilst complaints are negative feedback, the Council still encourages customers to make them as this feedback could help to improve our services and customer experience in the future.
- 2.16 A total of 146 complaints have been received between April 2018 and March 2019. This is a slight decrease compared to the previous year where 168 complaints had been received. The table in **Appendix C** illustrates how many complaints were received by each individual service in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18.
- 2.17 It should be noted that in previous years [Waste Services and Street Cleansing] as well as [Revenues (Council Tax) and Benefits] were grouped together in terms of customer feedback category data. The new system has allowed these to be separated into individual services for more accurate reporting.
- 2.18 The graph below illustrates the number of complaints received per service between April 2018 and March 2019 compared to 2017/18;



- 2.19 Waste Services have historically always received the highest amount of complaints, this is relative to the volume of service requests they receive as this service has contact with the largest number of households and customers in the District. It is pleasing to note that Waste Services also receive a lot of positive feedback in the form of compliments recorded.

- 2.20 The topic of or reason for the complaints received is now recorded and reported on. In order of frequency (highest to lowest) the topics/reasons for complaints are as follows: Quality of Service, Decision Made, Staff Behaviour and Lack of Contact or Communication, Process and Repeated Missed Bin Collections. The table in **Appendix C** illustrates how many complaints were received overall categorised by topic/reason.
- 2.21 Under the new process the response time for complaints is 21 days. The amount of time taken to respond to complaints from April 2018 to March 2019 has increased but is still well below the target 21 days. The average time to respond to complaints in 2018/19 was 7.3 days compared to 5.8 days the previous year. It should be highlighted that previous year data includes complaints under the old process where various team managers would investigate complaints at different stages, under the new process there is only one officer, independent of the service that deals with all complaints.
- 2.22 It has been identified that complaints received are becoming more and more complex requiring in-depth information gathering and investigations. This factor has also had an impact on the length of time taken to respond to complaints. Several complaints received recently have required legal advice and some have involved vulnerable customers which required more attention and a more sensitive approach to dealing with matters raised.
- 2.23 Of the 146 complaints received, 52 (35%) were upheld with the Council being found at fault by the independent officer following investigation. This is a decrease compared to the previous year where 84 (50%) of the complaints received were upheld.
- 2.24 The full breakdown of the number of complaints upheld per service can be found in the table in **Appendix D**.
- 2.25 Further and more detailed information on the complaints received and the complaints that have been upheld throughout the year can be found in the previously published Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports for 2018/19.

Overall Customer Feedback Statistics

2.26 The table below illustrates the overall reporting data for all customer feedback received compared to the previous year. All of which is detailed within the sections above.

Overall Figures	TOTALS/AVERAGES		Direction of travel
	18/19	17/18	
COMPLAINTS	146	168	↓
COMPLIMENTS	505	402	↑
COMMENTS	139	79	↑
AVG DAYS TO RESPOND	7.3 days	5.8 days	↑
WLDC at Fault	52	84	↓
% WLDC at Fault	35%	50%	↓

Customer Feedback Governance and Reporting

2.27 Customer Feedback is governed by a set of regular reports.

- Monthly Progress and Delivery reports monitor customer feedback levels including feedback received, days to respond to complaints and information on how many complaints are upheld in each period.
- Monthly reports on feedback received are sent to each service.
- Quarterly Customer Feedback reports are produced for the Service Leadership Team including the Management Team and Service Team Managers.

2.28 Regular reports are submitted to the Management Team.

2.29 The Quality Monitoring Board discusses and monitors learning and improvement actions and will undertake regular quality reviews.

2.30 Quarterly Voice of Customer Reports are published to all Team Managers and Officers and via the regular Members newsletter to our Councillors.

2.31 This Annual Voice of the Customer Report is presented to the Management Team and Challenge and Improvement Committee.

2.31 A report on the Annual Local Government Ombudsman letter is presented to the Management Team and Governance and Audit Committee.

Local Government Ombudsman Complaints (LGO)

- 2.32 Between April 2018 and March 2019 a total of 16 enquiries have been made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) this is a slight increase compared to the previous period where 15 enquiries were made.
- 2.33 15 of the enquiries made have now been closed, there is 1 complaint which the LGO are still currently investigating.
- 2.34 When a complaint is referred to the LGO they decide whether or not to investigate further. The table below shows the outcome of the complaints referred compared to the previous year. A report will follow later this year when the Annual LGO letter has been received which will detail the whole 2018/19 period of complaints to the LGO. This report will include benchmarking data to illustrate how we compare to other District Councils in terms of referrals and instances where councils are found to be at fault. This report will be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in October 2019.

LGO Outcome	2018/19	2017/18
Not investigated	8	4
Not found to be at fault	4	6
Fault identified	3	5
Still under investigation	1	-

- 2.34 The amount of complaints referred to the LGO where they decided not to investigate has doubled this year. These are complaints where the matter is either out of time or where the customer has another formal route of appeal for their complaint.
- 2.35 It is encouraging to note that the amount of complaints referred to the LGO where fault has been identified has decreased slightly.
- 2.36 The table in **Appendix E** illustrates which services the complaints referred to the LGO relate to.
- 2.37 Further and more detailed information on the complaints referred to the LGO throughout the year can be found in the previously published Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports for 2018/19.
- 2.38 Where fault is identified by the LGO a suitable remedy is recommended which usually includes an apology and on occasions a compensation payment for the time and trouble the customer has had to go to in order to make their complaint and escalate it to the LGO.
- 2.39 When a complaint is referred to the LGO there is no financial cost to the authority, unless the LGO find fault recommends that compensation is awarded.

Insights into Action

- 2.40 Gathering feedback from customers enables the Council to use these insights to shape the way it improves and develops. Customer insights relating to teams are sent to the relevant Team Managers stating the actions required and a deadline implementation date, this is escalated to The Management Team if failing to implement within the set timescale. Over time all suggested improvements are gathered into reports which are prioritised and fed into relevant projects.
- 2.41 When feedback is received and complaints are investigated the outcome is examined in order to identify any learning opportunities that can be gained from the issues raised. During the 2018/19 period many improvement actions have been implemented including changes in processes, procedure reviews, implementation of call recording and the introduction of customer standards. Further and more detailed information on the improvement actions made throughout the year can be found in the previously published Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports for 2018/19.

Example: Feedback received relating to the guildhall reception area and front desk processes has led to various improvement actions being implemented. Alterations have been made to the layout of the reception and waiting area including more private areas being made available and more suitably blocked off to avoid customers being able to overhear confidential conversations. The reception pod has been moved to make it easier for customers to identify where they need to go and a new processes for providing receipts to customers when documents are handed in has been implemented. A requirement for better awareness of equality issues when dealing with customers was identified so a specific training session was arranged for all customer service staff.

3.0 Customer Satisfaction Measurement

Satisfaction Surveys

- 3.1 The Council has been using an e-survey platform over the last year which enables to sending and analysis of customer satisfaction surveys from one place with real time results.
- 3.2 Surveys are sent to customers on a weekly basis to customers that have contacted the Council or have received a Council service in the previous week.
- 3.3 Currently surveys are only being sent via email but other methods are being investigated including channels such as SMS (to a mobile phone).
- 3.4 The insights gained from surveys are fed into the customer feedback system in order to collate all feedback in one central place. Identifying issues that customers report in survey responses allows the Council to act on and solve those issues before they potentially escalate into a formal complaint.

3.5 Not all services customers are sent satisfaction surveys, currently the services that are surveyed are; Anti-Social Behaviour, Environmental Protection, Food Health and Safety, Housing Enforcement, Planning and Development, Planning Enforcement, Public Protection, Street Cleansing, Waste Services and Street Naming and Numbering. Work is underway to enable surveys across all Council services in the future.

Satisfaction Levels

3.6 During the past year a total of 20,931 satisfaction surveys have been sent out and 2941 responses have been received, giving a response rate of 14%. In total 2725 satisfaction scores were completed and the overall satisfaction rating was 75.93%. This is a slight reduction in the satisfaction scores achieved for the previous year where overall satisfaction was 81%. More surveys were completed between April 2018 and March 2019 giving a bigger sample size and a higher response rate, further analysis will be undertaken to try to understand why satisfaction has decreased

3.7 Based on the responses and information collected the survey has now been redesigned into a simpler format which has been implemented since April 2019. It is hoped that an increase in response rates will be seen going forward. The new survey format also indicates which service the customer interacted with so going forward each service will receive its own individual customer satisfaction score. The target for customer satisfaction has been set at 75% for 2019/20.

3.8 The chart below illustrates the breakdown of all customer satisfaction scores received between April 2018 and March 2019.



4.0 Demand Analysis

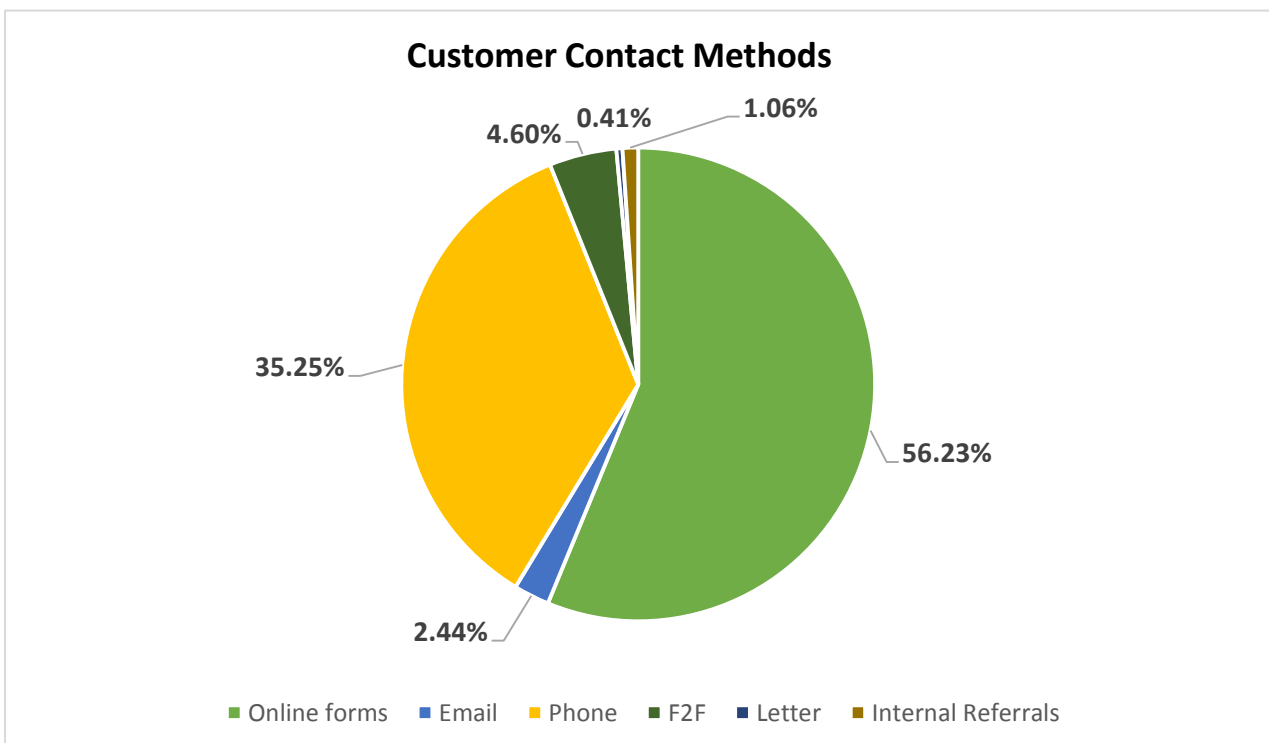
4.1 The demand analysis part of this report focuses the data available surrounding customer contact points. This includes data collected around telephony, face to face interactions, the website, payments and how service requests are received. Analysing this information can show how customers are choosing to interact with the council and through which channels.

Service Requests and Customer Contact Methods

4.2 Service requests can be made by customers through various channels. For example telephone, online forms, at the Guildhall and email. It is important to understand how customers are making requests so the receipt of these can be resourced adequately and appropriately.

4.3 Currently the method of receipt of service requests are only recorded by the following teams: Anti-Social Behaviour, Planning Enforcement, Housing Enforcement, Food Health and Safety, Public and Environmental Protection, Street Naming and Numbering (SNN) and Waste Services. Future investments in technology will allow for improved recording of future service request enabling a better understanding of our demands in this area.

4.4 The overall breakdown of contact channel for the teams mentioned above is: 35.25% from phone, 56.23% from online forms, 2.44% from email and 4.60% from face to face. These figures are the same as the previous year with the majority of customers making contact with us via the phone and online forms.



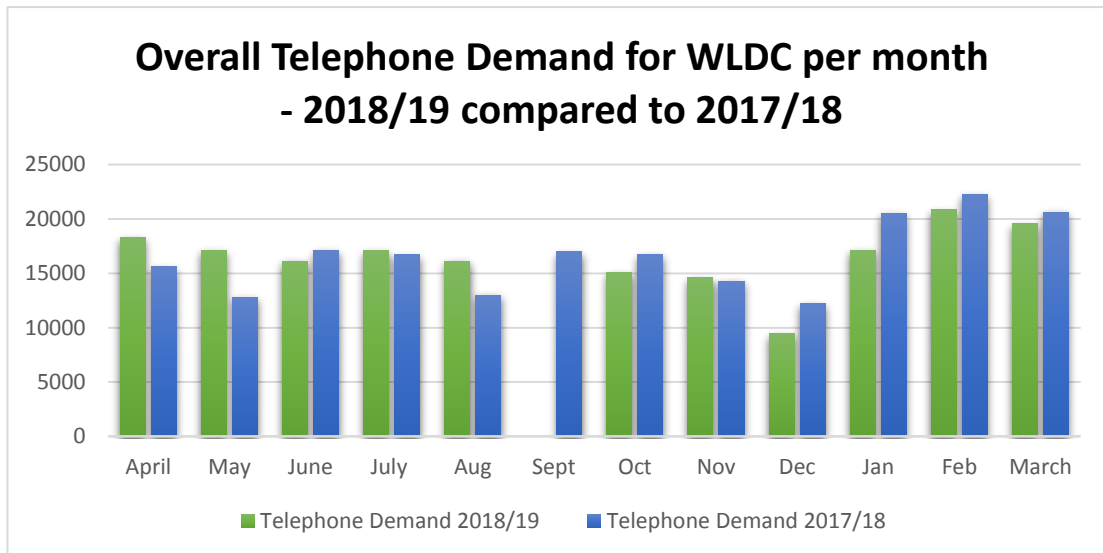
Face to Face Demand

- 4.5 The total number of customers that choose to come into reception is relatively low as many now choose to request services through other means. The footfall for the Guildhall is made up of Council customers as well as Job centre plus (JCP), Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Voluntary centre services (VCS) and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). While these are not our direct customers this still has a direct impact on demand and traffic in reception. On average just under 60% of reception footfall is for our tenants, leaving just over 40% of footfall visiting for the Council's services.
- 4.7 Reception footfall reduces in the summer and Christmas holidays, however demand remains consistent across other months. The volume of visitors to the Guildhall has remained the same compared to the previous year. The percentage of customers visiting for West Lindsey District Council services between April 2018 and March 2019 is 59.17% and for Tenants is 40.83% this breakdown is the same as the previous year.

	QU1	QU2	QU3	QU4	Totals	%
Total Footfall	13536	13427	13645	12674	53282	
WLDC	5580	5255	5673	5249	21757	40.83%
Tenants	7956	8172	7972	7425	31525	59.17%

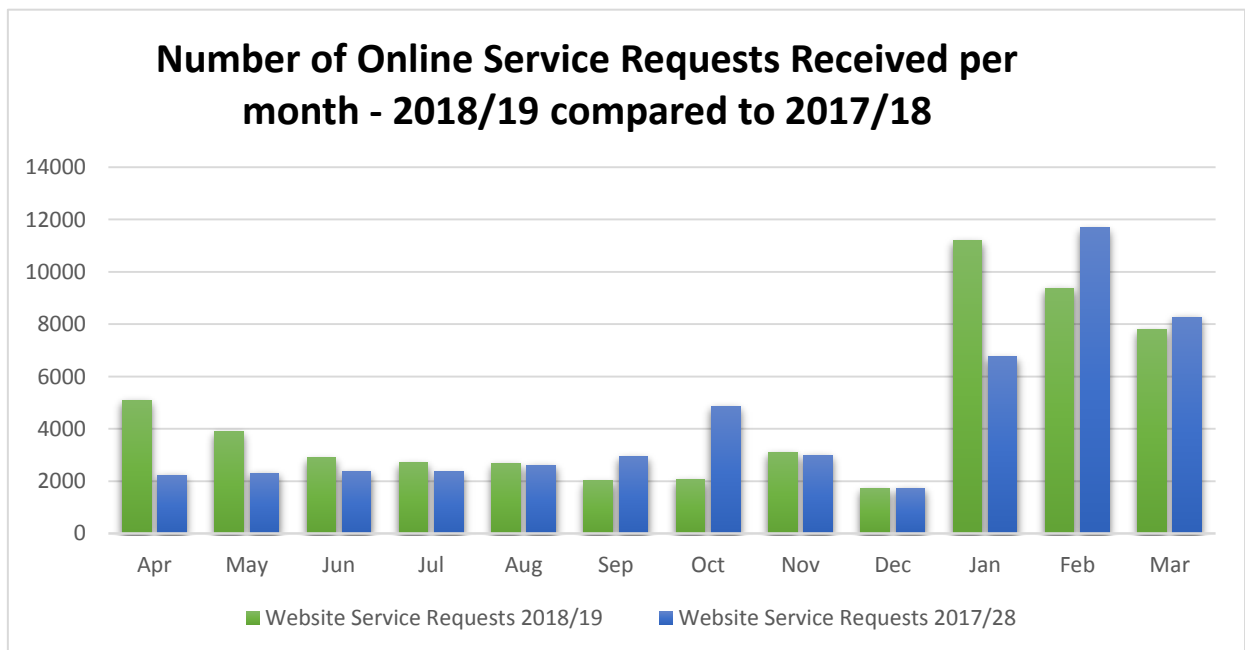
Telephone Demand

- 4.8 The graph below illustrates telephone demand each month compared to the previous year. There is no data available for September 2018 as telephone reports were not available due to a system upgrade.
- 4.9 At the beginning of the 2018/19 period telephone demand was higher than the previous year. Telephone demand decreased and less calls were presented at the end of the year compared to the previous year (2017/18). January, February and March is the period when customers sign up to the Green Garden Waste Service, this year more online subscriptions requests were made compared to via a phone call.
- 4.10 The total amount of calls presented to the Council across the year has remained the same as the previous year. The graph below illustrates how many calls were received each month compared to the previous period.



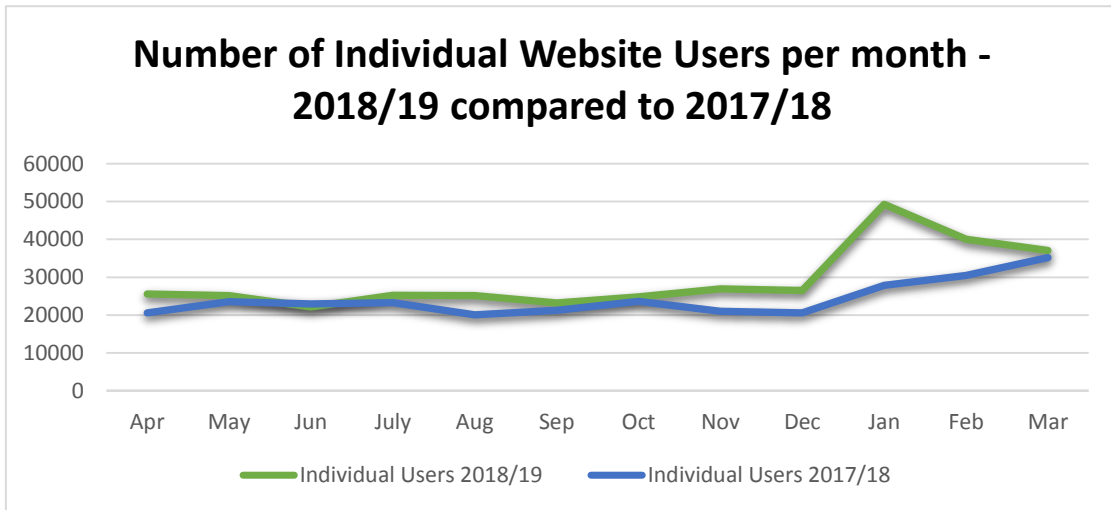
Online Demand

- 4.11 Customers can request or subscribe to a service via the Council website. The most visited pages on the website include the Green Garden Waste Service pages during the subscription period and the second most popular pages are relating to Planning and Development.
- 4.12 There has been an increase in service requests made via online forms during the 2018/19 period. In total 55,418 online requests were received compared to 51,098 the previous year. The graph below illustrates how many online requests were received each month. The increases in January, February and March are due to Green Garden Waste Subscriptions.

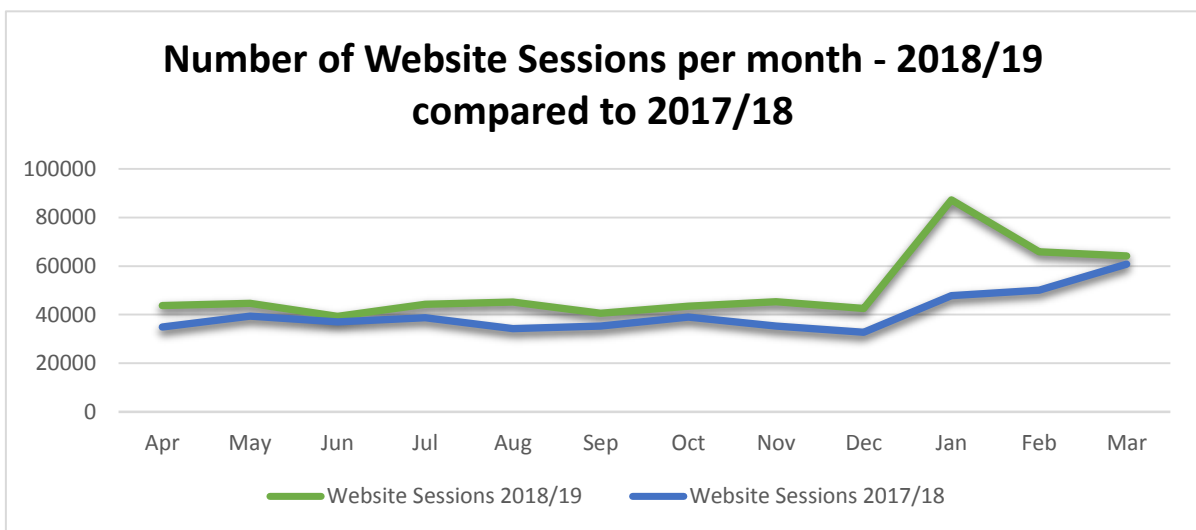


4.13 The graph below illustrates the number of individual website users each month compared to the previous year. As you can see there has been an overall increase in the number of users each month and a dramatic increase in users during the Green Garden Waste subscription period.

4.14 When both telephone and online demand is compared it is evident that during 2018/19 more customers decided to sign up to the Green Garden Waste Service online as there has been a decrease in calls compared to the previous year with an increase in online activity.

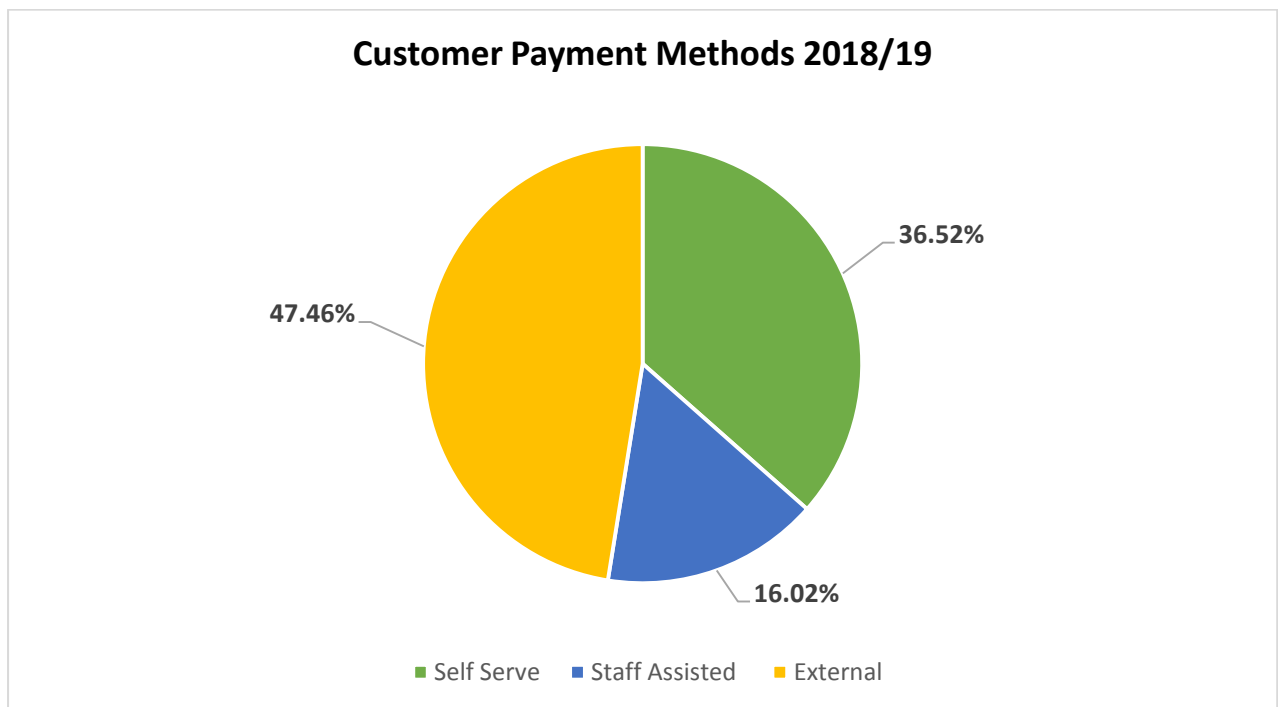


4.15 The graph below illustrates the number of website session per month. During 2018/19 there were over 120,000 more website sessions recorded in total compared to the previous year. Each month more sessions have been recorded than the previous year. This indicates that customers are becoming more confident in using the Council website to access our information and services and that the information provided is more informative and helpful. It is important that our customers' needs can be met via our website, Customer First is about putting the Customer at the centre of everything we do, through excellent customer service, a great experience, and a value-for-money, effective service delivery which is designed around our Customer's needs.



Payment Methods

- 4.16 The methods in which customers make payments to the Council can be classified into three categories; Self-Serve, Staff Assisted Payments and External Payments.
- 4.17 Self-Serve payments include payments taken over the website, the kiosk in reception and the automated telephone payment line. Staff Assisted payments include payments over the phone, postal cheques, cheques and small amounts of cash taken face to face. External Payments include bank account payments (but not direct debit payments), Post Office payments and PayPal.
- 4.18 In the 2018/19 period the payments have consisted of 36.52% Self-Serve Payments, this is a slight increase compared to last year which shows that more customers are confident in making their payments online or using automated systems. 16.02% of payments were Staff-Assisted, this has decreased compared to the previous period due to more people paying online and supporting customers to move to not paying by cash or cheque payments at reception. The volume of External Payments remains the same as the previous period at 47.46%. The breakdown of payment methods is illustrated in the chart below.



5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Overall we are receiving more feedback from our customers, in particular in the form of compliments and comments. Under the new process all customer feedback is recorded, historically not as much emphasis was put into recognising all compliments and comments received. There has been a particular rise in positive feedback for individual officers which is encouraging to see.

The 2018/19 period has seen an increase in overall customer contact and requests for our services. The methods in which customers contact us has shifted slightly towards more online self-service methods which means that we need to ensure that the information on our website is accurate, informative and up to date. When reviewing feedback received it is evident that website failure and down time leads to an increase in telephone calls and email contact to our Customer Services Team which increases pressure on the service.

Our customers live, work, or conduct business within our district usually for extended periods of time; and therefore the Council needs to build a positive relationship with customers for long term success.

The information within this report provides important input into the delivery of the Customer First Strategy, providing baseline data, enabling the Council to look through the customer's eyes at the services provided and to think, act and plan from the customer viewpoint which will be essential in making service improvements.

A customer wants to be seen as an individual, and wants to find or obtain what they need quickly and easily. The Council's role is to help customers do what they need to do, with the least possible friction. The data in this report will allow the use of customer analytics to predict customer behaviour, personalised services and continually evaluate the customer journey leading to an improved customer experience overall.

This will enable the Council to deliver excellent customer services, ensuring that it is operating and using its resources in the best way possible to provide a 'right first time' speedy, efficient and effective services.

Appendices

Appendix A – Compliments received per Service 2018-19

Service	Number of compliments received
Customer Services	113
Planning and Development	103
Street Cleansing	60
Waste Services	59
Building Control	32
Revenues	19
Arts and Leisure	16
Home Choices	15
Benefits	11
Housing Enforcement	9
Licencing	8
Local Land Charges	7
Environmental Protection	6
Property Services	6
Growth and Regeneration	6
Food, Health and Safety	6
System Development	5
Planning Enforcement	4
Community Safety	4
Customer Experience	3
Communities	3
Member and Support Services	3
Wellbeing and Health	1
Financial Creditors and Debtors	1
Energy	1
Public Health Funerals	1
Trees and Conservation	1
Communications Team	1
Cemetery	1

Appendix B – Comments received per Service 2018-19

Service	Number of comments received
Waste Services	42
System Development	37
Street Cleansing	12
Property Services	7
Arts and Leisure	6
Environmental Protection	6
Customer Services	6
Housing and Planning Enforcement	5
Revenues	4
Planning and Development	4
Building Control	2
Member and Support Services	2
Out of scope	2
Growth and Regeneration	1
Electoral Services	1
Communities	1
Management Team	1

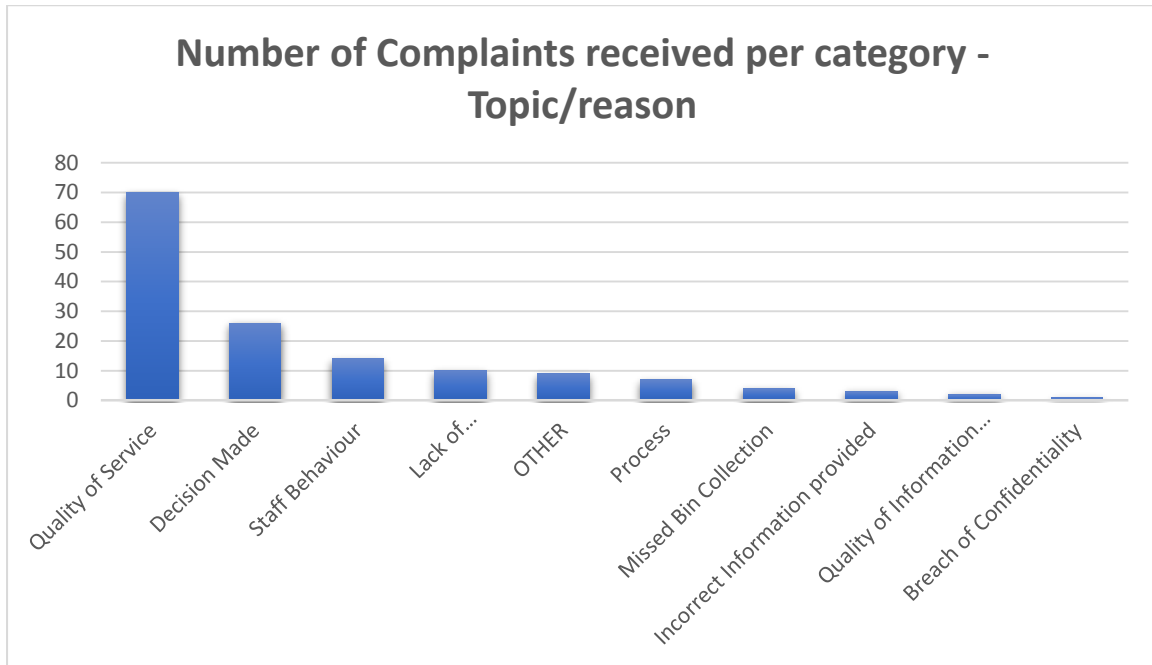
Appendix C - Complaints received per Service 2018-19

Number of complaints received

Service	18/19	17/18
Waste Services	29	*49
Planning and Development	26	25
Revenues (Council Tax)	15	*18
Planning Enforcement	13	19
Customer Services	10	10
Arts and Leisure	9	4
Out of Scope	8	unknown
Home Choices	7	7
Housing Enforcement	5	6
Environmental Protection	5	8
Property Services	4	4
Benefits	3	*18
Street Cleansing	3	*49
System Development	3	0
Financial Creditors and Debtors	1	0
Building Control	1	0
Growth and Regeneration	1	1
Local Land Charges	1	0
Electoral Services	0	3
Crematorium	0	0
Tourism	0	0
Energy	0	0
Wellbeing and Health	0	0
Customer Experience	0	0
Stray Dogs (Customer Services)	0	0
Public Health Funerals	0	0
Licencing	0	0
Cemetery	0	0
Trees and Conservation	0	0
HR	0	0
Communities	0	0
Food, Health and Safety	0	0
Member and Support Services	0	0
Management Team	0	0
Internal Confidential Issues	0	0
Communications Team	0	0

- It should be noted that in previous years Waste Services and Street Cleansing as well as Revenues (Council Tax) and Benefits were grouped together in terms of customer feedback categories. The new system has allowed these to be separated into individual services for more accurate reporting.

Appendix C Continued - Complaint Categories (topics/reasons)



Appendix D – Upheld Complaints per Service 2018-19

Service	Number of Partially upheld complaints	Number of Fully upheld complaints	Total
Waste Services		17	17
Customer Services	1	7	8
Revenues (Council Tax)	5	1	6
Planning and Development	1	3	4
Planning Enforcement	2	1	3
Housing Enforcement	3		3
System Development		3	3
Arts and Leisure		2	2
Home Choices	2		2
Environmental Protection	1		1
Benefits		1	1
Financial Creditors and Debtors		1	1
Local Land Charges		1	1

Appendix E – Complaints referred to the LGO by service

Service	Number of complaints referred to the LGO
Planning and Development	6
Council Tax	3
Planning Enforcement	2
Public Protection	2
Housing Enforcement	1
S106 agreements	1
Arts and Leisure	1