



**Governance and Audit
Committee**

Tuesday 20th July 2021

Annual Voice of the Customer Report 2020/21

Report by:	Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ian Knowles
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Purpose / Summary:	To summarise customer feedback from the year 2020/21 and analyse customer contact and demand data to provide a clear view of the voice of the customer.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- **Members note the contents of the Annual Voice of the Customer report;**
- **Members to provide feedback on the content of the report and seek assurance that robust and effective measures are in place to improve the overall customer experience**
- **Members support the work of the Customer Experience Officer and the Councils 'right first time' approach**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

None arising directly from this report.

Financial : FIN/39/22/B/SL

There are no financial implications arising 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.

Data Protection Implications :

None arising directly from this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None arising directly from this report.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None arising directly from this report.

Health Implications:

None arising directly from this report.

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

- West Lindsey District Council Customer Experience Policy
- 2020/21 Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports x 4

Available on the WLDC website via the following link:

<https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/my-council/have-your-say/comments-compliments-and-complaints/>

Risk Assessment :
N/A

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

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

X



**Annual Voice of the
Customer Report
April 2020 to March 2021**

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1.0 Introduction

What is the Voice of the Customer?

- 1.1 The Voice of the Customer Report doesn't just examine 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 continuous improvement and deliver a better service for our customers in line with the objectives of the Corporate Plan.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the 2020/21 period covered within this report was during the Covid-19 pandemic which began in March 2020, the Council found itself facing some unprecedented challenges. The situation meant that ways of working had to change at short notice, officers were asked to work from home and only skeleton staff remained working within the guildhall building to ensure essential services could continue.
- 1.3 The Guildhall building main entrance was closed and face to face contact was limited to vulnerable and emergency customers only. An intercom facility was installed at the entrance so that customers could be assisted from a safe distance and within social distance guidelines. The use of video calling was implemented to ensure that officers working from home could still communicate with vulnerable customers and assist them as required. March 2020 also saw the temporary closure of the Trinity Arts Centre and the Leisure Centre. The Trinity Arts Centre has remained closed throughout the pandemic and the Leisure Centre has opened and closed in line with the changing restrictions in place, all of which has had an overall effect on customer demand in 2020/21.
- 1.4 At the beginning of the lockdown period some services were temporarily suspended, waste services ceased taking bulky and special collection requests. The lockdown had a knock on affect for waste services as more household waste was being produced and the recycling centres closed limiting the ways households could dispose of their waste. There has been an increase in fly tipping reports increasing demand on the waste services operational teams.
- 1.5 New services were initiated to assist customers and businesses during the pandemic leading to some officers being redeployed to different areas. The growth and regeneration team set up and administered the governments business grant scheme, a lot of positive feedback was received regarding this initiative which is referenced within this report.
- 1.6 Officers from the performance and projects team were involved in setting up a community hub to assist vulnerable customers during the pandemic, again a lot of positive feedback was received regarding the assistance that was provided.
- 1.7 Officers from the food health and safety and enforcement teams took on the responsibilities of monitoring the various restrictions that had been put in place during the lockdown period. These included checking on businesses that continued to operate during lockdown, assessing social distancing measures in place and ensuring businesses were complying as they should be.
- 1.8 Given the ongoing lockdown restrictions throughout the 2020/21 period we would expect to see fluctuations in customer feedback and customer satisfaction.

2.0 Customer Feedback

Customer Experience Policy and Customer Feedback

- 2.1 A new process for dealing with customer feedback was implemented in January 2018. This is the third Voice of the Customer Report to include a full year's worth of data under the new process.
- 2.2 All customer feedback is logged on one central system allowing for easier and more specific reporting and comparison to take place, this allows customer feedback to be recorded and categorised. All customer feedback is logged by specific service and can be reported on by subject and issue. This makes it easier to identify trends and potential improvement actions.
- 2.3 Customer Satisfaction Surveys were temporarily paused during April and May 2020 beginning again in June 2020. Surveys have been sent on a weekly basis to our customers who have received a service from us during the previous week. Because of the pandemic situation it was decided to only send surveys to the main customer facing services during 2020/21 which include waste services, public protection, street naming and numbering, planning and development, planning enforcement and street cleansing services.
- 2.4 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 service redesign work and projects that affect the Council as a whole. All actions for the 2020/21 have been completed.

Compliments

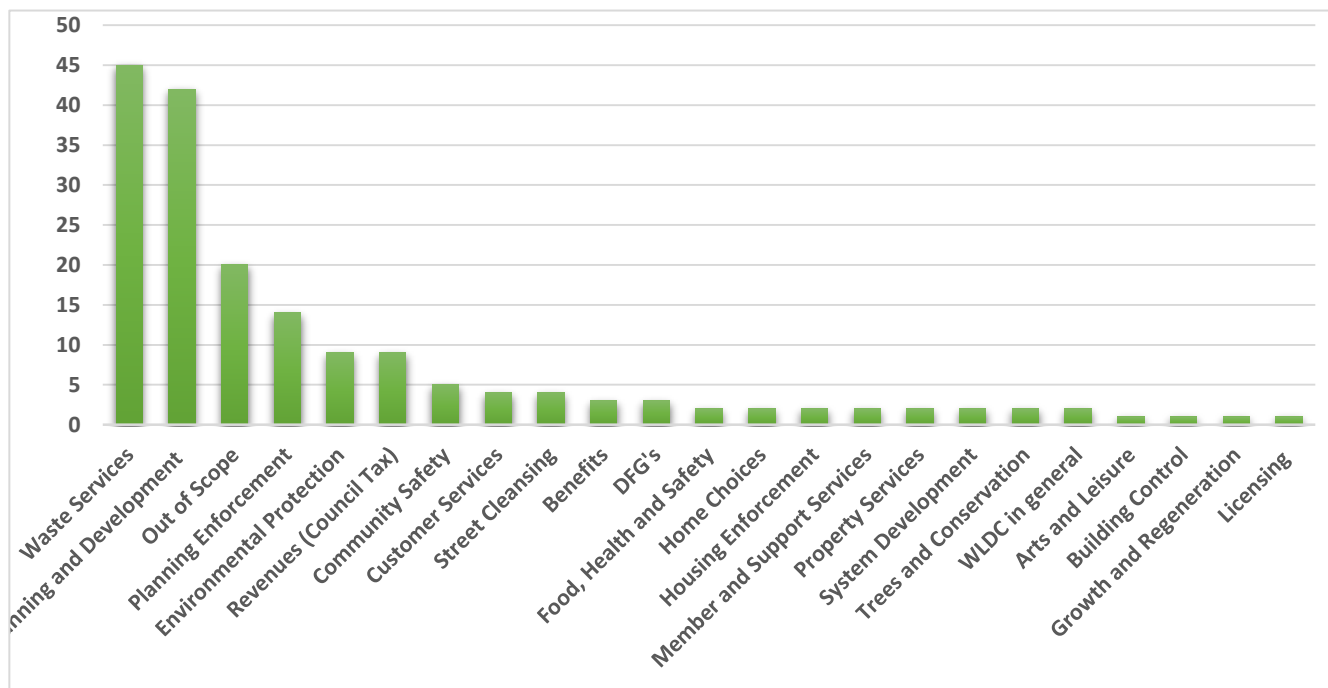
- 2.5 Compliments received allow us to identify what is working well and which aspects of our services our customers appreciate the most. These compliments are used to embed good practice across all Council services. Compliments received also encourage our officers to be the best they can be and provide the highest standard of service possible.
- 2.6 The Council received a total of 784 compliments between April 2020 and March 2021, this is an increase compared to the previous two years where 675 and 505 compliments were received. There was a rise in the number of compliments received at the beginning of the pandemic period and more compliments continue to be 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** shows how many compliments were received by each individual service in 2020/21 compared to the two previous years, 2019/20 and 2018/19.
- 2.7 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. During the 2020/21 period more compliments and messages of thanks have been received regarding the support we have provided to businesses and individuals during the pandemic situation. There has been an increase in the number of compliments received for the waste services, customer services, trees and conservation and growth and regeneration teams.

Comments

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 The Council received a total of 64 comments between April 2020 and March 2021, this is a decrease compared to the two previous years where 73 and 139 comments were received. The table in **Appendix B** shows how many comments were received by each individual service in 2020/21 compared to the two previous years, 2019/20 and 2018/19.
- 2.10 The decrease in the number of comments received has been affected by the temporary closure of the Trinity Arts Centre, in previous years several comments have been received regarding the facility and its operations, this year that has reduced to just one.
- 2.11 The nature and frequency of comments received can vary, this year has seen a rise in out of scope comments relating to the initial closures and restrictions in place at the recycling centres in the district. Where the customer's permission has been given comments received have been shared with Lincolnshire County Council. As comments are neutral suggestions it is difficult to benchmark performance but going forward improvements that occur from comments received will be reported on.

Complaints

- 2.12 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. The number of complaints has been growing in both the private and public sectors. In part, this reflects rising expectations and new technologies making it easier to complain, and is not necessarily due to decreasing service quality. However, where complaints provide an early-warning signal that something has gone wrong, they can be a useful way to stimulating innovation, and a powerful form of knowledge.
- 2.13 A total of 178 complaints were been received between April 2020 and March 2021. This is a slight decrease compared to the previous year (2019/20) when 187 complaints were received. 146 complaints were received in 2018/19. The table in **Appendix C** shows how many complaints were received by each individual service in 2020/21 compared to the two previous years, 2019/20 and 2018/19.
- 2.14 Waste Services have historically always received the highest number 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. The number of complaints received for Planning and Development has increased dramatically compared to previous years, the majority of these complaints have related to a planning application decision that has been made and originate from planning application objectors. These complaints have not been upheld, on investigation it was evident that the correct process had been followed and thorough considerations of any concerns raised had been carried out by the case officer concerned.
- 2.15 The graph below illustrates the number of complaints received per service between April 2020 and March 2021:



- 2.16 The topic or reason for the complaints received is recorded and reported on in order of frequency (highest to lowest) the topics/reasons for complaints are as follows: Quality of Service, Decision Made, Process, Staff Behaviour, Breach of Confidentiality, Repeated Missed Bin Collection, Staff Communication, Lack of Contact or Communication, Quality of Information provided and Incorrect Information provided. The table in **Appendix C** shows how many complaints were received overall categorised by topic/reason. The main reasons for complaints received are Quality of Service and Decision Made.
- 2.17 The target response time for complaints is 21 days. The average time to respond to complaints in 2020/21 was 8.2 days compared to 6.6 days and 7.3 days the previous year's. This is still well below our 21 day target. The majority of waste complaints are usually resolved quickly and some on the day they have been received which brings the average response time down whereas more complicated Planning and Development and Enforcement complaints take longer to investigate. During 2020/21 no complaint responses have taken longer than 21 days.
- 2.18 It should be noted that some of the complaints received are becoming more and more complex requiring in-depth information gathering and investigation. This factor has had an impact on the length of time taken to respond to some complaints. During 2020/21 a number of complex complaints have been investigated.
- 2.19 Of the 178 complaints received, 50 (28%) were upheld with the Council being found at fault by the independent officer following their investigation. This is a decrease compared to the previous year where 71 (37%) of the complaints received were upheld. Waste complaints have a big effect on the overall upheld percentage with 25 out of the 45 complaints received being upheld, so 50% of all complaints upheld were in relation to Waste Services which usually involve repeated missed bin collections, failed assisted collections, staff behaviour and damage caused amongst other issues. A data breach incident that arose via the Virtual Mail Room used by the Council Tax team has had a

direct impact on the number of upheld complaints in 2020/21. As soon as the issue was identified it was resolved but several complaints were received when affected customers were written to, the complaints were upheld but the data breach was not seen as being significant enough to warrant further action in terms of the individual customers involved. The matter was reported to the ICO as required.

2.20 The full breakdown of the number of complaints upheld per service can be found in the table in **Appendix D**.

2.21 Further and more detailed information on all compliments, comments and complaints received and upheld throughout the year can be found in the previously published Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports for 2020/21. These reports also include specific detail on the improvement actions that were made following complaints being upheld and can be found on the West Lindsey District Council website via the following link - <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/my-council/have-your-say/comments-compliments-and-complaints/>

Overall Customer Feedback Statistics

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

Overall Figures	Direction of Travel	TOTALS/AVERAGES			
		2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Complaints	↓	178	187	146	168
Compliments	↑	784	675	505	402
Comments	↓	64	73	139	79
Average number of days to respond	↑	8.2 days	6.6 days	7.3 days	5.8 days
WLDC at Fault	↓	50	71	52	84
% WLDC at Fault	↓	28%	37%	35%	50%

Customer Feedback Governance and Reporting

2.23 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 as well as customer satisfaction levels.
- Monthly reports on feedback received are shared with each service.
- Quarterly Customer Feedback and demand reports are produced for the Management Team and Service Team Managers.

- 2.24 Regular reports are submitted to the Management Team.
- 2.25 The Quality Monitoring Board discusses and oversees decisions on complex and sensitive complaints where high risk or reputational issues are involved. The QMB will agree any resolution or action required.
- 2.26 Quarterly Voice of Customer Reports are published to all Team Managers and Officers and via the regular Members newsletter to our Councillors.
- 2.27 This Annual Voice of the Customer Report is presented to the Management Team, Governance and Audit Committee and the Wider Management Team.
- 2.28 A report on the Annual Local Government Ombudsman letter will be presented to the Management Team and Governance and Audit Committee at a later date in the year.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints (LGO)

- 2.29 Between April 2020 and March 2021 internal records indicate that a total of 13 enquiries have been made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO), this will be confirmed once the Annual LGO letter is received later this year. This is a slight increase compared to the previous period where 10 enquiries were made.
- 2.30 All but 2 of the enquiries made have now been closed with final decisions being received.
- 2.31 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 2020/21 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 later in 2021.

LGO Outcome	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Not investigated	9	7	8
Not found to be at fault	1	3	5
Fault identified	1	0	3
Still under investigation	2	0	0

- 2.32 The number of complaints referred to the LGO where they decided not to investigate has increased this year. Half of the complaints referred to the LGO this year have been in relation to Planning and Development, the LGO have investigated one of these but no fault was found, the other six complaints were not investigated.
- 2.33 The LGO upheld one of the complaints referred to them during the 2020/21 period. This complaint was relating to ASB and noise nuisance.
- 2.34 The table in **Appendix E** illustrates which services the complaints referred to the LGO relate to.
- 2.35 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 2020/21 and in the forthcoming Annual LGO Report.

- 2.36 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.
- 2.37 The LGO identified fault in one of the complaints referred to them in the last year which related to ASB and noise nuisance. The LGO made various recommendations which have now been completed including carrying out a noise investigation, a review of and amendments to policies and procedures, in particular around multi agency involvement, improvements in record keeping around decisions made and a £450 payment to the complainant for the time taken and trouble experienced.
- 2.38 When a complaint is referred to the LGO there is no financial cost to the authority, unless the LGO find fault recommends that a payment is awarded. One payment of £450 was made in 2020/21.

Insights into Action

- 2.39 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 shared with 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. The Customer Experience Officer will assist with implementing the improvements where possible. Over time all suggested improvements are gathered into reports which are prioritised and fed into relevant projects and service redesign work.
- 2.40 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 2020/21 period many improvement actions have been implemented including changes in processes, procedure reviews, updates to the website, external systems and the continued monitoring 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 2020/21.
- 2.41 Some of the more significant learning and improvement actions from 2020/21 include updates to the Tell Us Once procedure, a review and amendments made to ASB and Environmental Protection procedures and policies and more focus on using the corporate call back facility rather than voicemail messages to ensure call back requests are recorded and can be monitored.

Following customer feedback received changes have been made to the options available on the telephone payment line for planning fees and earlier in the year alterations were made to the Covid message played on the telephone line when customers called us.

Several complaints have led to reminders being issued across all council services in relation to the correct policies and procedures that need to be followed. A reminder to planning officers of the administration process for issuing CiL liability letters was required as some inconsistency had been identified via feedback received.

Customer service officers were reminded of the importance of informing bulky waste customers of the collection window and the fact that it may be 48 hours in order to manage their expectations following contact from a frustrated resident.

When an issue was reported to us regarding planning application documents not being available on the WLDC website during the May Bank Holiday weekend the IT team identified the problem and implemented a new rule on the system to ensure the problem did not happen again.

Waste operatives have been reminded of the policies and guidelines in place which should be followed at all times. They have also been reminded what constitutes acceptable behaviour when out and about in the district and that they represent the council at all times so should conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.

Several updates to information on our website and online systems have been made throughout the year including the correction of confusing information on the bulky waste booking system, and the removal of a google link on the WLDC website which indicated that the recycling centres were open when they were actually closed at the beginning of the pandemic period.

Amendments were made to the templates used for Council Tax letters following feedback received from a customer regarding the information that was visible via the envelope window on a letter sent to them.

Appropriate improvements actions were put into place following the Virtual Mail Room data breach incident that affected Council Tax customers, the breach occurred outside of the council and was reported to the ICO and involved a company contracted to work for WLDC handling WLDC customer data. A handful of customers had further concerns regarding their privacy and the information that had been disclosed so logged formal complaints regarding the matter. It was determined that the breach was not severe enough to cause any lasting damage and the ICO were happy with our reports and follow up actions.

3.0 Customer Satisfaction Measurement

Satisfaction Surveys

- 3.1 The Council has been using an e-survey platform over the last few years which enables the 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

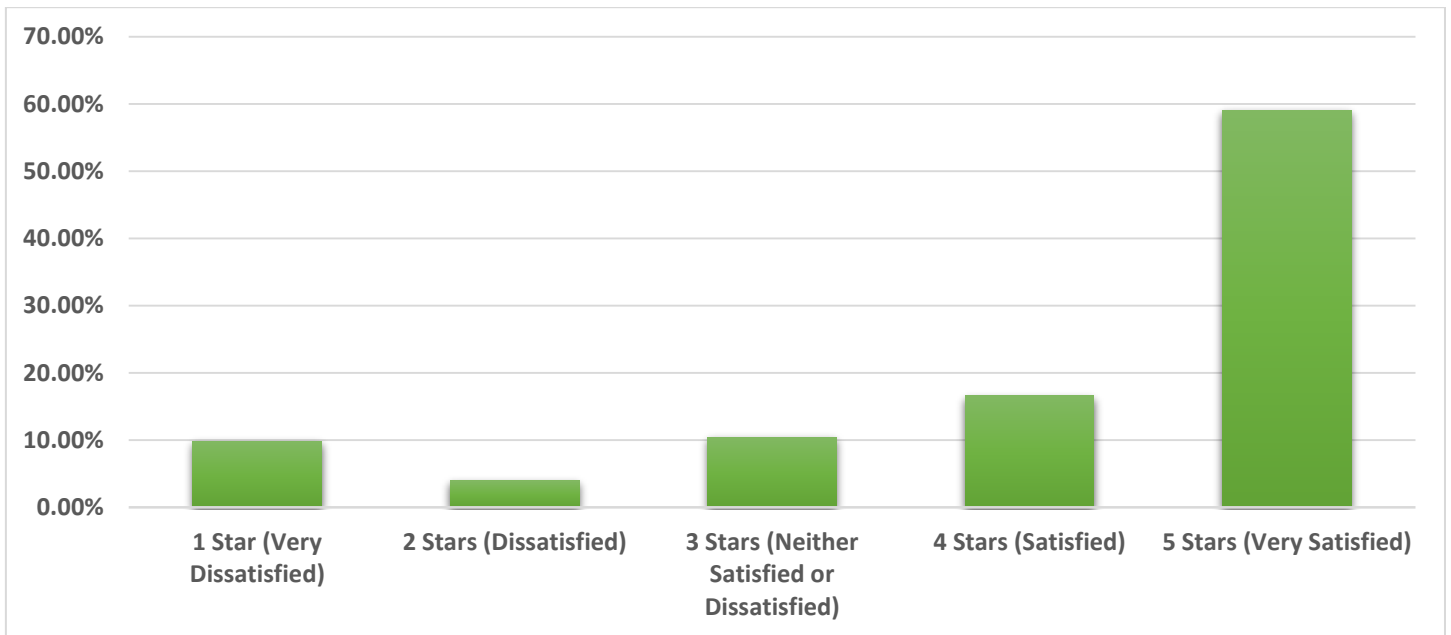
responses allows the Council to act on and solve those issues before they potentially escalate into a formal complaint.

- 3.5 Not all services customers are sent satisfaction surveys, and this has been limited further during the 2020/21 period due to the ongoing pandemic situation. During 2020/21 the services that have been surveyed are; Environmental Protection, Planning and Development, Planning Enforcement, Public Protection, Street Cleansing, Waste Services and Street Naming and Numbering. Work is ongoing to enable surveys across all Council services in the future. Note that surveys were temporarily suspended at the beginning of the pandemic period and commenced again in June 2020.
- 3.6 Other ad hoc surveys that have been carried out in 2020/21 include internal bespoke surveys for the IT, Finance and Projects and Performance teams and an external website consultation exercise using the survey platform has taken place. Customers signing up to the Green Garden Waste Service over the telephone have also been surveyed to establish why they chose to call us rather than subscribe online, this information will be used to improve the online facilities provided by the council in the future.

Satisfaction Levels

- 3.7 During the 2020/21 period from June 2020 to March 2021 a total of 4,272 satisfaction surveys were sent out and 873 responses were received, giving a response rate of 20% which is an increase compared to the previous year where the response rate was 18%. The overall satisfaction rating for 2020/21 is 75.72% this is a slight decrease compared the previous year where overall satisfaction was 77.04%. Given the ongoing lockdown restrictions throughout the 2020/21 period we expected to see fluctuations in customer satisfaction levels.
- 3.8 The majority of surveys are sent to waste services customers as they have the highest number of service requests recorded each week. Once response rates increase a satisfaction score will be able to be provided for individual services.
- 3.9 The charts below show the breakdown of all customer satisfaction scores received between June 2020 and March 2021.





3.10 Customers are asked to rate the service they received out of 5 stars (ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied) ratings of 4 stars and 5 stars are used to calculate the overall customer satisfaction score of **75.72%**. This equates to an overall star rating of 4.1 Stars.



3.11 High satisfaction scores have been given where customers have appreciated that we have done what we said we would when we said we would. They are happy when they have been able to speak to helpful, understanding, polite and friendly staff on the phone who have been able to help with their query there and then. Customers who have provided a 5 star rating have left comments regarding the speed of service, being kept updated and regularly informed and the professionalism, efficiency and politeness of staff they have dealt with.

3.12 Low satisfaction scores have been given where customers are disappointed that things have not happened as quickly as they should have done. Low scores have also been received where customers would have liked more communication or human contact, comments have also been received where customers have not received call backs, updates or a response to their problem.

3.13 In order to improve the overall satisfaction score any low star ratings received where comments have been submitted are analysed and are fed into the customer feedback system where improvement actions are recorded. If required, changes to processes and procedures are made and all relevant comments are fed into the service redesign work which is currently taking place. Any concerning comments received are followed up and logged as formal customer feedback.

4.0 Demand Analysis

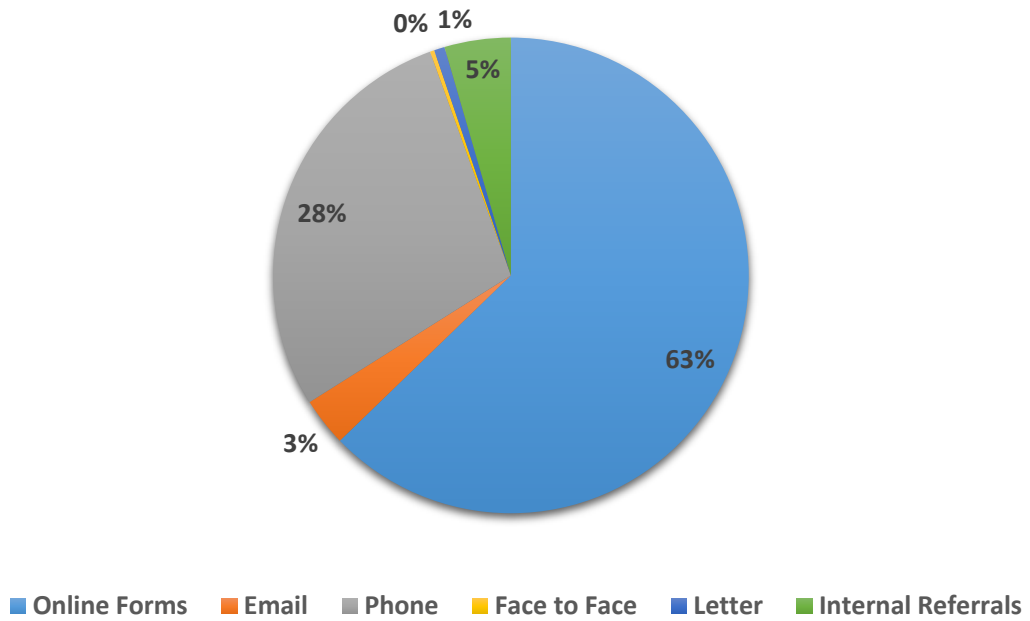
- 4.1 The demand analysis part of this report focuses the data available surrounding customer contact points. This includes data collected around telephony, face to face interactions, the website, payments and how service requests are received. Analysing this information can show how customers are choosing to interact with the council and through which channels. It should be noted that demand overall has decreased during 2020/21 due to the pandemic situation and face to face services being limited. The temporary closure of the Trinity Arts Centre has had an effect on telephone and online demand as customers have not been making contact to make show and performance bookings.

Service Requests and Customer Contact Methods

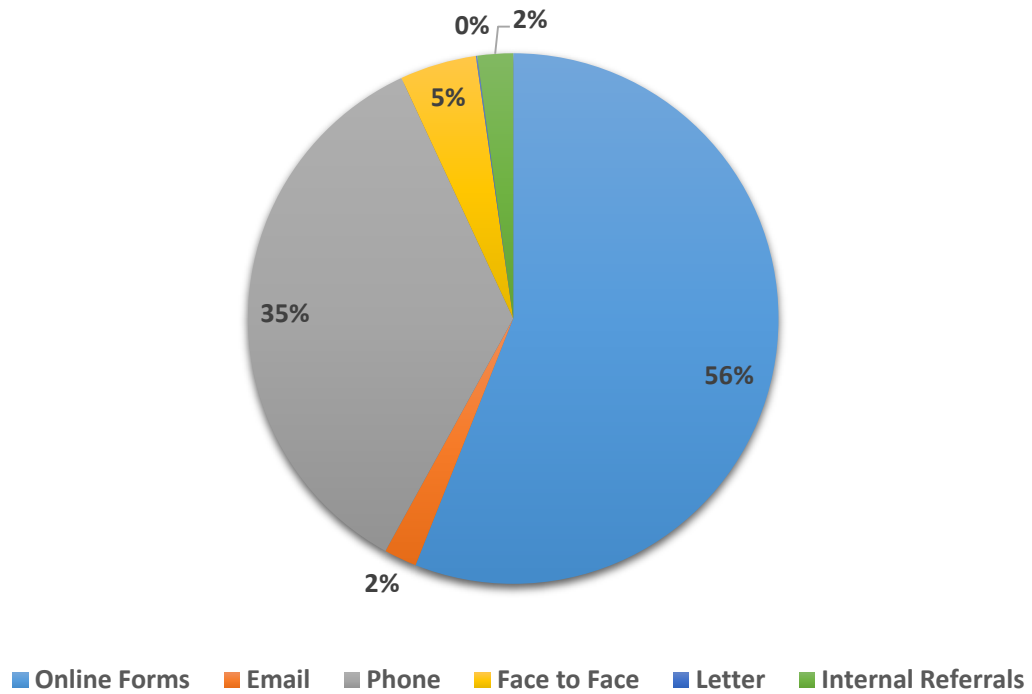
- 4.2 Service requests can be made by customers through various channels. For example telephone, online forms, at the Guildhall and email. It is important to understand how customers are making requests so the receipt of these can be resourced adequately and appropriately.
- 4.3 Currently the method 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 number of service requests received recorded for 2020/21 is 41,080 which is an increase compared to the previous year where 34,738 were recorded. This is an increase of 6,342 (18%) (Note - these figures include GW subscription requests)
- 4.5 The overall breakdown of the main contact channels used for service requests made to the teams mentioned above during 2020/21 is: 28.42% from phone, 62.77% from online forms, 3.29% from email and 4.51% from internal referrals. These figures differ from the previous year as there has been very little face to face contact. Online service requests and requests via email have increased and the number of internal referrals has risen. This is due to the nature of work being carried out during the pandemic and more internal referrals being made from officer visits that have been carried out in relation to Covid restriction monitoring. As with previous years the majority of customers (over 90% in 2020/21) make contact with us via the phone and online forms. The charts below illustrates the full breakdown of all contact channels used in 2020/21 compared with the previous year:

Contact Method	2020/21	2019/20	
Online Forms	62.77% (25,787)	56.00% (19,455)	Increase of 6.77%
Email	3.29% (1,351)	2.00% (694)	Increase of 1.29%
Phone	28.42% (11,674)	35.07% (12,183)	Decrease of 6.65%
Face to Face	0.29% (121)	4.67% (1,624)	Decrease of 4.38%
Letter	0.72% (296)	0.08% (28)	Increase of 0.64%
Internal Referrals	4.51% (1851)	2.17% (754)	Increase of 1.98%
Total number of service requests received	41,080	34,738	Increase of 18% (6,324)

Service Request Contact Methods 2020/21

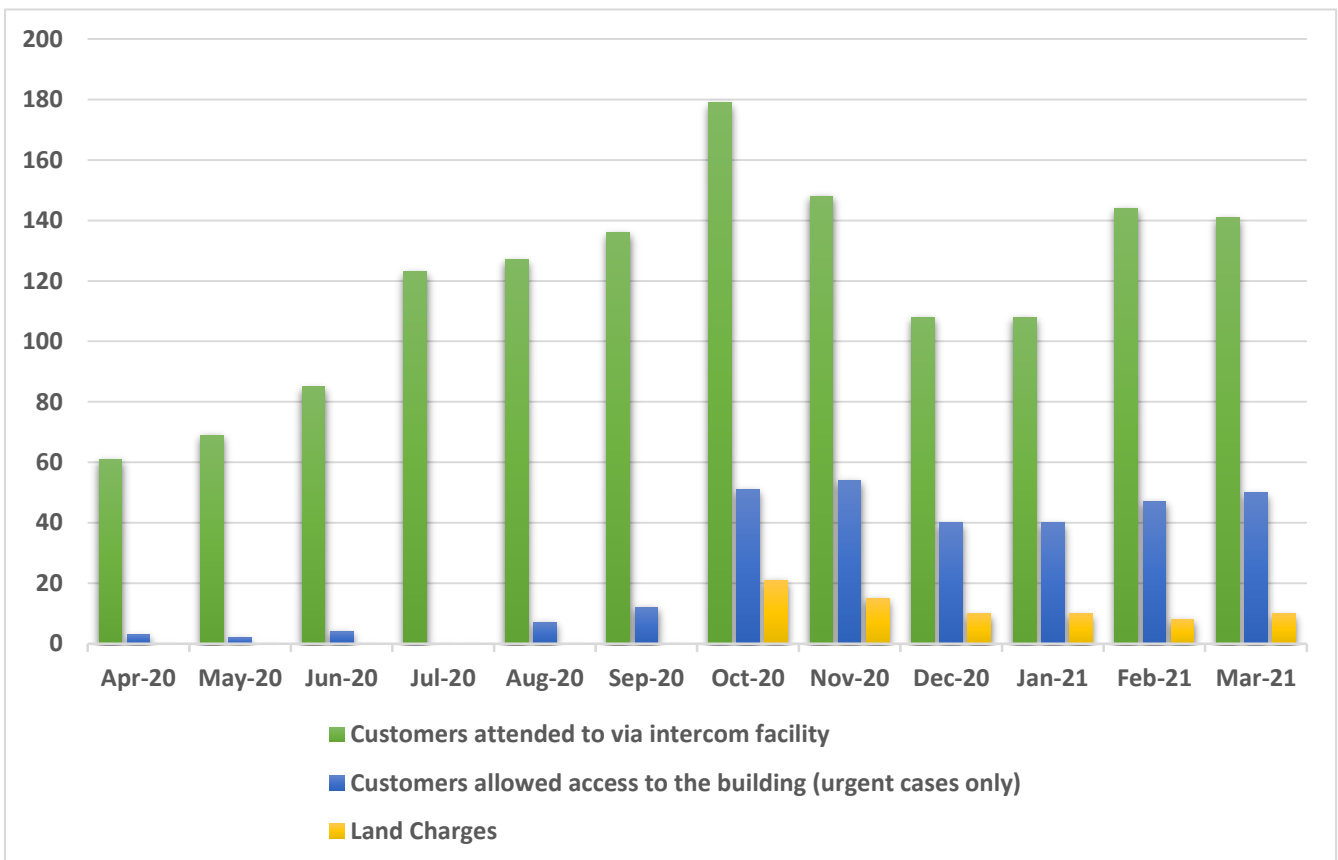


Service Request Contact methods 2019/20



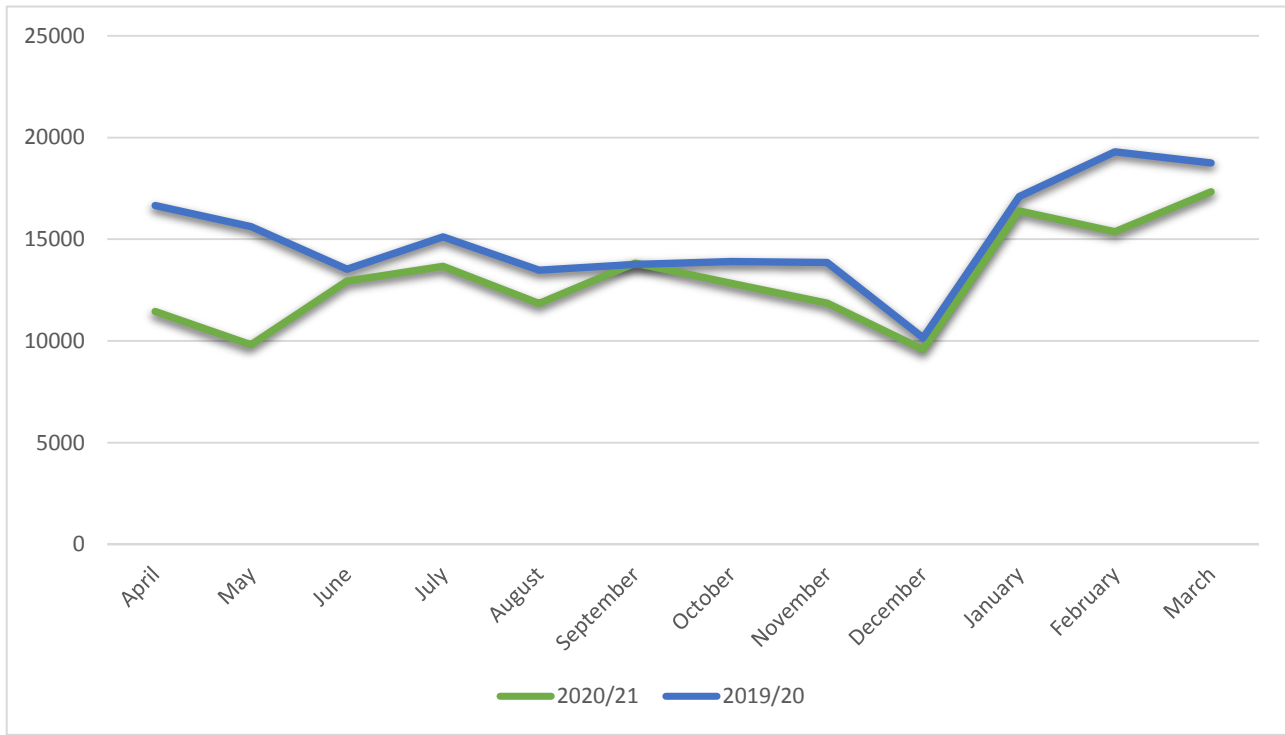
Face to Face Demand

- 4.6 The number of customers that choose to come into reception is historically relatively low as many now choose to request services through other means. Due to the pandemic and the restrictions in place the Guildhall’s main entrance was closed in March 2020 and face to face contact was limited to vulnerable and emergency customers only. An intercom facility was installed at the entrance so that customers could be assisted by the remaining members of the customer services team from a safe distance and within social distance guidelines. Therefore face to face demand in the 2020/21 period has been very low and comparison to previous years would have little value. It is recognised that a face to face service will always be required as customers need the choice available, plans will need to be put in place to reinstate face to face services in some form but the pandemic may have assisted with the shift to more online activity. A higher number of customers may choose to use online services now they are confident in doing so rather than visiting the Guildhall for a face to face service.
- 4.7 In October 2020, in order to improve performance the Land Charges team started seeing agents to enable them to undertake LLC searches via an appointment system.
- 4.8 The graph below shows how many customers were attended to via the intercom and how many customers were allowed access to the building each month, from October 2020 the number of Land Charges appointments are included. As you can see the number of customers approaching the Guildhall for assistance increased as lockdown restrictions started to ease.



Telephone Demand

4.9 The graph below illustrates telephone demand each month for 2020/21 compared to the previous year:



4.10 Overall telephone demand has decreased during 2020/21 compared to the previous year. The number of calls received has been impacted by the temporary closure of the Trinity Arts Centre as customers have not been calling to book tickets to shows and performances. The decrease in calls received has also been affected by the temporary suspension of services at the beginning of the pandemic, a decrease in enquiries to the elections service and council tax team and a change in customer behaviour during April and May 2020 when a significant drop in calls received was recorded.

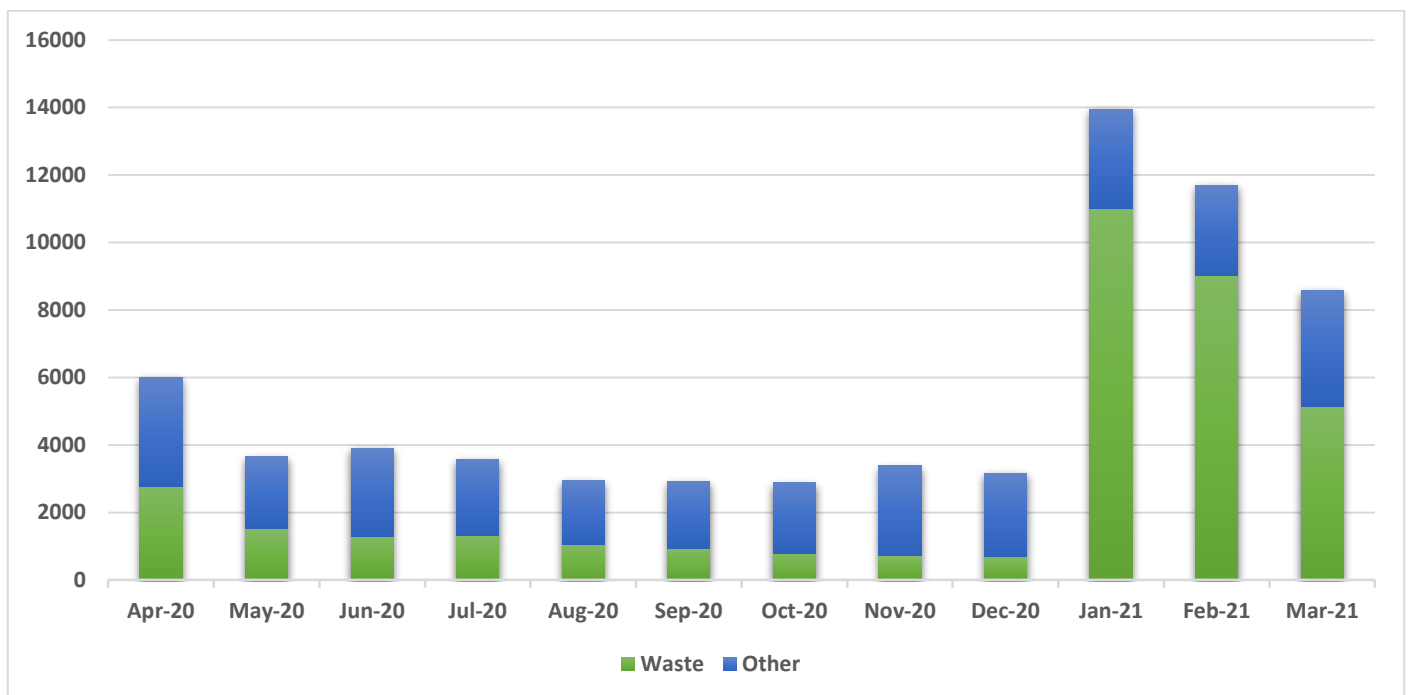
During 2020/21 156,915 calls were received across the whole council compared to 181,248 in 2019/20. This is a 13% decrease. Telephone demand always increases dramatically during January, February and March during the Green Garden Waste Service sign up period.

4.11 On average 80% of all calls received across the council were answered and handled during 2020/21, this is a slight decrease compared to the previous year where 82% of all calls were answered and handled. (Note – unanswered call figures include calls which go through to voicemail services).

Online Demand

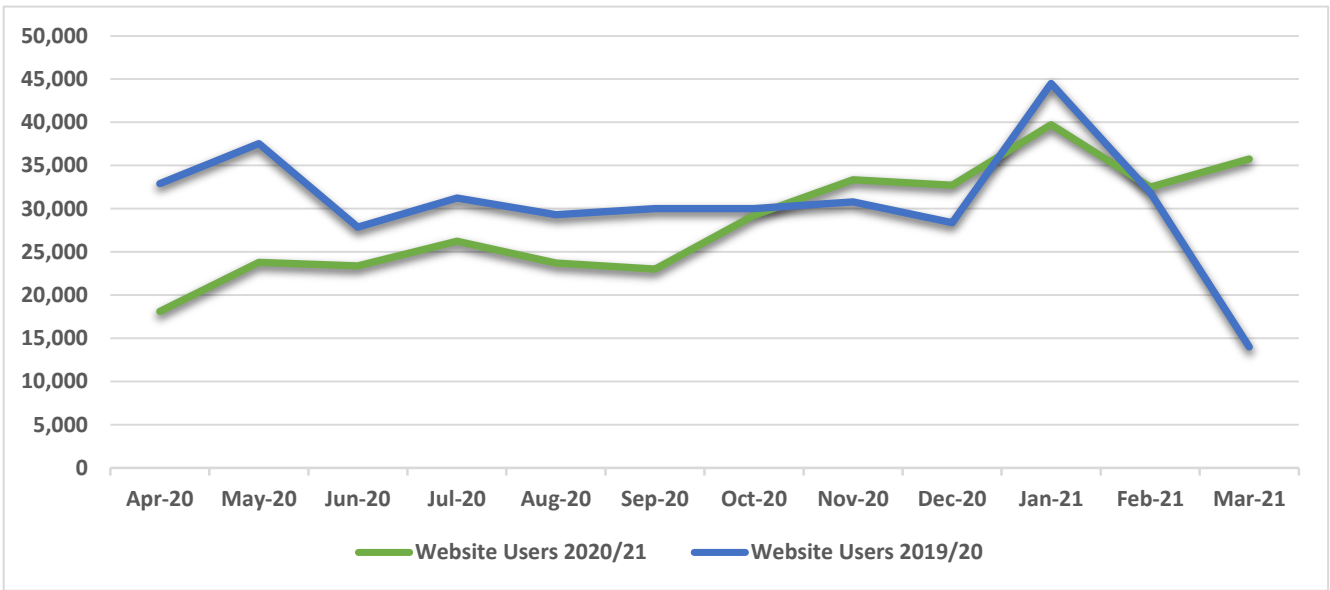
4.12 Customers can request or subscribe to a service via the Council website. The most visited pages on the website include the Green Garden Waste Service pages during the subscription period and the second most popular pages are relating to Planning and Development.

4.13 There has been an increase in the number of service requests made via online forms during the 2020/21 period. In total 66,644 online requests were received compared to 55,969 the previous year. The graph below illustrates how many online requests were received each month during 2020/21 broken down by waste requests and other requests. The increases in January, February and March are due to Green Garden Waste Subscriptions.

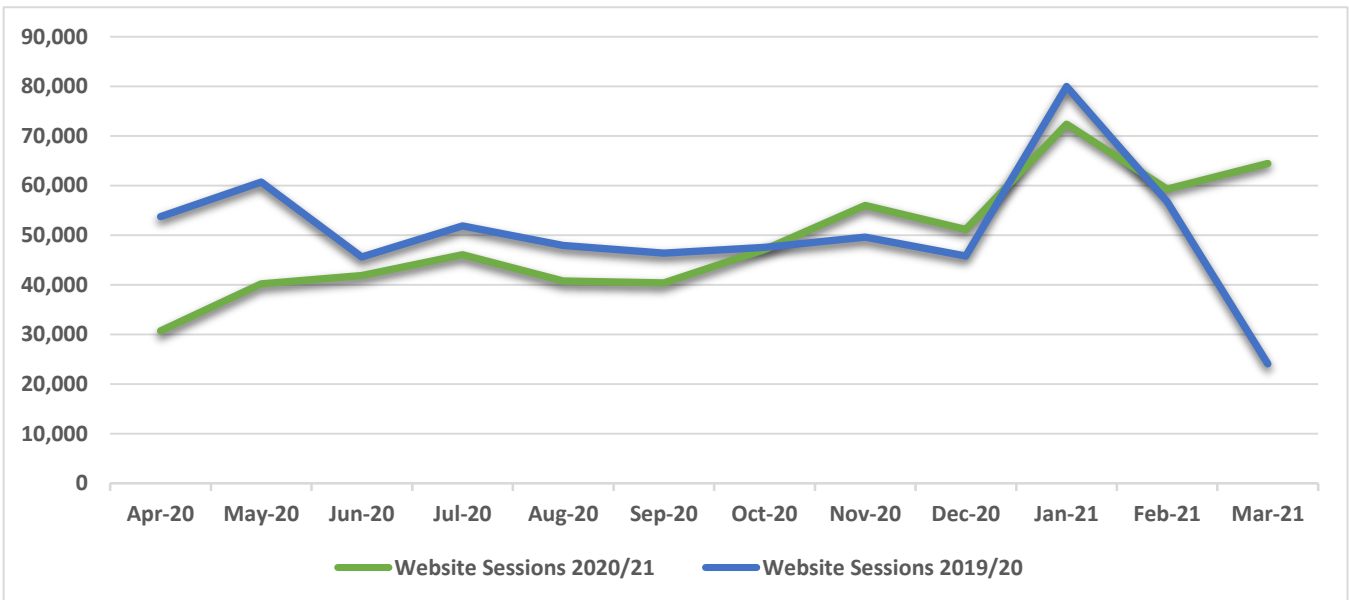


4.14 The graph below illustrates the number of individual website users each month compared to the previous year. As you can see there has been an overall decrease in the number of users each month and as with telephone contact, a dramatic increase in users during the peak of the Green Garden Waste subscription period in January 2021.

4.15 When both telephone and online demand is compared it is evident that during 2020/21 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.



4.16 The graph below illustrates the number of website session per month. As with the number of website users, during 2020/21 there has been a decrease overall. 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 and that they can access the services they require 24/7.



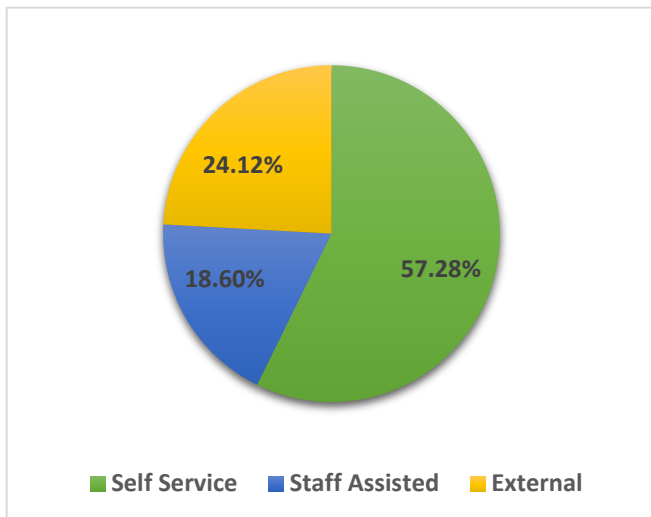
Payment Methods

4.17 The methods in which customers make payments to the Council can be classified into three categories; Self-Serve, Staff Assisted Payments and External Payments.

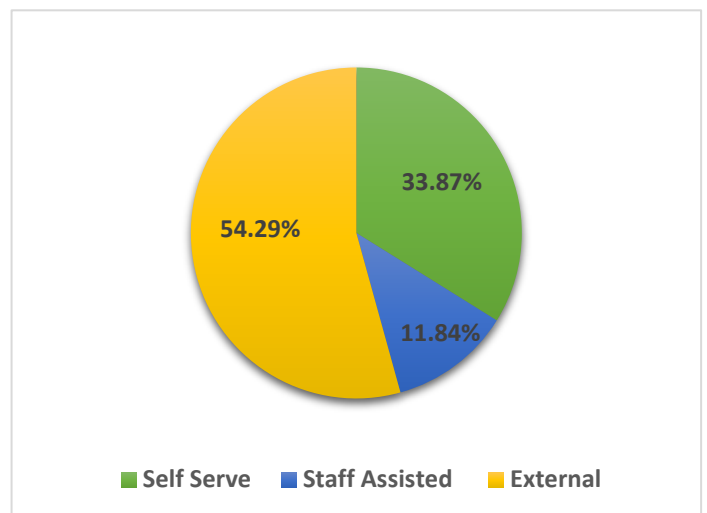
4.18 Self-Serve payments include payments taken over the website, the kiosk in reception and the automated telephone payment line. Staff Assisted payments include payments over the phone, postal cheques and small amounts of cash taken face to face. External Payments include bank account payments (but not direct debit payments), Post Office payments and PayPal.

4.19 In the 2020/21 period the payments have consisted of 57.28% Self-Serve Payments, this is a big increase compared to last year which is due to the implementation and more frequent use of the automated payment facility. 18.60% of payments were Staff-Assisted, this has increased compared to the previous period due to more people paying choosing to pay by telephone. The volume of External Payments has decreased compared to the previous period at 24.12%. The breakdown of payment methods is illustrated in the chart below.

Payment Methods 2020/21



Payment Methods 2019/20



4.20 Going forward it is anticipated that more customers will use the automated payment facility or make payments online as they become more confident and satisfied that it is a secure method to use.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 2020/21 has been a difficult year for everyone due to the pandemic situation and lockdown restrictions in place. WLDC officers have had to adapt to new ways of working with little notice and have continued to provide council services in unprecedented circumstances. Fluctuations in customer satisfaction is to be expected.

Overall we have received more positive feedback from our customers during the 2020/21 period, there has been a particular focus on gratitude for services continuing with little disruption during the pandemic, especially for the waste services department. Assistance that has been provided during the pandemic has been praised, many messages of thanks have been received for the Growth and Regeneration team from businesses that have been assisted with grant funding.

The number of complaints received in 2020/21 has decreased compared to previous years and a fewer number of complaints have been upheld, this is a positive outcome in what has been a difficult and frustrating year for all. Despite this improvements have continued to be made where possible.

The 2019/20 period has seen a decrease in overall customer contact and demand, the temporary pause on face to face contact and temporary closure of the Trinity Arts Centre has affected overall telephone and online contact throughout the year.

The methods in which customers contact us have changed in 2020/21 with more online self-service methods being utilised by customers 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. We need to make it as easy as possible for our customers to interact with us seven days and week and 24 hours a day.

The information within this report provides important input into the delivery of the in progress Customer Experience Strategy (which will be presented to members before implementation), 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.

Appendix A - Compliments received per Service 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 and 2018/19

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Customer Services	168	145	113
Waste Services	145	81	59
Planning and Development	126	159	103
Growth and Regeneration	55	12	6
Trees and Conservation	46	12	1
Street Cleansing	44	47	60
Revenues (Council Tax)	26	15	19
Home Choices	15	10	15
Benefits	14	11	11
Building Control	14	21	32
Customer Experience	13	7	3
Environmental Protection	12	11	6
System Development	11	6	5
Planning Enforcement	9	6	4
DFG's	9	2	0
Food, Health and Safety	8	19	6
Local Land Charges	8	5	7
Arts and Leisure	7	17	16
Communications Team	7	0	1
Management Team	7	1	0
Crematorium	6	3	0
Licensing	6	11	8
WLDC in general	6	1	0
Communities	5	10	3
Property Services	4	8	6
Housing Enforcement	3	3	9
Member and Support Services	3	36	3
Cemetery	2	2	1
Financial Creditors and Debtors	2	1	1
Out of Scope	2	0	0
HR	1	0	0
Community Safety	0	7	4
Electoral Services	0	1	0
Energy	0	0	1
Public Health Funerals	0	3	1
Stray Dogs (Customer Services)	0	0	0
Tourism	0	1	0
Wellbeing and Health	0	0	1
Projects and Performance	0	1	0

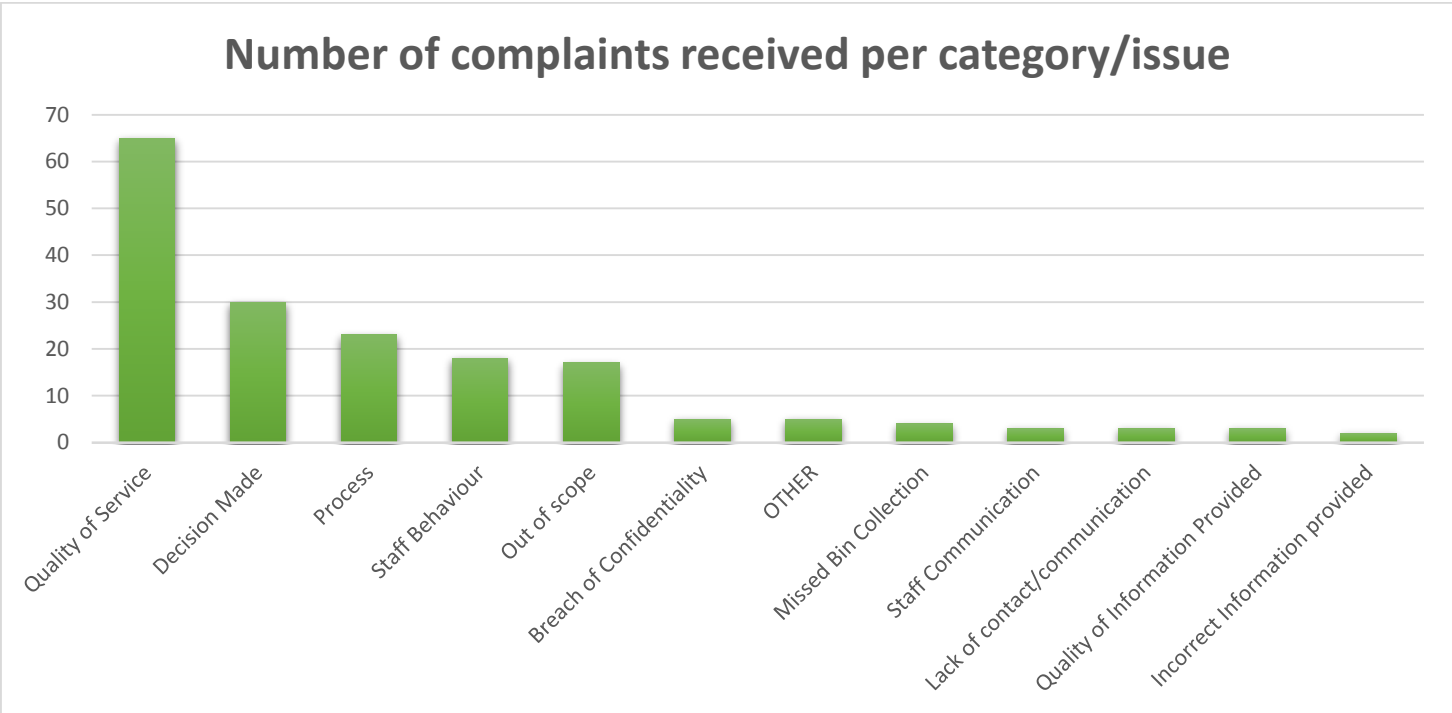
Appendix B - Comments received per Service 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 and 2018/19

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Waste Services	26	33	42
System Development	8	4	37
Out of Scope	8	3	2
Customer Services	5	2	6
Planning and Development	4	2	4
Revenues (Council Tax)	3	4	4
Property Services	2	2	7
Street Cleansing	2	0	12
Arts and Leisure	1	14	6
Community Safety	1	0	0
Food, Health and Safety	1	0	0
Management Team	1	1	1
Trees and Conservation	1	0	0
WLDC in general	1	0	0
Benefits	0	1	0
Building Control	0	0	2
Cemetery	0	0	0
Communications Team	0	0	0
Communities	0	1	1
Crematorium	0	0	0
Customer Experience	0	0	0
Electoral Services	0	0	1
Energy	0	1	0
Environmental Protection	0	1	6
Financial Creditors and Debtors	0	0	0
Growth and Regeneration	0	2	1
Home Choices	0	0	0
Housing Enforcement	0	1	0
HR	0	0	0
Internal Confidential Issues	0	0	0
Licensing	0	0	0
Local Land Charges	0	0	0
Member and Support Services	0	0	2
Planning Enforcement	0	0	5
Public Health Funerals	0	0	0
Stray Dogs (Customer Services)	0	0	0
Tourism	0	0	0
Wellbeing and Health	0	0	0

Appendix C - Complaints received per Service 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 and 2018/19

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Waste Services	45	58	29
Planning and Development	42	22	26
Out of Scope	20	22	8
Planning Enforcement	14	12	13
Environmental Protection	9	6	5
Revenues (Council Tax)	9	6	15
Community Safety	5	1	0
Customer Services	4	8	10
Street Cleansing	4	3	3
Benefits	3	5	3
DFG's	3	0	0
Food, Health and Safety	2	0	0
Home Choices	2	4	7
Housing Enforcement	2	10	5
Member and Support Services	2	0	0
Property Services	2	3	4
System Development	2	0	3
Trees and Conservation	2	1	0
WLDC in general	2	0	0
Arts and Leisure	1	19	9
Building Control	1	0	1
Growth and Regeneration	1	2	1
Licensing	1	0	0
Communications Team	0	1	0
Communities	0	1	0
Financial Creditors and Debtors	0	2	1
Local Land Charges	0	0	1
Markets	0	1	0

Appendix C Continued - Complaint Categories (topics/reasons) 2020/21



Appendix D – Upheld Complaints per Service 2020/21

	Number of Complaints received	Number of Partially upheld complaints	Number of Fully upheld complaints	Number of complaints where some fault identified	Upheld % by Service
Waste Services	45	2	23	25	55.56%
Planning and Development	42	3	4	7	16.67%
Out of Scope	20	0	1	1	5.00%
Planning Enforcement	14	0	1	1	7.14%
Environmental Protection	9	2	0	2	22.22%
Revenues (Council Tax)	9	2	3	5	55.56%
Community Safety	5	0	1	1	20.00%
Customer Services	4	1	2	3	75.00%
Street Cleansing	4	0	1	1	25.00%
Benefits	3	0	0	0	0.00%
DFG's	3	0	0	0	0.00%
Food, Health and Safety	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Home Choices	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Housing Enforcement	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Member and Support Services	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Property Services	2	0	0	0	0.00%
System Development	2	0	1	1	50.00%
Trees and Conservation	2	0	1	1	50.00%
WLDC in general	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Arts and Leisure	1	0	0	0	0.00%
Building Control	1	1	0	1	100.00%
Growth and Regeneration	1	1	0	1	100.00%
Licensing	1	0	0	0	0.00%

Appendix E – Complaints referred to the LGO by service 2020/21

Service	Number of complaints referred to the LGO	Status or Decision Made
Planning and Development	7	1 x complaint investigated - No Fault identified
		The LGO decided not to investigate 6 x complaints
Planning Enforcement	2	The LGO decided not to investigate both complaints
Environmental Protection	2	The LGO are still investigating these 2 x complaints
ASB and Noise	1	Complaint investigated - upheld and fault identified
Housing Enforcement	1	The LGO decided not to investigate this complaint