



**Governance and Audit
Committee**

Tuesday 19th July 2022

Annual Voice of the Customer Report 2021/22

Report by:	Director of Commercial & Operational Services
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Purpose / Summary:	To summarise customer feedback received during the year 2021/22 and analyse customer contact demand data to provide a clear view of the voice of the customer.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- **Members welcome 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/50/23/GA/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 Feedback Policy
- 2021/22 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 :
Not Applicable

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 2021 to March 2022**

Contents

Executive Summary	6
1.0 Introduction	7
What is the Voice of the Customer?.....	7
2.0 Customer Feedback.....	8
Customer Experience Policy and Customer Feedback	8
Compliments	8
Comments	9
Complaints	10
Overall Customer Feedback Statistics.....	13
Customer Feedback Governance and Reporting	13
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints (LGSCO)	14
Insights into Action – Learning and Improvement Actions	15
3.0 Customer Satisfaction Measurement.....	20
Satisfaction Surveys.....	20
Satisfaction Levels	20
4.0 Demand Analysis	22
Service Requests and Customer Contact Methods	22
Face to Face Demand	24
Telephone Demand.....	25
Online Customer Demand	26
Online Service Requests.....	26
West Lindsey District Council Website Usage	26
Payment Methods	28
5.0 Conclusion	29
Appendix A - Compliments received per Service 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 and 2019/20.....	31
Appendix B - Comments received per Service 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 and 2019/20.....	32
Appendix C - Complaints received per Service 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 and 2019/20.....	33
Appendix C Continued - Complaint Categories (topics/reasons) 2021/22	33
Appendix D – Upheld Complaints per Service 2021/22	34
Appendix E – Complaints referred to the LGSCO by service 2021/22	35

Executive Summary

2021/22 saw an increase in customer feedback and customer demand compared to the previous year.

There was an increase in the number compliments received, a small decrease in the number of complaints received and a large increase in the number of comments received. The average response time for complaints increased slightly but the number of upheld complaints decreased.

More information on learning from complaints has been included in this years report along with examples of the different types of complaints received.

Customer satisfaction has decreased slightly compared to the previous year, for 2021/22 the satisfaction score for the main customer facing services was 74%.

Customer demand has increased throughout the year, telephone and online methods continue to be the preferred method of contact with over 90% of customers utilising those channels.

Although face to face contact was limited at the beginning of the 2021/22 period it increased towards the end with more people attending the Guildhall building, this was also affected by the Job Centre Plus seeing more customers on an appointment basis.

Overall customer contact and demand, and in particular the number of telephone calls received increased dramatically from February to March 2022. This was due to several factors including all residents being sent a letter in February 2022 regarding the new recycling service implementation, the start of the Green Garden Waste Period along with an increase in enquiries in relation to the Household Support Fund, the Council Tax Energy Rebate and the situation in Ukraine.

The remainder of this report explores the above in more detail.

Following the increase in customer feedback being received the Customer Experience Officer has benefited from extra resource during the last 12 months. A customer service officer has been assisting with the workload on a temporary basis and this is now being assessed with a view to making it into a permanent position.

1.0 Introduction

What is the Voice of the Customer?

- 1.1 The Voice of the Customer Report examines all customer feedback received across the Council and also considers a wider scope of customer views, customer demand data, customer opinions and expectations.
- 1.2 Information is collected via a number of different customer contact channels including data collected from day to day interactions as well as the compliments, comments and complaints received by the customer experience team and customer satisfaction survey responses.
- 1.3 The aim is to learn from the insight available and implement actionable solutions in order to deliver a better service for our customers, in line with the objectives of the Corporate Plan, and to drive continuous learning and improvement across all Council services. The data included within this report feeds into the T24 service redesign work that is ongoing.
- 1.4 The 2021/22 period started in March 2021 at the point when a national phased return out of the restrictions that had been in place during the Covid-19 pandemic began. The organisation remained cautious due to the risks still present, officers continued to work at home and only skeleton staff remained working in the guildhall building to ensure essential services could continue.
- 1.5 From October 2021 people began to return to the office, but officers were asked to only attend the Guildhall for essential work, a desk booking system was put into place to ensure social distancing could continue with only limited numbers working in the office building. The majority of services continued to operate on a virtual first basis.
- 1.6 In December 2021 measures were stepped up again following government messages in regards to a new Covid 19 variant and all officers were asked to remain working from home where possible.
- 1.7 Following a series of successful outdoor events earlier in 2021 at the Trinity Arts Centre began to open fully again from the beginning of December 2021 for screened events that remained socially distanced.
- 1.8 Contact with the Council increased during Quarter 1 due to the Covid Hardship Grant payments that were being administered by the revenues and benefits team. At the beginning of 2022 we continued to receive a higher number of telephone queries in relation to the Household Support Fund and the Council Tax Energy Rebate along with enquiries in regards to the Ukraine situation.
- 1.9 Given the ongoing changes and lockdown restrictions in place during the 2021/22 period we would expect to see fluctuations in customer feedback and satisfaction levels.
- 1.10 The law for committee meetings changed on the 7th May 2021 and committee meetings returned to being held face to face rather than virtually. The first face to face meeting held was the planning committee on the 26th May 2021 and a full Council meeting was held at the Epic Centre on Monday 28th June 2021 which allowed a larger number of councillors to attend keeping in line with social distancing requirements.

2.0 Customer Feedback

Customer Experience Policy and Customer Feedback

- 2.1 All customer feedback received is processed in line with the West Lindsey District Council Customer Experience Policy Complaints Process and is responded to by the Customer Experience Officer.
- 2.2 All customer feedback received is recorded on a central system allowing for easier and more specific reporting and so that that meaningful comparison can take place. Customer feedback is logged by service and specific subjects or issues can be reported on making it easier to identify and examine trends and potential improvement actions.
- 2.3 When improvement actions are identified they are logged and are fed back to the relevant service managers for implementation, with the assistance of the Customer Experience Officer where appropriate. The action is tracked and service managers then report back to confirm the action has been implemented and advise of any outcomes. This improvement log also helps to identify any wider areas for improvement which can potentially be built into the service redesign work that is taking place. All of the actions identified in 2021/22 have been completed.
- 2.4 Another method used to gather customer feedback is via customer satisfaction surveys which are sent out on a weekly basis to customers that have received a service during the previous week. These surveys are sent to customers of the main customer facing services which include; waste services, street cleansing, planning and development, public protection, licensing, street naming and numbering and planning enforcement.

Compliments

- 2.5 When compliments are received it allows us to identify what is working well and which aspects of our services our customers appreciate the most. Compliments received are shared with teams and relevant officers, they encourage our officers to be the best they can and provide the highest standard of service possible. Compliments are used to embed good practise across all Council services.
- 2.6 The Council received a total of 1117 compliments between April 2021 and March 2022, this is an increase compared to the previous year when 784 were recorded.
- 2.7 The number of compliments received increased during the Quarter 4 period of 2021/22 due to the beginning of the Green Garden Waste Service sign up period and the communications that were being sent out in regards to the new recycling service being introduced. In turn this also led to an increase in the number of calls being received.
- 2.8 The services that receive the highest number of compliments are the main customer facing services; Customer Services, Waste Services and Planning and Development. The table in [Appendix A](#) shows how many compliments were received by each individual service in 2021/22 compared to the previous three years. It should be noted that compliments for these services are also taken from customer satisfaction survey responses received (which are not sent to every Council service) so a wider number of

customers have been asked for their views for some services in particular.

- 2.9 Compliments received are generally regarding the quality, speed and the efficiency of the service provided or officer professionalism including politeness, patience, knowledge and willingness to help. Customers appreciate it when we do what we say we are going to do when we say we are going to do it. If delays are expected they appreciate it when they are kept up to date and informed. Even where we do fail on the odd occasion if we identify the failure, admit to it and put it right customers will often still provide positive feedback in relation to the service they have received and how the matter was handled.
- 2.10 During 2021/22 a number of compliments were received for work carried out by the revenues and benefits teams combined. This was in relation to the Covid Hardship Grant payments that the teams administered during the Quarter 1 period. Member and Support Services also received an increase in praise for their efforts in getting face to face committee meetings back up and running safely and smoothly.

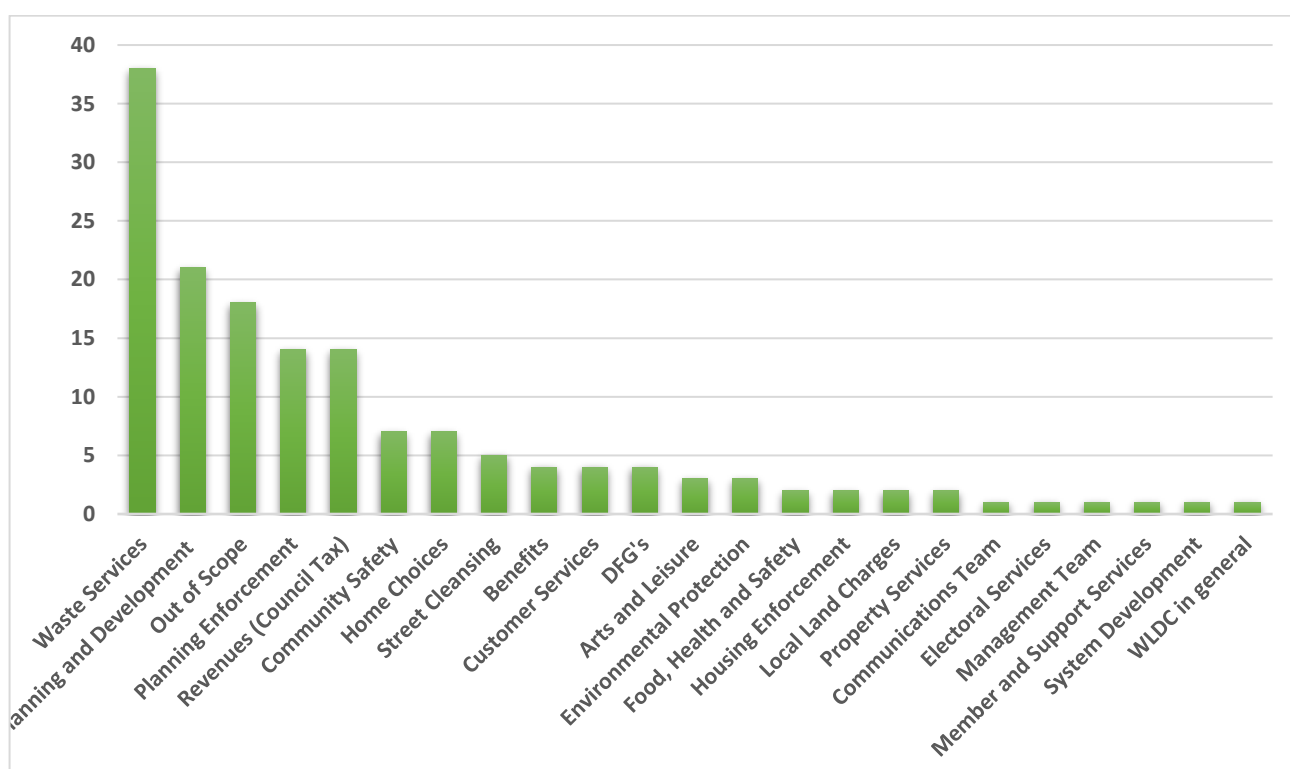
Comments

- 2.11 Whilst some feedback received may not be particularly praising our services or raising a complaint comments are still classed as important feedback as they provide useful insight and suggestions that may help to improve the services and experiences we provide.
- 2.12 Between April 2021 and March 2022, the Council received a total of 155 comments, this is an increase compared to previous years when 64 were received in 2020/21 and 73 in 2019/20. The table included in [Appendix B](#) shows how many comments were received by each service in 2021/22 compared to the previous three years.
- 2.13 A total of 63 comments were received during Quarter 4 in relation the Green Garden Waste Service and the implementation of the new recycling service. Comments included suggestions regarding the timing, number and duration of collections for the Green Garden Waste Service, with some customers suggesting that collections should start earlier in the year or continue on later into the winter season. These will be taken into account when the service is next reviewed and where appropriate communications in regards to why the collection dates are set as they are will be increased.
- 2.14 All residents were sent a letter regarding the implementation of the new recycling service in February 2022 which led to an increase in comments being received in relation to the new service, including concerns regarding the extra bin that would be provided, space to store the bin and the fact that residents were being asked to separate their waste more thoroughly than before. All comments received have been shared with the service managers and where possible and relevant a response has been provided to the customer.
- 2.15 Sometimes improvements can be made from comments received. During 2021/22 comments taken into account regarding the street cleansing service and how customers are not kept informed or made aware when a report of waste had been cleared have been considered and going forward customers will be made aware in real time when their report has been actioned. This is possible due to the new handheld technology that waste crews will be using that reports information through to customers accounts on the new Customer Relationship Management System (CRM). Comments had also been received regarding

planning service payments and how they could not be made online. Customer feedback was taken into account and a new system was implemented that now allows planning payments online via our website, therefore not restricting this to business hours only.

Complaints

- 2.16 Whilst complaints are perceived as negative feedback the Council still encourages and welcomes them as all feedback can potentially 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.
- 2.17 A total of 155 complaints were received between April 2021 and March 2022. This is a decrease compared to the previous year, 2020/21 when 178 complaints were received. 187 complaints were received in 2019/20 and 146 in 2018/19. The table in [Appendix C](#) shows how many complaints were received by each individual service in 2021/22 compared to the previous three years.
- 2.18 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.
- 2.19 The graph below illustrates the number of complaints received per service between April 2021 and March 2022:



- 2.20 In comparison to the previous year, complaints for waste services have decreased by 7, and complaints for planning and development have decreased by 50% from 42 in 2020/21 to 21 in 2021/22. The number of complaints received for planning enforcement has remained the same and complaints for revenues (council tax) have increased from 9 to 14 compared to 2020/21.
- 2.21 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.
- 2.22 It should be noted that a single occurrence of a missed bin collection would not be classed as a formal complaint, the only time missed bins are treated as formal complaints is when there has been a repeated issue of missed bins, normally 3 occurrences in a row or where we have failed to return for a missed bin within the 5 days promised. In these instances, further investigation into the reasons why it keeps occurring is required and it may not always be the waste crews that are at fault.
- 2.23 The target response time for complaints is 21 days. The 21 days stated is 21 days (not working days) the system used at the moment cannot distinguish between working days and none working days – when the complaints process is moved over to the new system this will be brought in line with other targets and changed to working days.
- 2.24 The average time to respond to complaints in 2021/22 was 8.3 days compared to 8.2 days and 7.3 days the previous years. 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 often take longer to investigate.
- 2.25 During 2021/22 five complaint responses took longer than 21 days. In July 2021 there were five out of time responses and in December 2021 two responses took longer than 21 days. These complaints were in relation to Planning and Development, Planning Enforcement and Housing Enforcement, the time taken to respond was affected by various aspects out of the Customer Experience Officers control including the amount of complex information that needed to be considered for some of the longer planning and development complaints submitted, officer availability due to annual leave and sickness as well as the Christmas and New Year holiday periods. All complainants were kept up to date throughout and were made aware of the delays expected.
- 2.26 Of the 155 complaints received, 46 (30%) were upheld with the Council deemed to be fully or partially at fault by the independent officer following their investigation. This is a similar percentage to the previous year when 50 (28%) of complaints received were upheld. Waste services complaints have a big effect on the overall upheld percentage with 19 out of the 46 that were upheld relating to the waste service. Upheld complaints for waste services include repeated missed bin collections, failed assisted collections, staff behaviour and damage caused amongst other issues.

2.27 The full breakdown of the number of complaints upheld per service can be found in the table in [Appendix D](#).

2.28 Complaints received can vary in nature, often they can be justified but there is little within the authorities control that can be done to resolve them, here are some examples of different scenarios;

a. A complaint that was justified and led to a clear change:

For example, several complaints were received in relation to a new waste initiative regarding sack presentation where signs had been erected and leaflets distributed to all households in the area as they had incorrect information printed on them leading to a lot of confusion, frustration, extra contact and feedback from customers. The signs and leaflets stated that sacks should be presented from 7am on collection day when they should have said by 7am on collection day.

When the error was identified the signs were replaced, new leaflets were distributed and social media messages were updated. Customers that had complained received an explanation and an apology for the inconvenience caused.

b. A complaint that was not justified that led to no changes being made:

For example, a complaint was dealt with regarding a planning application decision made and the fact that the application did not go to planning committee for decision.

Investigation found that the complaint was not justified as the decision had been made correctly and in line with planning guidelines, policy, plans and legislation and the application did not warrant being decided by committee.

The complaint was not upheld and no changes were made.

c. A complaint that was justified but we were unable to take any action:

For example, a complaint was dealt with where a customer was not happy that our enforcement team could not take action against a business that had painted their industrial fencing a new colour. The complaint stated that the colour used could be perceived as an eyesore and claimed it was not the colour that was given permission.

The complaint could be perceived as justified however, the enforcement team were not able to take action as the condition written in the planning permission was not specific enough in terms of the colour that should be used. This has been shared with the manager of the planning team who has in turn briefed the wider team.

2.29 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 2021/22. 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

2.30 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 compared to previous year	Totals/Averages				
		2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Complaints	↓	155	178	187	146	168
Compliments	↑	1117	784	675	505	402
Comments	↑	155	64	73	139	79
Average number of days to respond	↑	8.3 days	8.2 days	6.6 days	7.3 days	5.8 days
WLDC at Fault	↓	46	50	71	52	84
WLDC at Fault %	↑	30%	28%	38%	36%	50%

Customer Feedback Governance and Reporting

2.31 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.

2.32 Regular reports are submitted to the Management Team and monthly 'emerging issues' meetings are held with the Directors of Operational & Commercial Services and Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services.

2.33 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.

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

2.35 This Annual Voice of the Customer Report is presented to the Management Team, Governance and Audit Committee and the Wider Management Team.

2.36 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 (LGSCO)

- 2.37 Between April 2021 and March 2022 internal records indicate that a total of 10 complaint referrals were made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), this will be confirmed once the Annual LGSCO letter is received later this year. This is a slight decrease compared to the previous period where 13 enquiries were made.
- 2.38 All of the referrals made have now been closed with final decisions being received.
- 2.39 When a complaint is referred to the LGSCO they decide whether or not to investigate further. The table below shows the outcome of the complaints referred to them compared to the previous year. A report will follow later this year when the Annual LGSCO letter has been received which will detail the whole 2021/22 period of complaints to the LGSCO. 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 2022.

LGO Outcome	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Not investigated	3	9	7	8
Not found to be at fault	5	1	3	5
Fault identified	2	1	0	3
Still under investigation	0	2	0	0
Total	10	13	10	16

- 2.40 The number of complaints referred to the LGSCO where they decided not to investigate has decreased this year. Half (5) of the complaints referred to the LGSCO have been in relation to Planning and Development, the LGSCO have investigated three of these but no fault was found, the other two complaints were not investigated.
- 2.41 The LGSCO upheld two of the complaints referred to them during the 2021/22 period. These complaints were relating to Community Safety and Planning Enforcement cases.
- 2.42 Further and more detailed information on the complaints referred to the LGSCO throughout the year can be found in [Appendix E](#) and the previously published Quarterly Voice of the Customer Reports for 2021/22 and in the forthcoming Annual LGSCO Report.
- 2.43 Where fault is identified by the LGSCO 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 LGSCO.
- 2.44 The LGSCO identified fault in two of the complaints referred to them in the last year. The first was in relation to Planning Enforcement;

Mrs X complained the Council unnecessarily delayed in taking planning enforcement action against her neighbour. She also complained about how it updated her on its progress. The Council was at fault for allowing the case to drift for a short period of time. The Council will apologise to Mrs X. It has taken suitable action to prevent the fault occurring again.

The complainant was sent an apology and workload and resource issues were addressed by the Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager.

The second upheld complaint was in relation to Community Safety;

There is evidence of fault by the Council. The Community Protection Notice served on a neighbour due to anti-social behaviour was not worded in a way that it was enforceable. In addition, when the Council got legal advice on the notice, it did not review or revise it to ensure that it was relevant to the anti-social behaviour complained about. The Council's apology and revision of procedures on wording and reviewing notices remedies the injustice caused.

The complainant was sent an apology and the procedure for signing off Community Protection Notices was reviewed and updated with evidence being provided to the LGSCO.

- 2.45 When a complaint is referred to the LGSCO there is no financial cost to the authority, unless the LGSCO find fault and recommends that a payment is awarded. No compensation payments were made in 2021/22.

Insights into Action – Learning and Improvement Actions

- 2.46 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.
- 2.47 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 2021/22 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.
- 2.48 The table below includes details of the learning and improvement actions that have been identified during the 2021/22 period:

Planning Enforcement

Issue: There has been an increase in the number of complaints received and upheld regarding lack of contact, response or updates when customers have either made a report or are asking further queries.

Resolution: Potential causes are resource issues, increases in work load due to customers observing more as they are at home more or are cases more complex and therefore take longer to resolve. The Assistant Director and Team Managers were engaged with to identify how this

issue could be resolved, extra resource has been added to the team and procedures are being reviewed. There may be potential for some triage at first contact and more self-service be added into the process.

Planning Enforcement

Issue: There have been several complaints received regarding the fact that the enforcement team are unable to take any action, often because the condition that was put in place is not specific enough. This causes frustrations for the enforcement team, if conditions were more specific or better written then it would save time, make it easier for the enforcement team and would mean complaints would reduce.

Resolution: Why do planning officers not work more closely with the enforcement team when conditions are being written? This would make it much easier for the enforcement team in enforcing them and would reduce the number of complaints received leading to an improved customer experience and better efficiency overall. This has been raised with relevant Assistant Directors and Team Managers.

Planning Enforcement

Issue: Complaint investigations have identified that although flare is used for enforcement records all associated documents, including evidence and customer correspondence is saved on another system (Idox). Other teams store everything on flare, this makes it easy for anyone examining a case to see all information required without having to bother the officer for more information or explanation. When the LGSCO approach us for information they often request a copy of the full case record, when this is not all in one place this becomes a difficult and time consuming task.

Resolution: Since this issue was identified records have been updated and links have been made on cases so that Idox records can be easily accessed via flare.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Issue: Complaints have been received regarding delays to DFG applications and works. Investigations have found that the delays are not caused by WLDC, they are due to delays in LCC and Occupational Therapists completing their assessments. This is a part of the process which occurs prior to WLDC becoming involved.

Resolution: The team are aware of this issue and are working to ensure that applicants are made aware of the specific process and different stages involved in their application. The performance team will be examining the DFG process to see where improvements can be made and the performance indicators will be reviewed to ensure they are relevant.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Issue: Complaints have been received regarding the charges that are placed on a customer's property when they receive a DFG. Claims have been made that they have only found out about the charges once the work has been completed.

Resolution: The team are aware of this issue and are working to ensure that applicants are made aware of the charges that will be placed on their property from the outset so that they know what to expect and the charges do not come as a surprise. This information is included in the supporting letter that is sent to applicants with the application form and at the stage of approving the grant the land charge amount is detailed.

Planning and Development

Issue: There has been an increase in the number of complaints received regarding historical issues, some in relation to planning decisions that were made 10 to 20 years ago. These investigations have required several hours of senior officer time. When referred to the LGSCO they would not investigate the matter as they classed it as being out of time.

Resolution: The council can't reasonably be expected to investigate something that happened 10 or 20 years ago and therefore as a result the WLDC complaints process will be amended as follows to better explain what we can and cannot investigate and to reflect the LGSCO's investigation process:

What we cannot investigate:

We cannot look at a complaint if:

- *you have left it more than 12 months since knowing about the problem*
- *It is regarding a matter or decision that happened several years ago*
- *the matter has not affected you personally or caused you an injustice*
- *the issue affects most people in the council's area*
- *it is about employment or staffing matters (such as employment or disciplinary issues)*

Street Cleansing

Issue: Several customer satisfaction survey comments have been received regarding fly tipping reports and the fact that customers are not informed when they have been actioned. It has also been identified that when a fly tip is reported that WLDC can't remove because it is located on private land the customer is not made aware. This leads to them thinking that their report has been ignored and they leave a low satisfaction score.

Resolution: The historical system was not able to offer this function to resolve the issue but the new CRM system that is currently being set up and installed will be able to provide timely updates to customers when fly tipping has been reported to us and removed.

WLDC Officer Voicemail Boxes

Issue: A complaint investigation discovered that several voicemail boxes on officer extensions were full and there were messages that had not been listened to or actioned. This means that if a customer calls that extension and it is not answered they are not able to leave a voicemail message as the box is full.

Resolution: A reminder and guidance on how to use the voicemail service was sent out to Team Manager's to share with their teams, they were also asked to remind officers to action voicemail messages and delete them so that voicemail boxes do not become full. In future alerts will be sent to officers of full mailboxes advising action to be taken.

Planning and Development (Online Payments)

Issue: Following comments received regarding the automated phone line for payments and the fact that payments for planning services could not be completed online considerations took place into how this could work and be implemented.

Resolution: In November 2021 the facility to make planning payments online was made available making it easier for customers to make a planning payment 24/7 without having to wait until the phone lines open.

Revenues – Council Tax

Issue: A complaint received highlighted some confusion regarding the allocation of Empty Homes Discount, it transpired that a new property owner was not entitled to the discount and this was only known when full information had been received on the history of the property.

Resolution: Although this does not happen very often the team were briefed and were asked that as part of the process, when they are speaking to customers in future where this situation may arise, to advise and note that they have been advised that any discount awarded may have to be removed once full details are received in order to manage expectations.

Online Services – Waste Bookings

Issue: Comments and feedback has been received on a regular basis regarding issues with the online booking form for waste services such as bulky and sharps collections. Users on certain devices and browsers could not complete the process when it came to choosing a time or date. These customers then had to call us to complete their bookings.

Resolution: After several reports to the system administrators the issue has now been resolved, all customers can now complete their bookings online with no problem.

Street Cleansing and Community Safety

Issue: Investigation into a complaint received revealed that there was no clear process for collaboration between the street cleansing and community safety teams when a report of fly tipping is received that may contain evidence. On this occasion the report was not acted on in a timely manner so the evidence had been cleared away before it could be retrieved and used for potential action.

Resolution: This matter has been considered and there is a process in place to ensure that the links between the two departments are made in a timely manner so that evidence can be collected where possible.

Website Information for cemeteries and parking fines

Issue: Following HotJar feedback, it was identified that the information on the WLDC website regarding cemeteries had been disabled so customers were no longer able to view what they needed. This was fixed as soon as it was reported to us.

Resolution: A comment received identified that the phone number published on the WLDC website for challenging a parking fine was incorrect, this was amended following feedback received.

Planning Enforcement

Issue: Following an increase in case numbers, customer feedback and a complaint that was upheld by the LGSCO extra resources were temporarily added to the planning enforcement team.

Resolution: A review of the enforcement policies and procedures is due to take place this year in order to improve the customer experience and make the service more efficient.

Community Safety

Issue: Feedback received in relation to the new waste initiative regarding sack presentation where signs were erected and leaflets distributed to all households in the area highlighted that incorrect information had been printed on the signs and leaflets which led to a lot of confusion, frustration, extra contact and feedback from customers. The signs and leaflets stated that sacks should be presented **from 7am** on collection day when they should have said **by 7am** on collection day.

Resolution: When the error was identified the signs were replaced, new leaflets were distributed and social media messages were updated.

Planning and Development

Issue: A complaint was upheld in relation to regular and ongoing issues accessing planning documents online, this is a known issue.

Resolution: Work is underway to make the WLDC website more stable and to implement a new document management system for planning which will improve the overall customer experience when viewing planning application information.

Trinity Arts Centre – Ticket Insurance

Issue: An investigation into a complaint received in relation to Trinity Arts Centre ticket insurance discovered that it was important for the insurance T&C's to be made clearer on the call where it was being suggested.

Resolution: Officers were asked to advise the customer to check the T&C's thoroughly before purchasing the insurance to ensure they were happy with what was covered. Training material was updated to reflect this process amendment.

Trinity Arts Centre – Recorded Message on phonline

Issue: Through investigations into other matters it was discovered that the phone line message for Trinity Arts Centre tickets was not clear regarding booking fees and how they are cheaper if booked online.

Resolution: An improvement was suggested and the phonline message was updated to advise customers that it is cheaper to book tickets online. This would assist in reducing calls into the customer services team as customers may choose to go online as it is a cheaper option.

ASB Early Presentation Action

Issue: A letter was sent by the community safety team to a resident in relation to bins being left on the highway, the resident made contact to advise that the place they were kept was actually their own private property and they had kept them in the same place for several years.

Resolution: A potential improvement action was identified around making checks before these types of letters are sent out. Land registry checks should be made to establish land ownership. If this had been carried out on this occasion although the bins looked like they were on the highway it would have shown that they were actually on land owned by the property, a letter would not have been sent and the customer would not have needed to make a complaint.

Planning and Development

Issue: A resident's objections to a planning application were redacted, due to defamatory comments, a complaint was received that they were not made aware that may happen.

Resolution: Following the complaint investigation, the information provided on the website was amended so that it makes it clear that any defamatory comments etc will be either redacted or sent back to the sender to amend until they are suitable for publication.

Community Safety

Issue: Following an investigation into a complaint by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and a decision received in March 2022 updates have been made to the Community Protection Notice (CPN) procedure.

Resolution: The LGSCO recommended that we review CPN procedures to ensure that the wording in CPN is effective and that officers review them after any legal advice is received. This update to the procedure has been completed.

3.0 Customer Satisfaction Measurement

Satisfaction Surveys

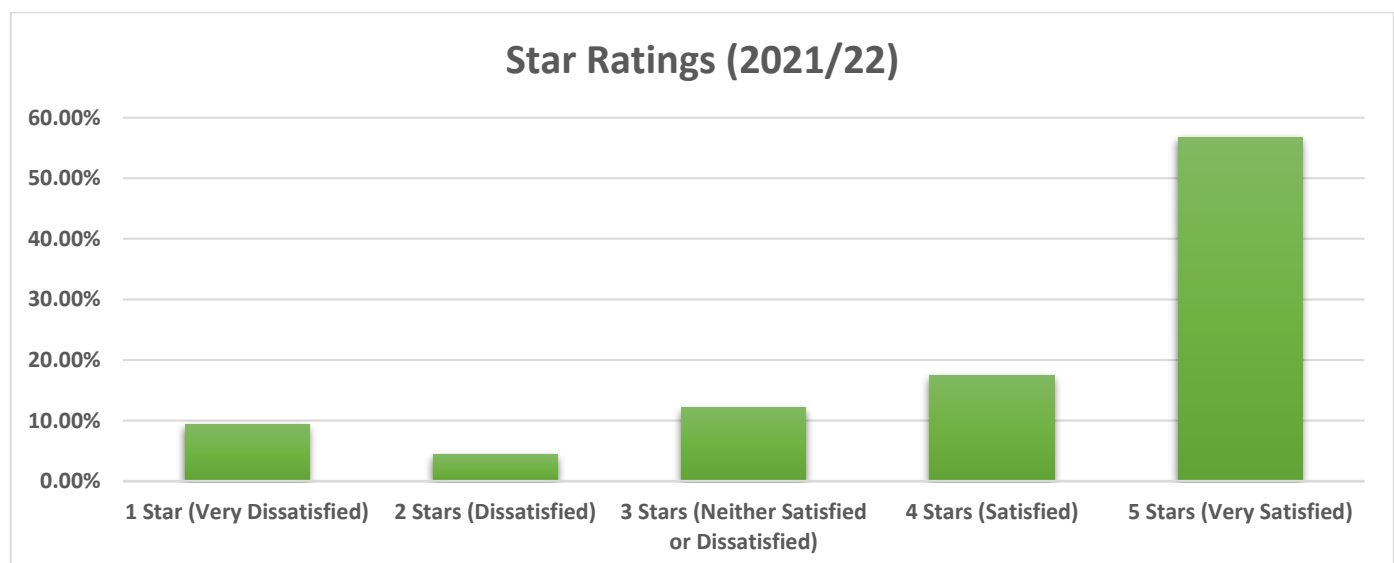
- 3.1 The Council has been using an e-survey platform over the last few years which enables the sending and analysis of customer satisfaction surveys from one place with real time results.
- 3.2 Surveys are sent on a weekly basis to customers that have contacted the Council or have received a Council service in the previous week.
- 3.3 Currently surveys are only being sent via email but other methods are being investigated during the implementation of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- 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 customers are sent satisfaction surveys, surveys are sent to customers of the main customer facing services. During 2021/22 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.
- 3.6 Since August 2021 surveys have also been sent to customers of the Licensing service.

Satisfaction Levels

- 3.7 During the 2021/22 period from April 2021 to March 2022 a total of 6983 satisfaction surveys were sent out and 1256 responses were received, giving a response rate of 18% which is a small decrease compared to the previous year where the response rate was 20%. The overall satisfaction rating for 2021/22 is 74.00%, this is a slight decrease compared the previous year where overall satisfaction was 75.72%. Given the ongoing

pandemic restrictions throughout the 2021/22 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 April 2021 and March 2022;



- 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 **74.00%**. This equates to an overall star rating of 4.07 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, helpfulness, 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 on 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.

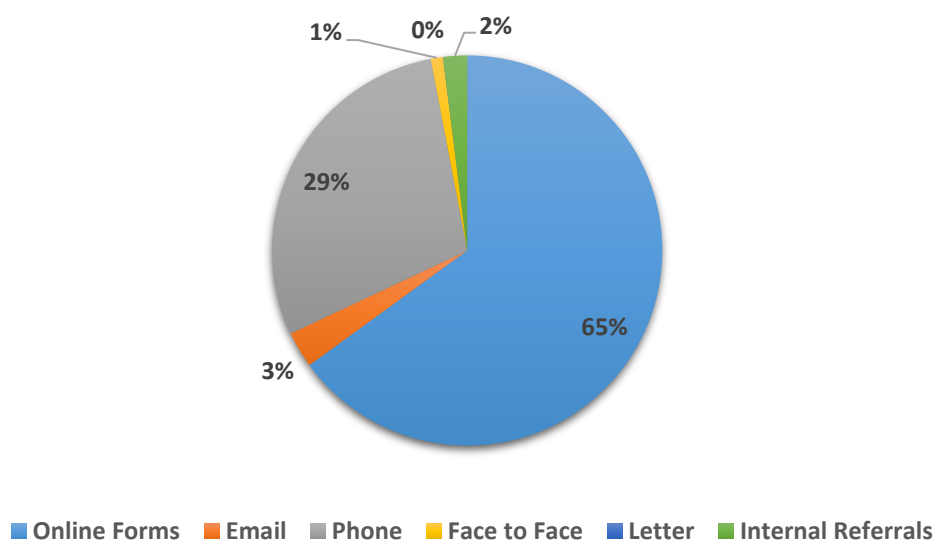
Service Requests and Customer Contact Methods

- 4.2 Service requests can be made by customers through various channels. For example, telephone, online forms, at the Guildhall and via 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 2021/22 is 41,136 which is a very small increase compared to the previous year where 41,080 were recorded. (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 2021/22 is: 29.42% from phone, 65.04% from online forms, 2.52% from email and 2.08% from internal referrals. Online service requests and requests via telephone have increased compared to previous years. As with previous years the majority of customers (over 90% in 2021/22) make contact with us via the phone

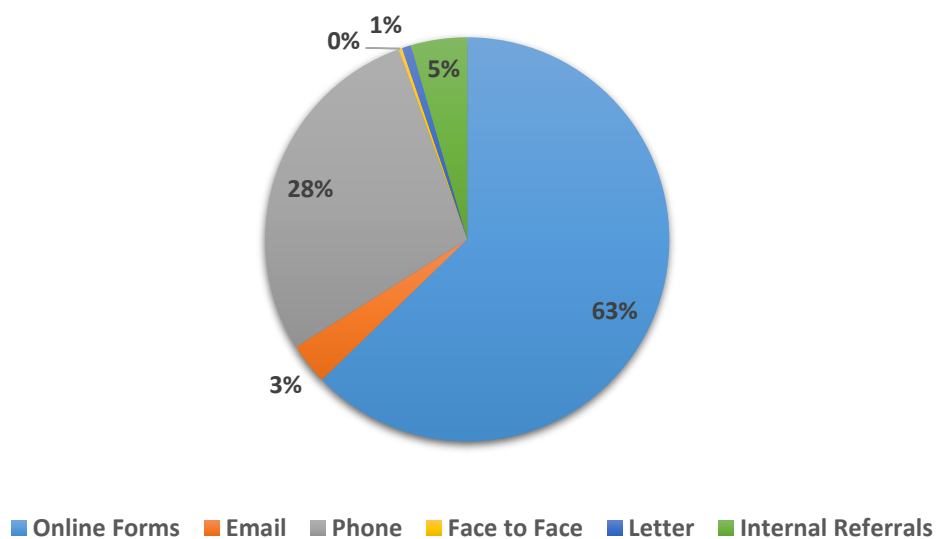
and online forms. The charts below illustrate the full breakdown of all contact channels used in 2021/22 compared with the previous year:

Contact Method	2021/22	2020/21	
Online Forms	65.04% (26,753)	62.77% (25,787)	Increase of 2.27%
Email	2.52% (1,037)	3.29% (1,351)	Decrease of 0.77%
Telephone	29.42% (12,101)	28.42% (11,674)	Increase of 1.0%
Face to Face	0.61% (251)	0.29% (121)	Increase of 0.32%
Letter	0.34% (140)	0.72% (296)	Decrease of 0.38%
Internal Referrals	2.08% (854)	4.51% (1851)	Decrease of 2.43%
Total number of service requests received	41,136	41,080	Increase of 0.001% (56)

Service Request Contact Methods 2021/22

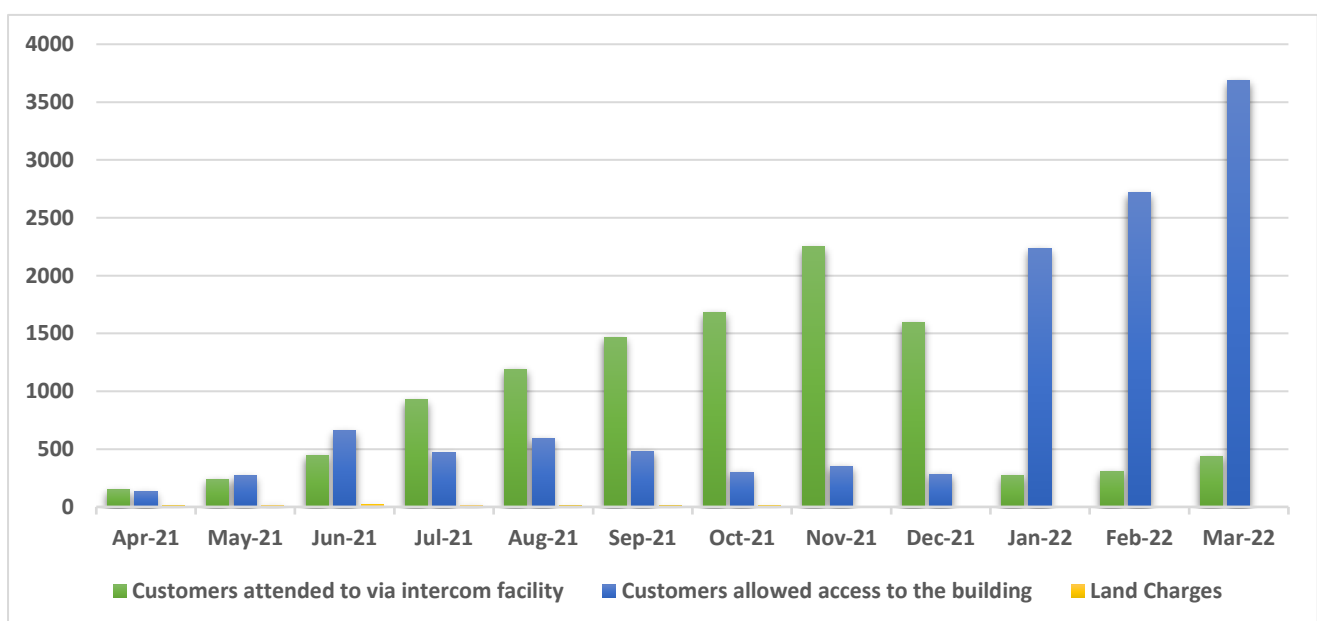


Service Request Contact Methods 2020/21



Face to Face Demand

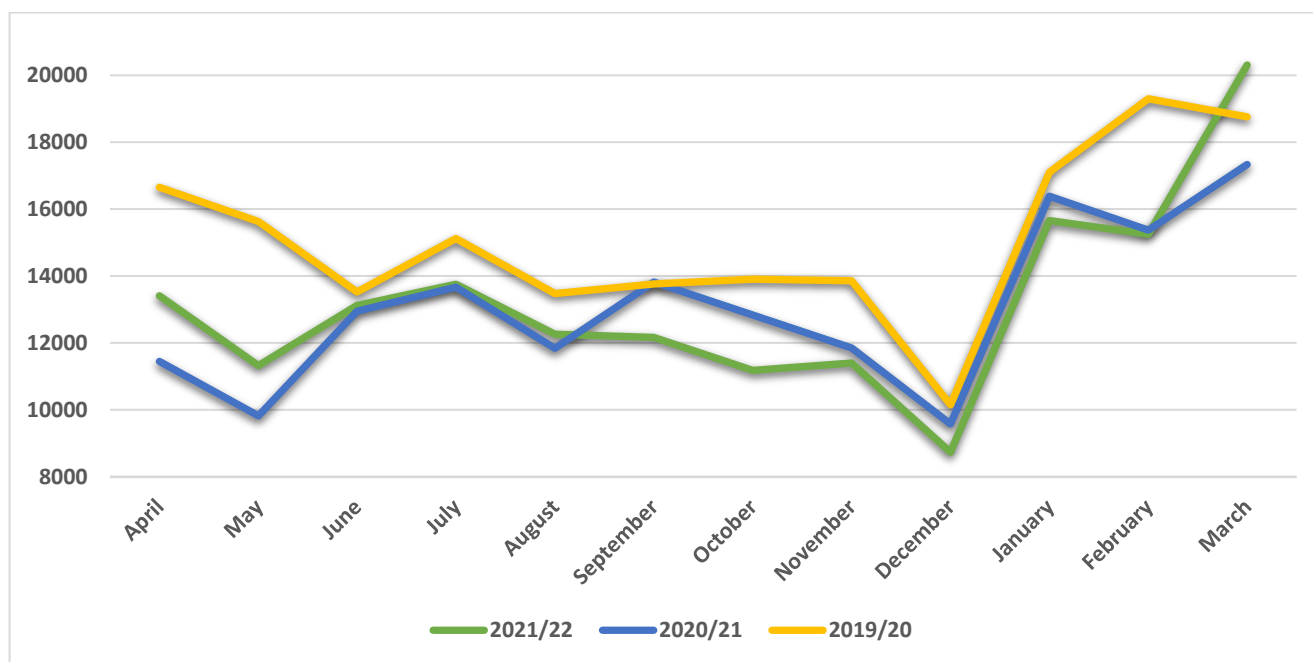
- 4.6 Historically the number of customers that choose to visit the Councils reception at the Guildhall is relatively low as many customers now opt to request services via other means. During the 2021/22 period the Guildhall's main entrance remained closed to walk in customers and face to face contact remained limited to vulnerable and emergency customers only as well as pre-arranged appointments with officers. The intercom facility remained in place at the entrance to allow members of the customer services team to assist them from a safe distance.
- 4.7 Face to face demand during the last year has been very low so comparison to previous years would be of 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.
- 4.8 From March 2021 to November 2021 the Land Charges team continued to see agents via an appointment system to allow them to undertake LLC searches. Face to face appointments were no longer needed from December 2021 onwards as the LLC system was moved online so physical records no longer has to be examined.
- 4.9 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. As you can see the number of customers approaching the Guildhall for assistance increased as lockdown restrictions started to ease. Job Centre Plus (JCP) began seeing a small number of customers again by appointment in June 2021, this reduced during the October to December 2021 months and from January 2022 the number of customers being seen increased dramatically meaning that more customers were allowed access to the Guildhall building.



- 4.10 These figures along with data relating to the specific reasons why customers attend the Guildhall will be analysed and used in the plans for the future design of how the reception area will work in terms of face to face contact and how services will operate going forward.

Telephone Demand

- 4.11 The graph below illustrates telephone demand each month for 2021/22 compared to the previous two years:

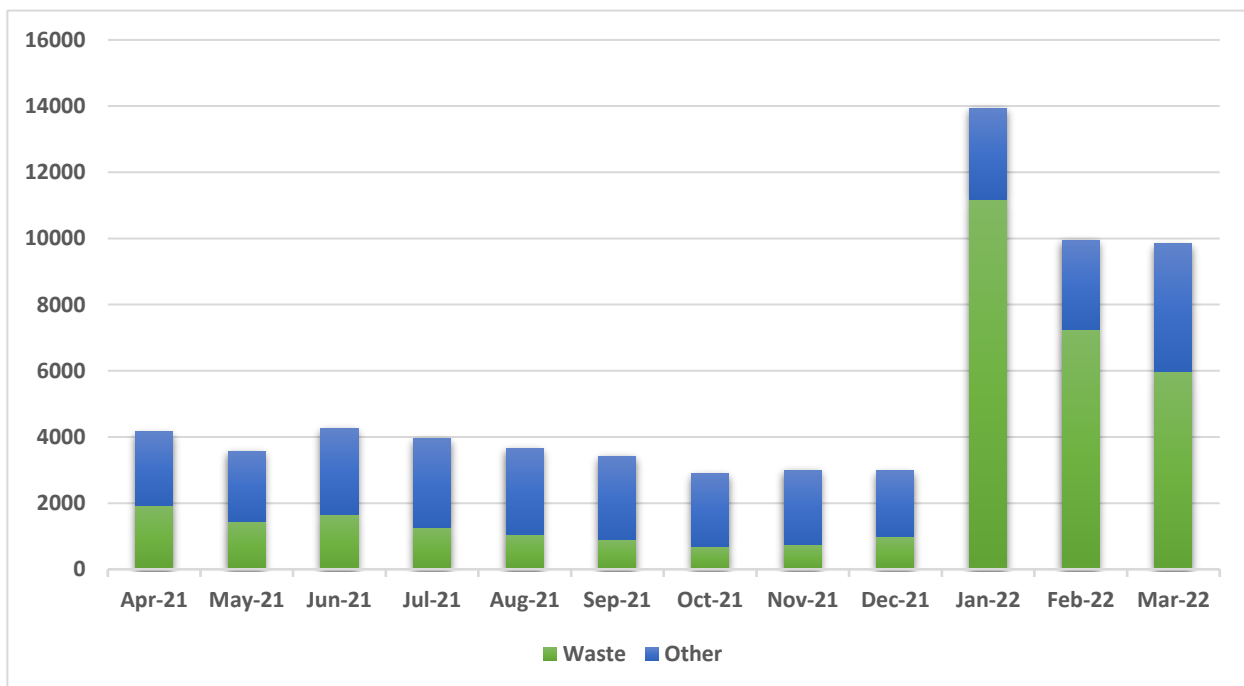


- 4.12 Overall telephone demand has increased during 2021/22 compared to the previous year, in particular during April 2021 and March 2022. Telephone demand always increases during January, February and March during the Green Garden Waste Service sign up period.
- 4.13 The number of calls received in March 2022 was also affected by the new recycling service implementation, all residents were sent a letter in February 2022 advising of the upcoming changes, in turn this led to an increase in the number of calls received as customers called with queries regarding the new recycling service.
- 4.14 Calls also increased as we received a high number of telephone queries in relation to the Household Support Fund and the Council Tax Energy Rebate and enquiries in regards to the Ukraine situation.
- 4.14 During 2021/22 a total of 158,577 calls were received across the whole council compared to 156,915 in 2020/21. This is an increase of 1% (1662) calls.
- 4.15 On average 76% of all calls received across the council were answered and handled during 2021/22, this is a slight decrease compared to the previous year where 80% of all calls were answered and handled on first contact. It should be noted that although a call may go unanswered, customer can opt to receive a call back once the officer is available. (unanswered call figures include calls which go through to voicemail services).

Online Customer Demand

Online Service Requests

- 4.16 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.
- 4.17 Compared to the previous year there has been a slight decrease in the number of service requests made via online forms during the 2021/22 period. In total 65,593 online requests were received compared to 66,644 in 2020/21.
- 4.18 The graph below illustrates how many online requests were received each month during 2021/22 broken down by waste requests and other requests. The increases in January, February and March are due to Green Garden Waste Subscriptions.

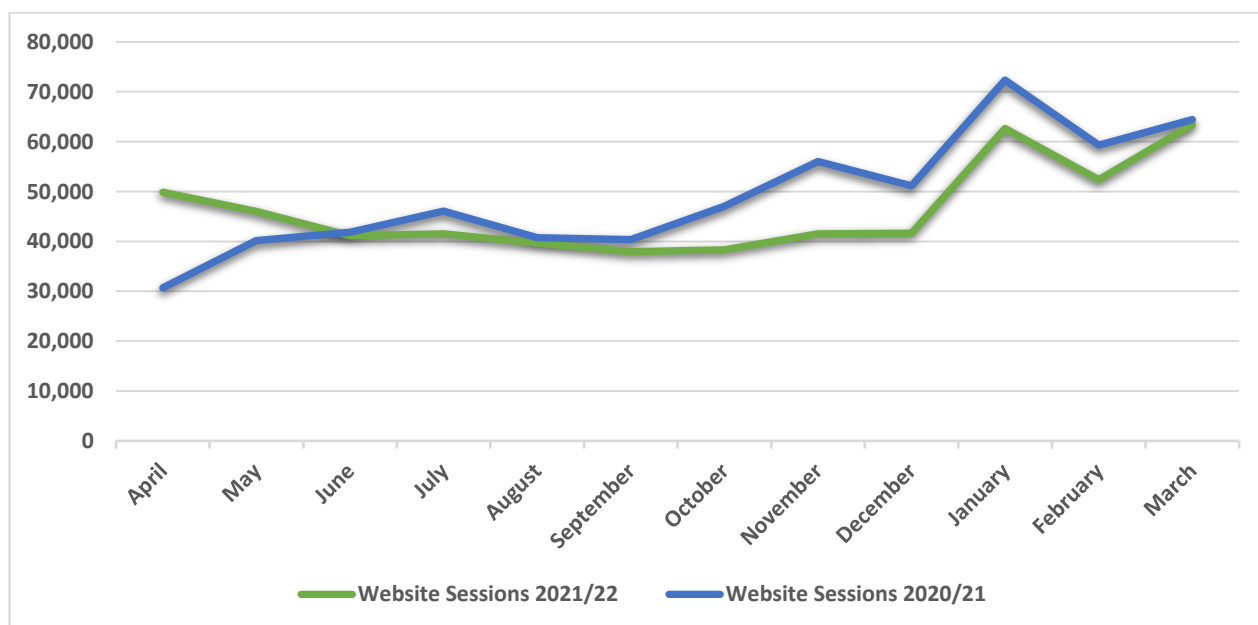


West Lindsey District Council Website Usage

- 4.19 Via Google Analytics we are able to track users of the West Lindsey District Website where they have consented to cookies being enabled which monitors their activity.
- 4.20 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 but as with telephone contact, a dramatic increase during the peak of the Green Garden Waste subscription period in January 2022.



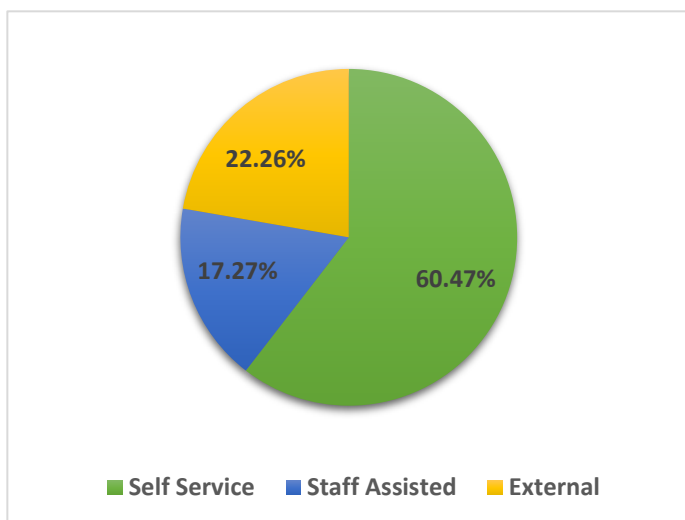
4.21 The graph below illustrates the number of website session per month. As with the number of website users, during 2021/22 there has been a decrease overall. Customers are becoming more confident in using the Council website to access our information and services and the information provided is becoming 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.



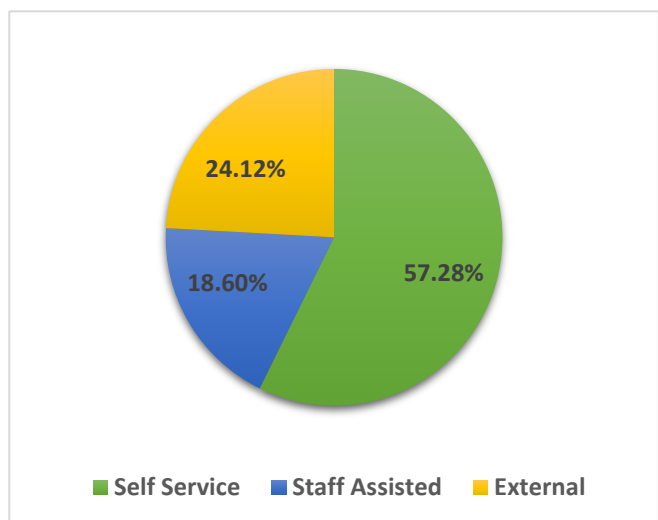
Payment Methods

- 4.22 Various services across the council accept payments from customers. The methods in which customers make payments to the Council can be classified into three categories; Self-Serve, Staff Assisted Payments and External Payments.
- 4.23 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.
- 4.24 In the 2021/22 period the payments consisted of 60.47% Self-Serve Payments, this is a small increase compared to last year which is due to the implementation and more frequent use of the automated payment facility. 17.27% of payments were Staff-Assisted, this has decreased slightly compared to the previous period and involves customers paying over the telephone. The volume of External Payments has decreased compared to the previous period at 22.26%. The breakdown of payment methods is illustrated in the charts below.
- 4.25 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.

Payment Methods 2021/22



Payment Methods 2020/21



5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The 2021/22 period was a busy year for all West Lindsey District Council services, challenges continued due to the ongoing pandemic situation and the various lockdown restrictions that remained in place. Officers have continued to work in new ways and have continued to provide Council services with very little disruption.

Given the circumstances fluctuations in customer satisfaction were expected but despite this positive feedback received has increased. There was a particular increase during the Quarter 1 period when our revenues and benefits team worked effortlessly to administer additional hardship grants that were provided by Government via Lincolnshire County Council that enabled the districts councils to award grants to anyone suffering financial vulnerability due to the pandemic.

The teams considered anyone who had already received either a discretionary housing payment (help with rent), Test and Trace or Winter Payment award or a Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Payment (help with council tax) and as a result were able to award an additional payment of £450 to all those eligible paying out £59,850 in total. Customers really appreciated the support and assistance that we were able to give them.

Overall the number of complaints received decreased compared to previous years and a smaller number of complaints were upheld, this is a positive outcome but despite this improvements have continued to be made across many different services.

The beginning of the 2020/21 was quieter compared to previous years in terms of overall customer contact and feedback but this increased at the beginning of 2022 in January, February and March due to the Green Garden Waste subscription period and when all residents in the West Lindsey area were sent letters regarding the new recycling service that was going to be implemented. These letters, sent in February 2022 led to an increase in calls to the council as well as comments and complaints.

Customer demand has fluctuated throughout the year with a higher number of calls being received compared to 2020/21, the number of calls received increased dramatically during April 2021 and March 2022. Telephone demand always increases during January, February and March during the Green Garden Waste Service sign up period. The number of calls received in March 2022 was also affected by the new recycling service implementation and the letters that were sent out to all residents. Demand during this time also increased due to more queries in regards to the Household Support Fund and the Council Tax Energy Rebate along with enquiries in regards to the Ukraine situation.

It is anticipated that customer feedback will increase as we enter into 2022/23 as the new recycling service is implemented and as residents get used to the changes being put in place.

Self-service online and telephone continue to be the preferred methods of contact with the Council with over 90% of customers choosing to interact with us in those ways. More online self-service methods are being utilised by customers which means that we need to ensure that the information on our website is accurate, informative and up to date.

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 a 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.

Work is also continuing on the T24 service redesign work, the data in this report will assist the redesign process. The service redesign work examines all elements of how each individual service operates from processes and procedures to how customers make contact with the service.

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 effort. 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 2021/22 compared
to 2020/21 and 2019/20**

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Customer Services	212	168	145
Waste Services	177	145	81
Planning and Development	163	126	159
Food, Health and Safety	84	8	19
Street Cleansing	76	44	47
Revenues and Benefits (combined)	59	0	0
Licensing	53	6	11
Trees and Conservation	48	46	12
Revenues (Council Tax)	29	26	15
Home Choices	24	15	10
Arts and Leisure	22	7	17
Environmental Protection	20	12	11
Benefits	18	14	11
Building Control	15	14	21
Customer Experience	15	13	7
DFG's	12	9	2
Growth and Regeneration	12	55	12
Communities	11	5	10
Member and Support Services	10	3	36
System Development	9	11	6
WLDC in general	9	6	1
Housing Enforcement	7	3	3
Planning Enforcement	7	9	6
Local Land Charges	6	8	5
Property Services	6	4	8
Electoral Services	3	0	1
Cemetery	2	2	2
Community Safety	2	0	7
Communications Team	1	7	0
Financial Creditors and Debtors	1	2	1
Management Team	1	7	1

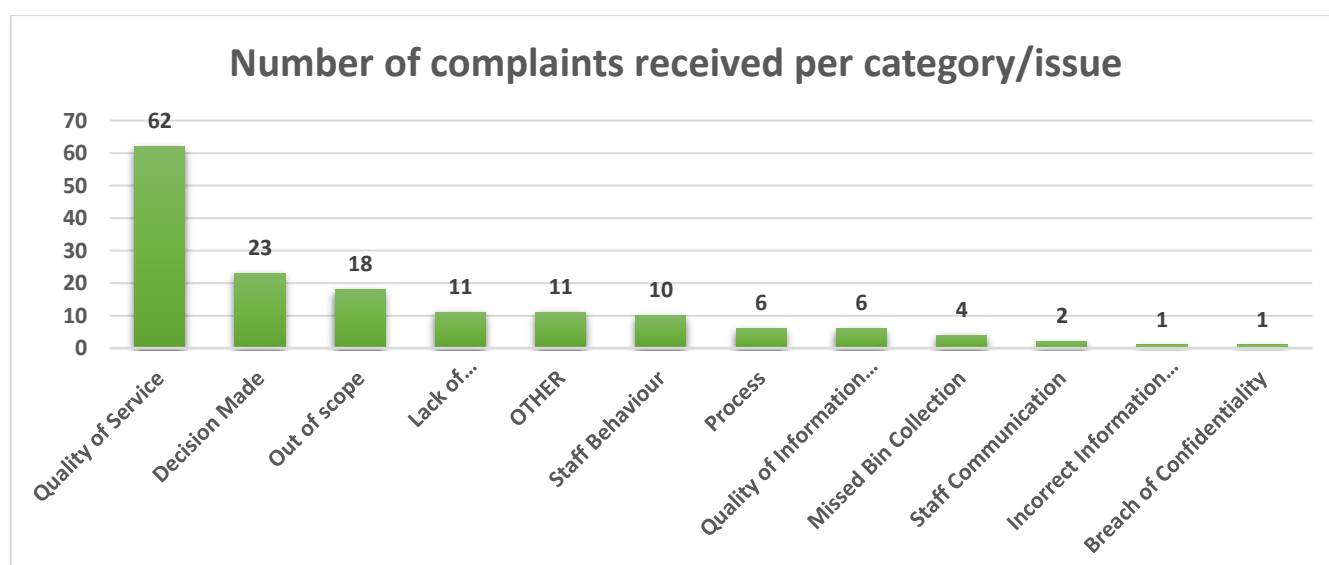
Appendix B - Comments received per Service 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 and 2019/20

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Waste Services	96	26	33
System Development	12	8	4
Food, Health and Safety	7	1	0
Street Cleansing	7	2	0
Community Safety	5	1	0
Planning and Development	5	4	2
Customer Services	4	5	2
Property Services	4	2	2
Arts and Leisure	3	1	14
Electoral Services	2	0	0
Out of Scope	2	8	3
Revenues (Council Tax)	2	3	4
WLDC in general	2	1	0
Communications Team	1	0	0
Communities	1	0	1
Environmental Protection	1	0	1
Growth and Regeneration	1	0	2

Appendix C - Complaints received per Service 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 and 2019/20

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Waste Services	38	45	58
Planning and Development	21	42	22
Out of Scope	18	20	22
Planning Enforcement	14	14	12
Revenues (Council Tax)	14	9	6
Community Safety	7	5	1
Home Choices	7	2	4
Street Cleansing	5	4	3
Benefits	4	3	5
Customer Services	4	4	8
DFG's	4	3	0
Arts and Leisure	3	1	19
Environmental Protection	3	9	6
Food, Health and Safety	2	2	0
Housing Enforcement	2	2	10
Local Land Charges	2	0	0
Property Services	2	2	3
Communications Team	1	0	1
Electoral Services	1	0	0
Management Team	1	0	0
Member and Support Services	1	2	0
System Development	1	2	0
WLDC in general	1	2	0

Appendix C Continued - Complaint Categories (topics/reasons) 2021/22



Appendix D – Upheld Complaints per Service 2021/22

	Number of complaints received	Number of Partially upheld complaints	Number of Fully upheld complaints	Number of complaints where some fault was identified	Upheld complaint % by service
Waste Services	38	2	17	19	50.00%
Planning and Development	21	1	3	4	19.05%
Planning Enforcement	14	3	2	5	35.71%
Revenues (Council Tax)	14	0	4	4	28.57%
Community Safety	7	0	3	3	42.86%
Home Choices	7	1	1	2	28.57%
Street Cleansing	5	0	1	1	20.00%
Benefits	4	0	0	0	0.00%
Customer Services	4	0	2	2	50.00%
DFG's	4	2	0	2	50.00%
Arts and Leisure	3	1	0	1	33.33%
Environmental Protection	3	1	1	2	66.67%
Food, Health and Safety	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Housing Enforcement	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Local Land Charges	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Property Services	2	0	0	0	0.00%
Communications Team	1	0	0	0	0.00%
Electoral Services	1	0	0	0	0.00%
Management Team	1	0	0	0	0.00%
Member and Support Services	1	0	0	0	0.00%
System Development	1	0	0	0	0.00%
WLDC in general	1	0	1	1	100.00%

Appendix E – Complaints referred to the LGSCO by service 2021/22

Service	Number of complaints referred to the LGSCO	Status or Decision Made
Planning and Development	5	3 x complaints investigated - No Fault identified/Not Upheld
		The LGSCO decided not to investigate 2 x complaints
Planning Enforcement	3	3 x complaints investigated
		1 x complaint Upheld 2 x complaints Not Upheld
Community Safety	1	This complaint was investigated and Upheld
Benefits and Tax	1	The LGSCO decided not to investigate