



GA.13 16/17

Governance and Audit
Committee

26 July 2016

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Subject: Annual Customer Feedback report

Report by:

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Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To review the number, type and results of Compliments, comment and complaints made to the Council during 2015/16, advise on any trends, areas for learning and future management of feedback

RECOMMENDATION(S): That Members note the 2015/16 results and where appropriate suggest corrective action

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None arising from this report

Financial: FIN/24/17 - In 2014 members requested work be carried out to establish the cost of complaints to the council. This piece of work was carried out and is addressed at point 5.5 of this report.

Staffing : None arising from this report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Customers have the ability to make a compliment, comment or complaint in a variety of ways such as face to face, letter, telephone, email or the website. When requested our procedure will be provided in alternative formats such as another language or in braille

Risk Assessment : None arising from this report

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : None arising from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

The Local Government Ombudsman prepare an annual letter which provides details of LGO complaints received and dealt with.

*Institute of Customer Services “Cost of handling complaints in the public sector 2014”

Details of all compliments, comments and complaints are held on internal software and reports from that system are used to create this report.

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

1. Introduction

1.1 In March 2008 the Corporate Governance Group agreed to submit an annual report to this Committee on customer complaints, referred to internally as feedback. Customers are at the heart of what we do and we need to ensure that our services meet the needs of the customer.

1.2 This report looks at 3 main areas within feedback. These are compliments, comments and complaints. All 3 are of equal importance in understanding what customers think of the services we provide.

1.3 Customers can also ask that their complaint is ultimately reviewed by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The remit of the LGO is to investigate complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. If there has been fault she considers whether it has caused an injustice and if it has, she may suggest a remedy. (Local Government Act 1974 Sections 26 (1) & 26A (1))

2. Background

2.1 Compliments, Comments and Complaints are recorded by the Customer Services team and are dealt with in accordance with the Council's procedure.

3. Compliments

3.1 The Council received a total of 162 compliments in 2015/16.

3.2 Compliments were received in the following teams;

A. Development Management = 41

B. Customer Services = 37

C. Waste Services = 32

D. Building Control = 12

E. Housing Benefits = 8

F. Environmental Services = 5

G. Council Tax = 4

H. Licensing = 4

I. Home Choices = 3

J. 16 other teams received compliments of 2 or below

3.3 The Council actively encourages customers and staff to log all compliments received as it is vital to understand how customers perceive the services we provide.

3.4 Appendix A shows what the compliments received were about, with the majority of compliments received being about officers

4. Comments

4.1 The Council also captures comments from our customer and these provide essential information in terms of how we can change our services for the better.

4.2 Comments were received in the following areas;

- A. Customer Services = 64**
- B. Waste Services = 19**
- C. Development Management = 11**
- D. IT Services (website) = 13**
- E. Corporate Governance = 9**
- F. Housing Benefits = 6**
- G. Council Tax = 5**
- H. Home Choices = 5**
- I. Building Control = 3**
- J. 7 teams received 2 comment or below**

4.3 The Council received a total of 142 comments in 2015/16 and appendix B shows what these comments were about.

4.4 Appendix C shows some of the actions we took in response to comments – known as “**You said we did**”

5. Complaints for 2015/16

5.1 A total of 136 complaints were received in 2015/16, this is an increase 41 from 2014/15.

5.2 An increase in complaints received presents its own challenges and these are to be welcomed, but it should be noted that the Council deals with over half a million enquiries a year from customers which means that less than **0.02% of customers we deal with make a formal complaint.**

5.3 Of the 136 complaints received – the figure below adds up to 153 and this is because I have also capture decisions made at both stage 2 and 3 even though one complaint

- 50 complaints were upheld in the customers favour
- 96 were not upheld
- 7 complaints are currently still under investigation

5.4 In 2014/15 members requested an understanding of how much dealing with complaints costs the Council. Using the same monetary figures as 2014/15 each complaint costs a minimum of £314.54 to deal with*. Therefore the minimum total figure for dealing with complaints in 2015/16 is £42,777.84.

5.5 Work is to take place during 2016/17 to create an internal financial figure per complaint dealt with

5.5 The council also offered a financial remedy in relation to two complaints totalling £1,000

5.6 Appendices D to I provided at the end of this report shows volumes, types, and response rates of complaints.

**Institute of Customer Services “Cost of handling complaints in the public sector 2014”*

6 Local Government Ombudsman

6.1 There were a total of 3 enquiries to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), which is the same as 2014/2015.

6.2 Two of these have been investigated and closed and one is still under investigation.

6.3 Regarding the closed cases the LGO found no evidence of fault in one case but did uphold the customer's complaint in the second case and found the Council at fault. In this case the Council have and are continuing to comply with the remedy requested by the LGO. This has not resulted in any financial compensation.

6.4 In addition during 2015/16 we have received 1 LGO request for information and we are still waiting for LGO to advise if a full investigation is to take place.

7. Complaints system

7.1 Following the appointment of the Customer First strategic lead the complaint procedure and process has been reviewed.

7.2 The Customer first strategic lead found that the procedure we have is robust and complies with best practice as required by the LGO but found that there were significant issues in the way the process was implemented across services and recommended that improvements are made.

7.3 A recommendation was that a number of key officers should undertake complaint investigation training as provided by the Local Government Ombudsman.

7.4 This training took place on the 27 of April and the 17 May 2016 and we now have a core team of 30 officers who have been trained to undertake complaint investigations. This training will not stop complaints being received by may result in less escalations

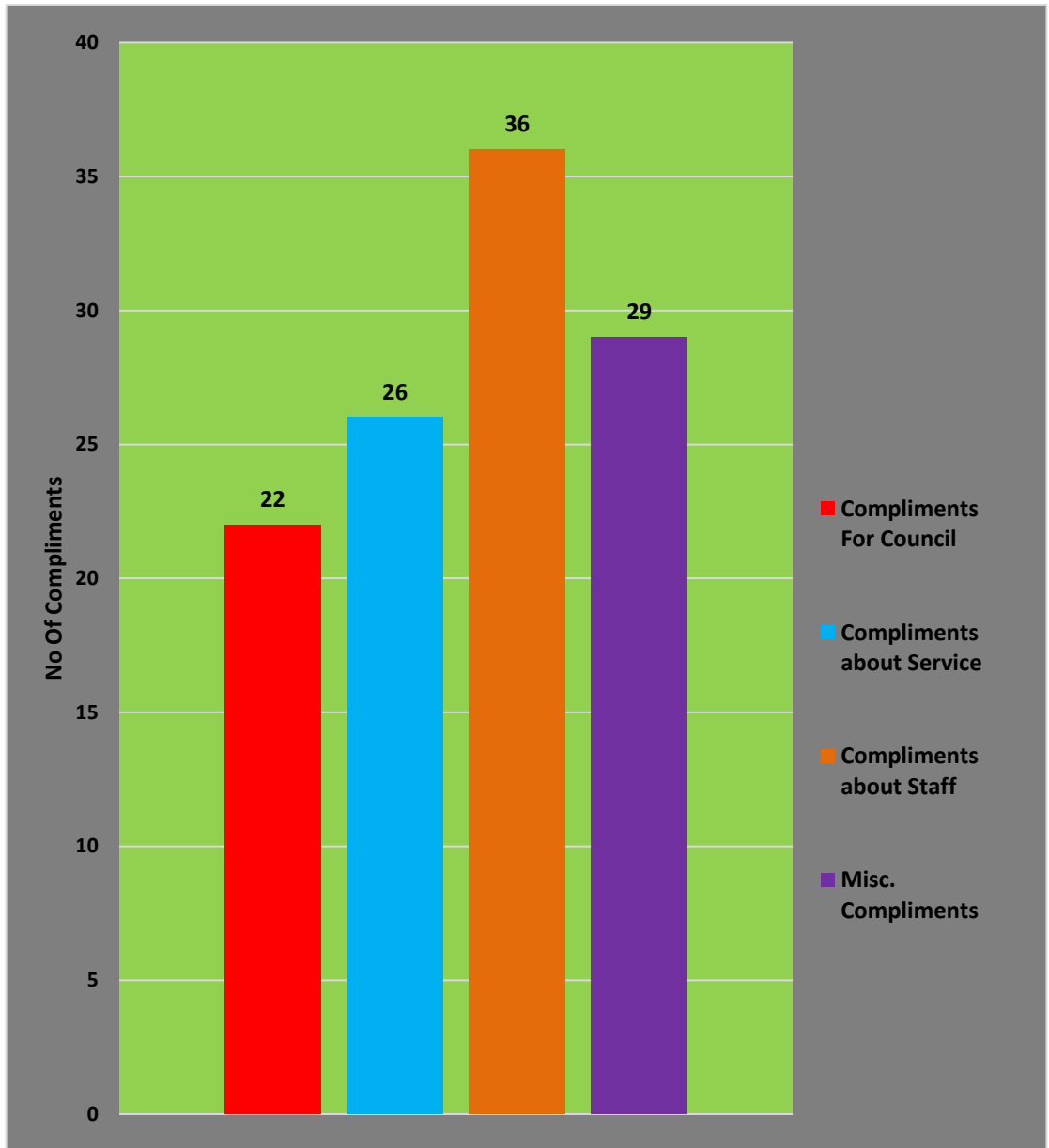
7.5 An e-form has been created for customers to log complaints via the website and work is ongoing to create a more streamline process internally for the logging, monitoring and dealing with of all complaints, including a review of response times.

8. Conclusion

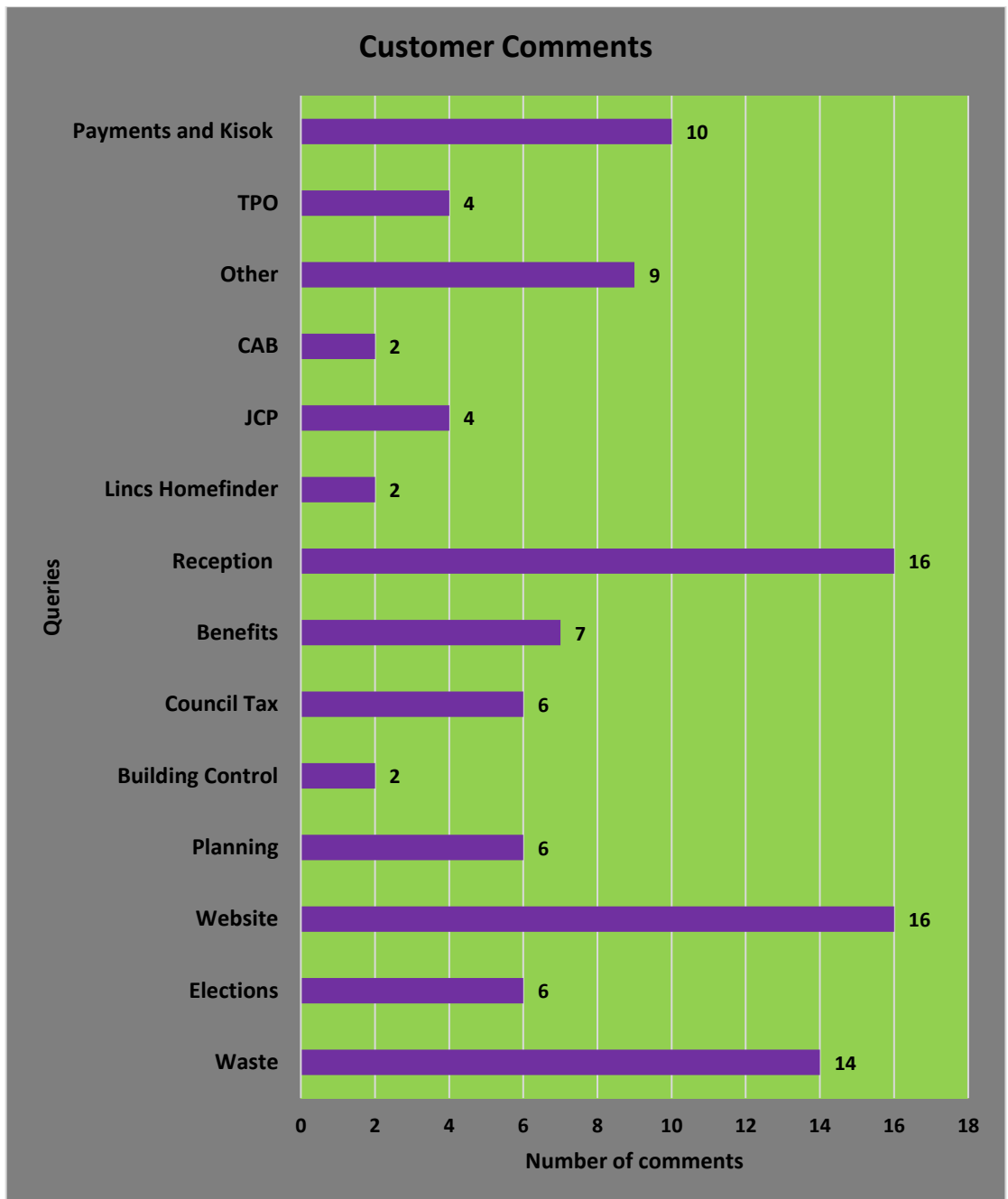
8.1 This report sets out comprehensive information on customer compliment, comments and complaints and this feedback will continue to be used to improve services.

8.2 It should also be noted that development management received both the highest number of compliments and complaints within the Council.

Appendix A - What compliments are about



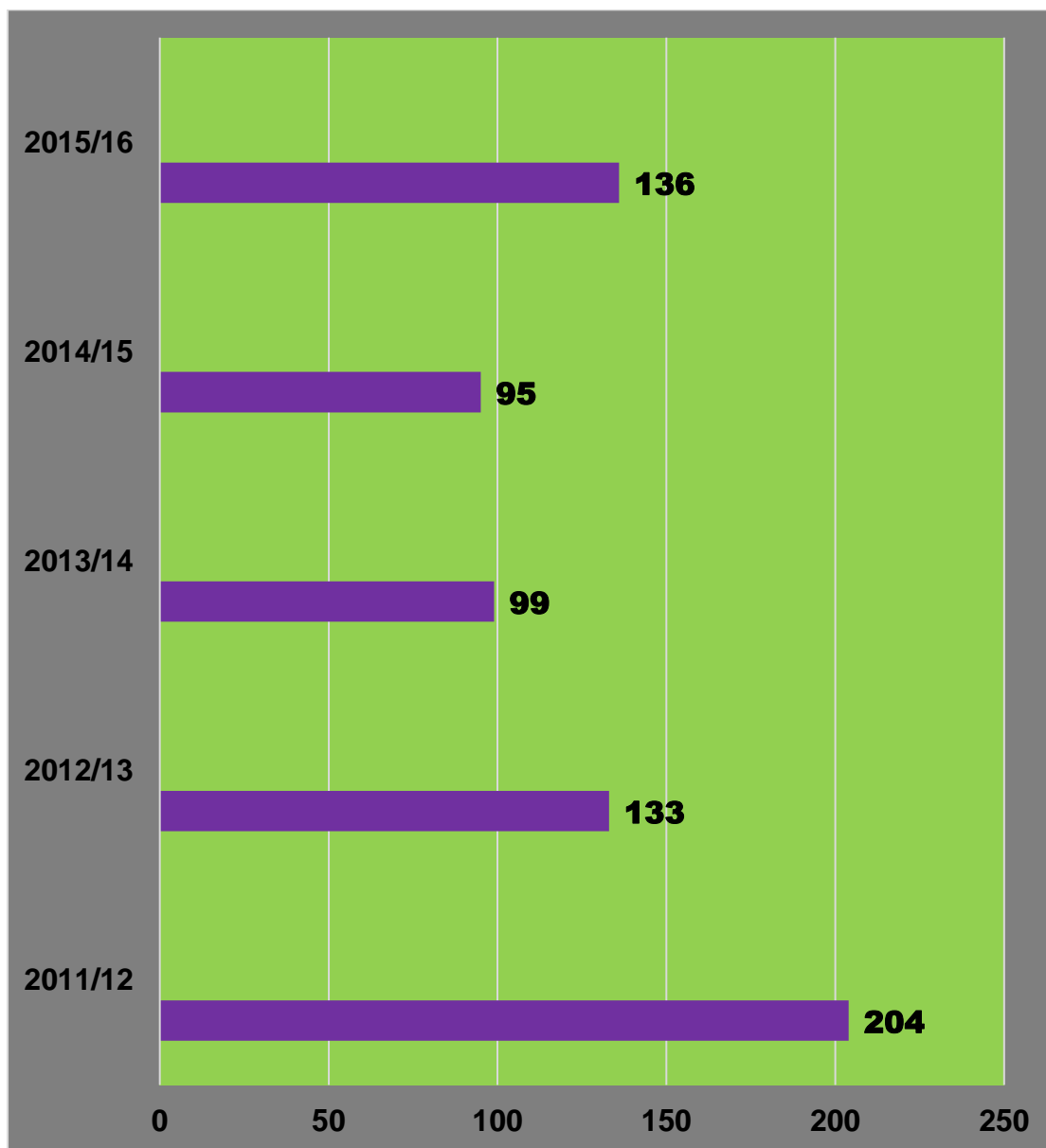
Appendix B - What customer commented about?



Appendix C - You Said We Did

Comment	What we did
Struggled to find out how to pay green bin on website.	We put this service in a more prominent position on the website
Customer wanted to bring pet dog into reception.	Increased size of and how many assistance dogs only signs for reception
The Colours of old website are not friendly for disabled customers	This was fed into the website working group and colours have been changed to be more disabled friendly
Having to make benefits appointments for short queries.	Implemented quick appointment system
Need more help when using computers in public services hub	Set up system of digital volunteers to help customers
No opening times for CAB on door.	Asked CAB to advertise their opening times
Could we have more than one computer that prints	All self-service computers now linked to printer
Please can you let me know which is my parish council as your website shows conflicting information.	Customer Services checked the website and it showed conflicting information. This has now been amended.
Your website should have a link to market officers details/ who to speak to about getting a market stall. Found a lot of information about terms and conditions, etc. but not the basic info wanted	The web team amended the website and to reflect this requirements
Could not find opening times of the Guildhall on website.	These now on website

Appendix D - Volumes of complaints from 2011/12 to 2015/16.



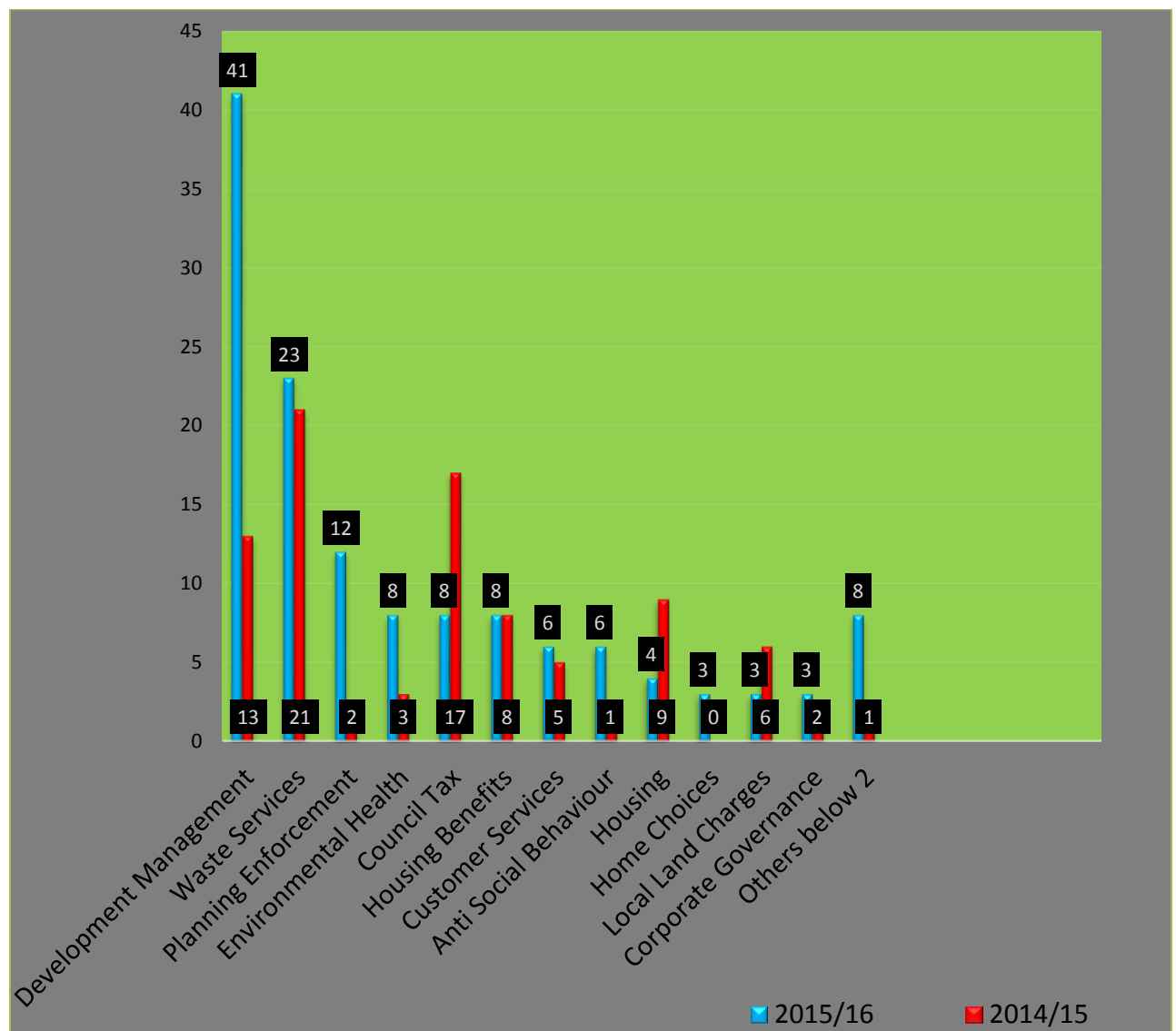
Appendix E - Volumes of complaints received across all sections during 2014/15 and 2015/16

The graph shows increases in complaints during 2015/16. Analysis of complaints has been undertaken to understand why this is and there is no clear evidence to demonstrate a continued failure in a particular way of delivering a service or in the way staff deliver services.

It should also be noted that the team with the largest number of complaints also received the largest number of compliments during 2015/16

Our customers come in many guises and as such, many customers that deal with areas such as planning will have a professional background and are therefore more likely to challenge our professionalism or decision making process than customers from more vulnerable sections of our community.

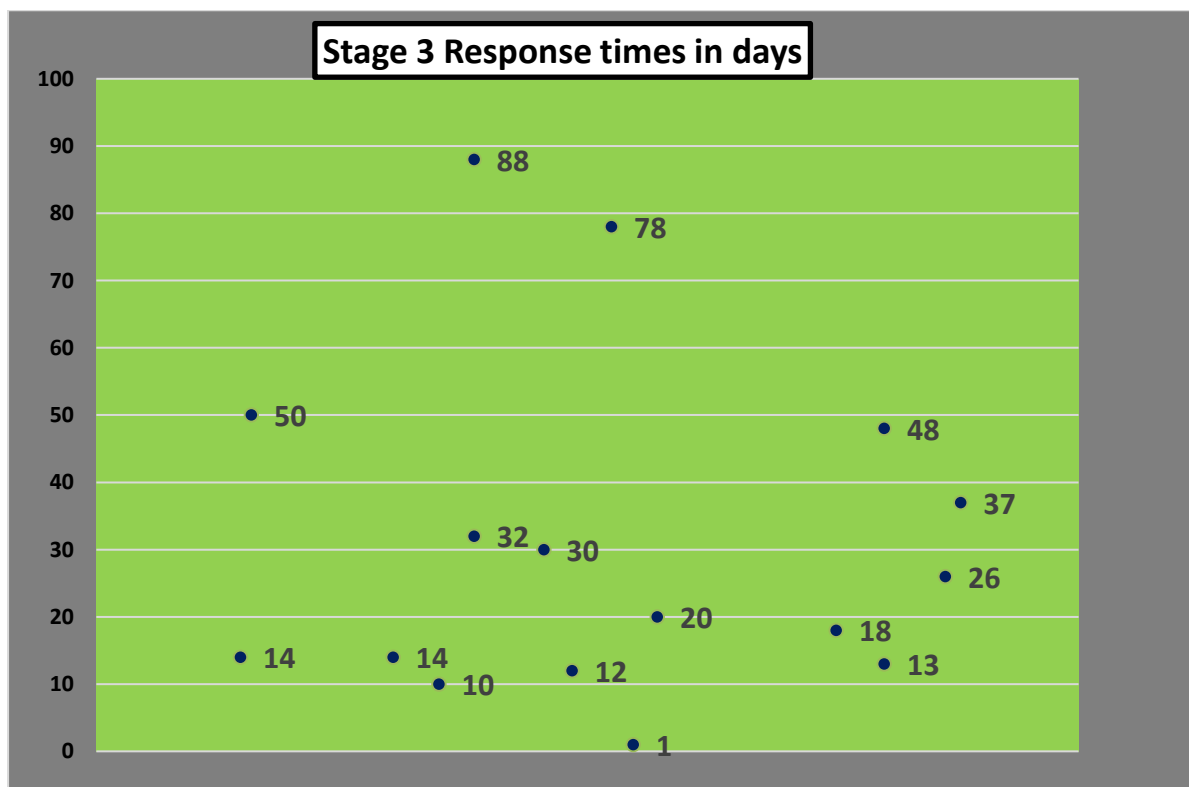
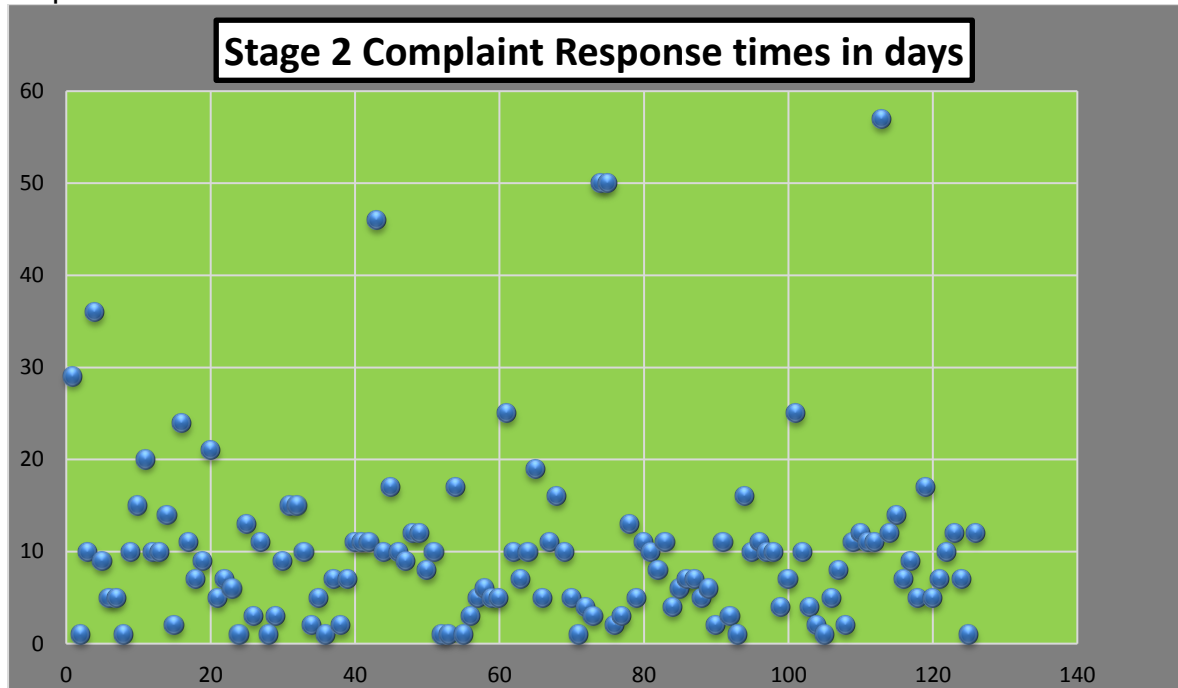
This is a challenge for the council in terms of how we gain confidence from both sets of customers, in the delivery of our services in difficult and challenging financial times.



Appendix F - Time taken to resolve complaints at stage 2 and 3.

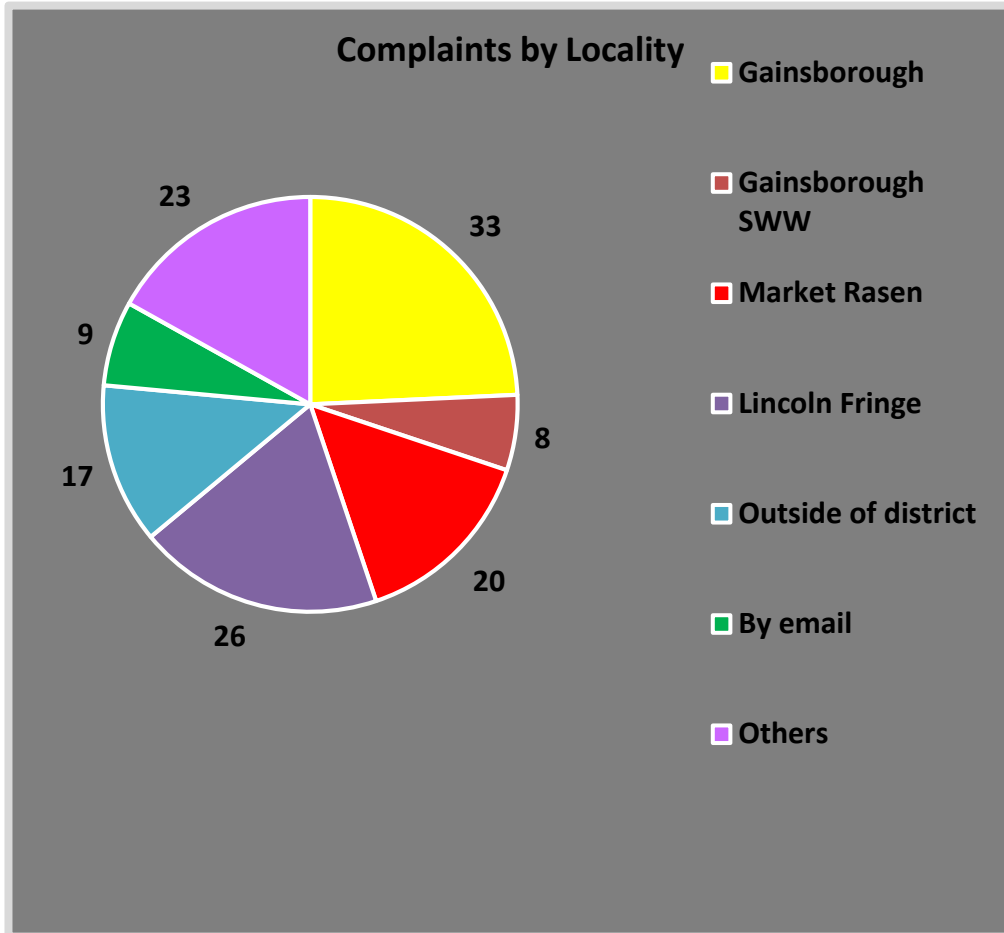
Where we have complex cases, that take more than 10 days to resolve, customer receive 'keeping in touch letters' to keep them up to date with progress.

During the internal review we will be looking to see how we can improve on response times.

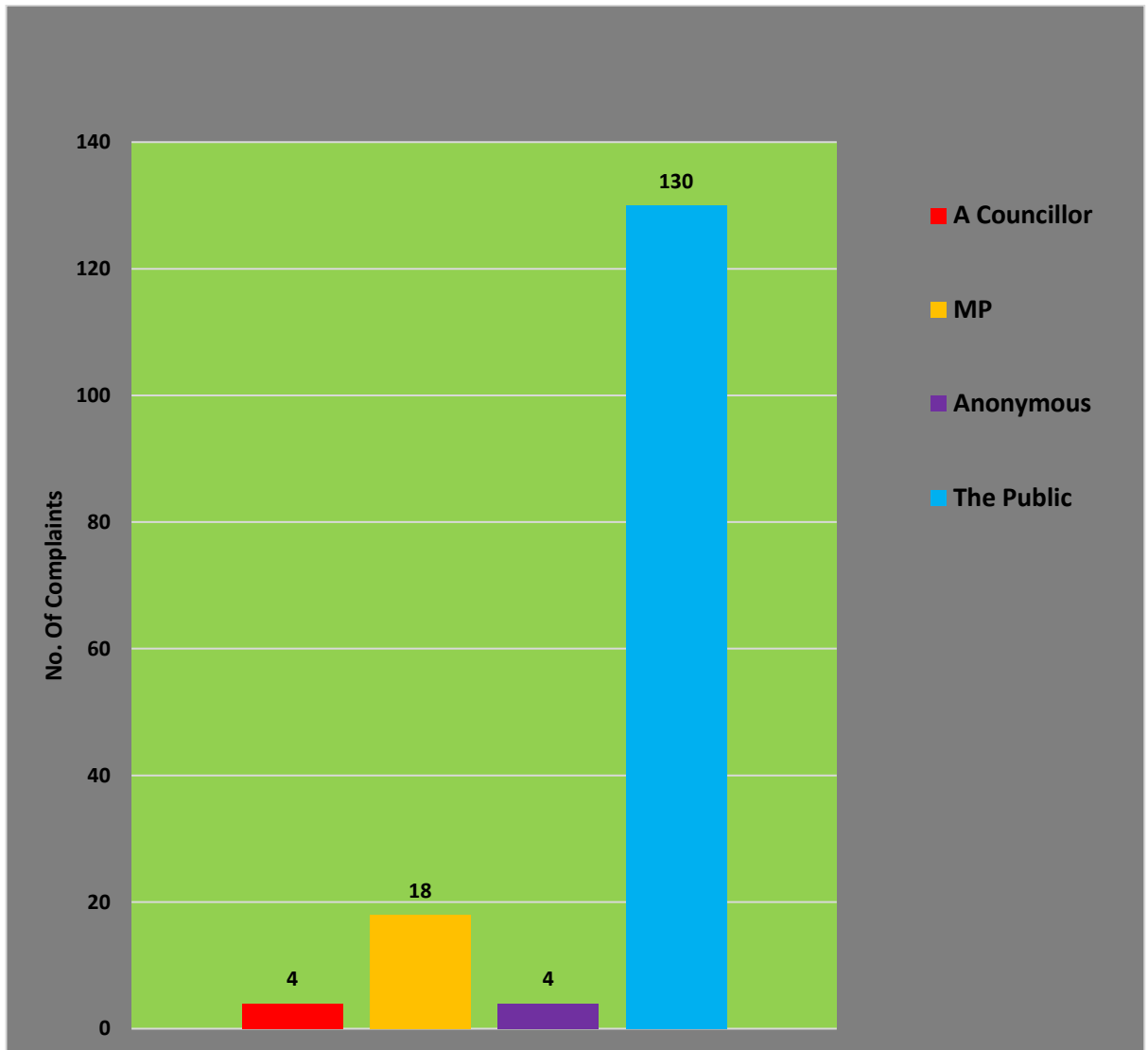


Appendix G - Complaints by locality 2015/2016

This shows the areas we received complaints from, capturing complaints received by email, those outside of the district and the others are a mixture of anonymous complaints and complaints received by a 3rd party on a customer's behalf

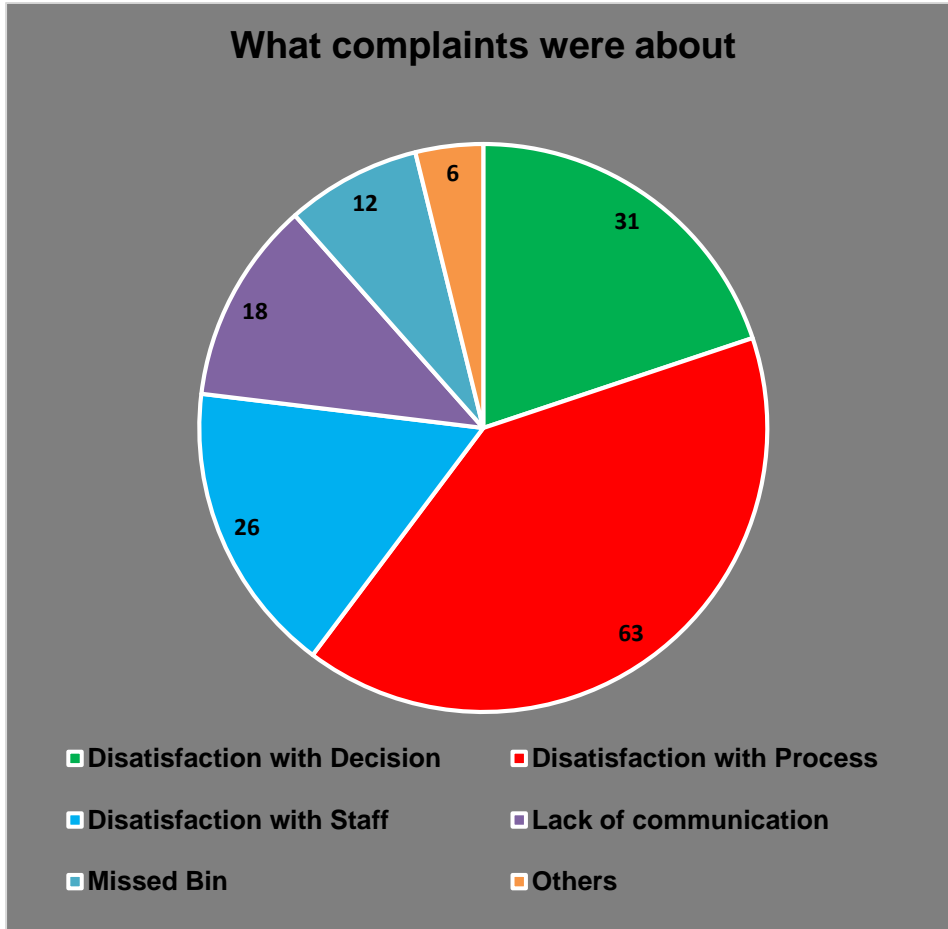


Appendix H - Complaints received from during 2015/16



Appendix I – What customers complained about?

This shows what customers complained about, this adds up to more than the number of complaints we have because some complaints were about more than one issue.



Report End