

Standards Committee

22 November 2010

Corporate Complaints, Compliments, Comments and Suggestions Performance Report for Quarter 2, 2010/11



Report of Terry Collins- Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present progress for quarter 2, 2010/11 in relation to corporate complaints, compliments, comments and suggestions.

Background

- 2 This Paper informs the Standards Committee of performance results and learning outcomes for the second quarter of 2010/11, providing information from 1 July to 30 September 2010.
- 3 Corporate Complaints, Compliments, Comments and Suggestions are currently monitored by the Corporate Complaints Team within Customer Services in the Neighbourhood Services Grouping. They deal with corporate complaints (non-statutory) across the Council. This report also contains information on statutory complaints for Adults, Wellbeing & Health and Children's & Young Peoples Services.
- 4 The Corporate Complaints team, and the Council as a whole, work to specified corporate service standards, previously agreed by the Cabinet and so have a number of targets to achieve, for example, acknowledging all corporate complaints within 2 working days, responding to all corporate complaints within 10 working days.

Progress of Complaints Handling Review

- 5 A review of the procedures in place for handling corporate complaints, compliments, comments and suggestions is now complete and an action plan developed. The action plan focussing on the review of processes and procedures, the storage and recovery of performance data and the collection and use of learning outcomes is now beginning to be implemented. The governance and implementation of the actions will be monitored by the Customer Focus Board as part of the council's corporate improvement programme and will be reported to future standards committees.

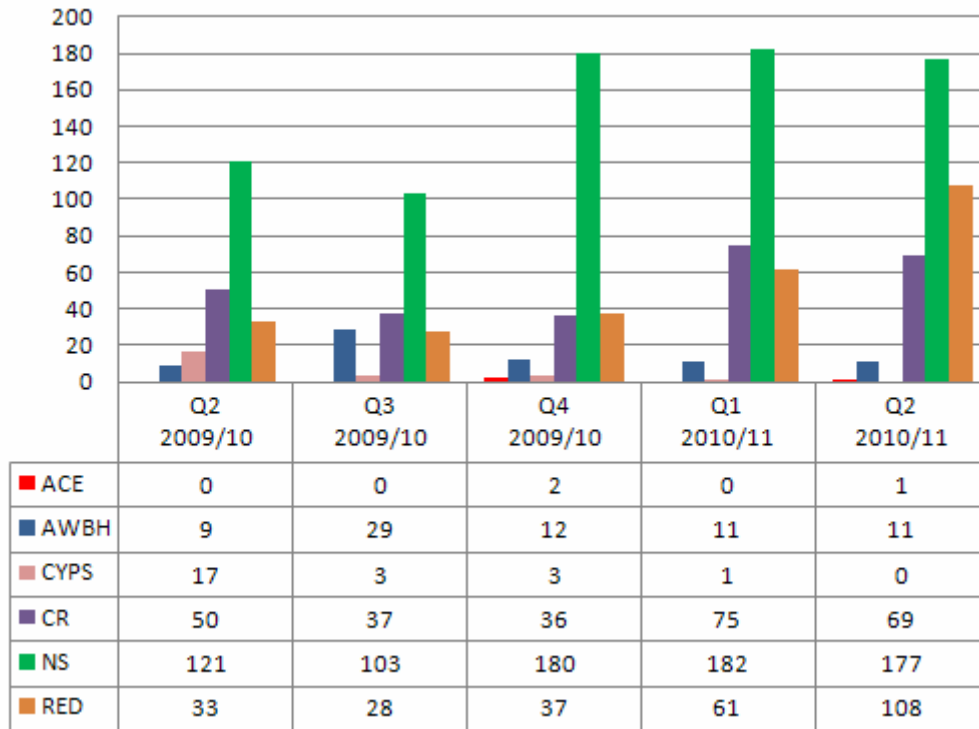
Format of this report

- 6 This report is divided into 2 main sections, an overview section and a more detailed report from each service grouping.
- 7 It should be noted that the following abbreviations and colours are used to identify service groupings throughout this report

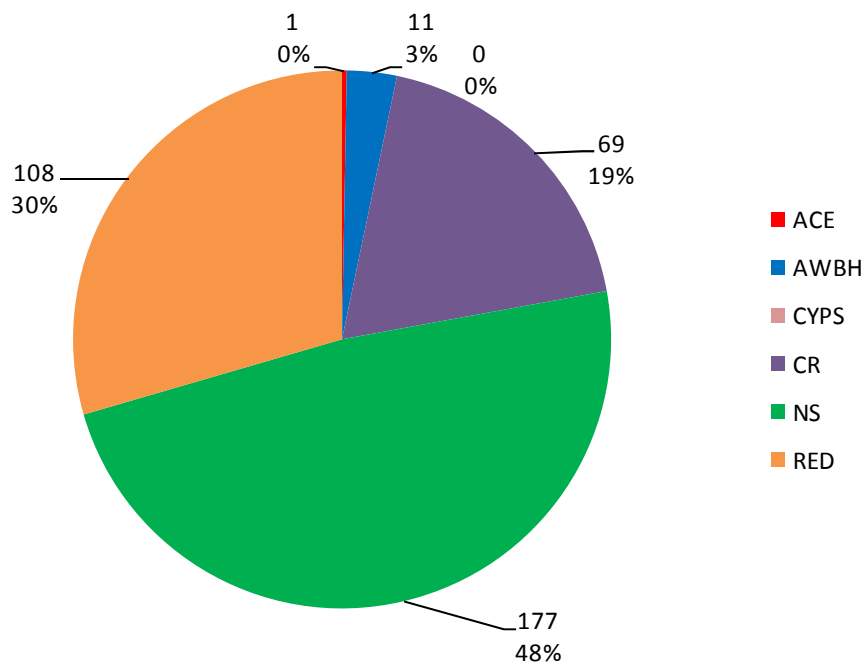
Abbreviation	Service Grouping	Colour
ACE	Assistant Chief Executive's Office	Red
AWBH	Adults, Well-being and Health	Blue
CYPS	Children and Young People's Services	Light Red
CR	Corporate Resources	Purple
NS	Neighbourhood Services	Green
RED	Regeneration and Economic Development	Orange

Section 1 - Overview

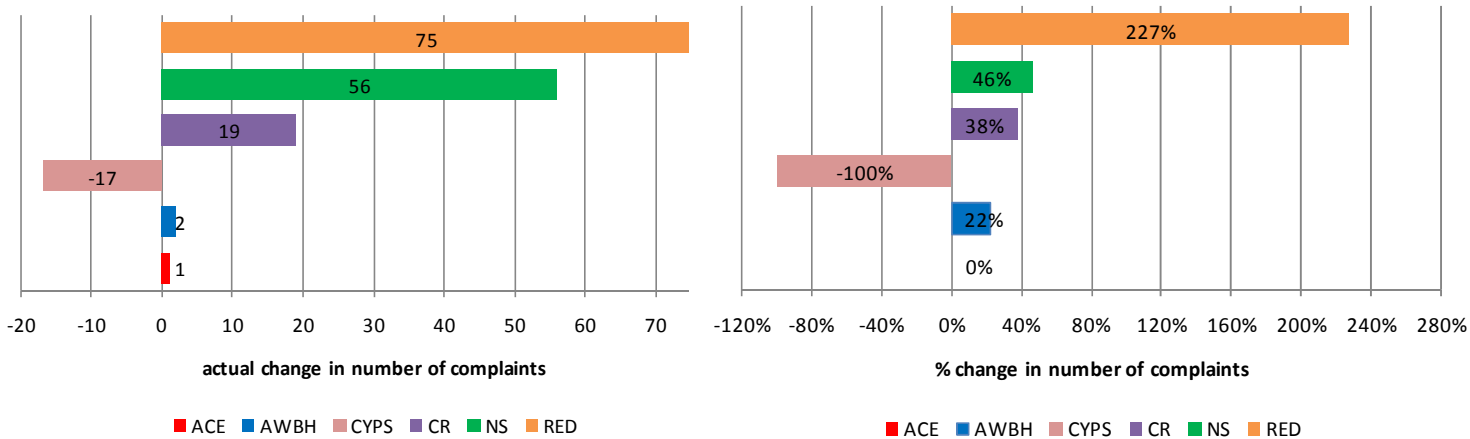
- 8 The following graph shows the number of corporate complaints received each quarter over the last year. The information is sub divided by each service grouping



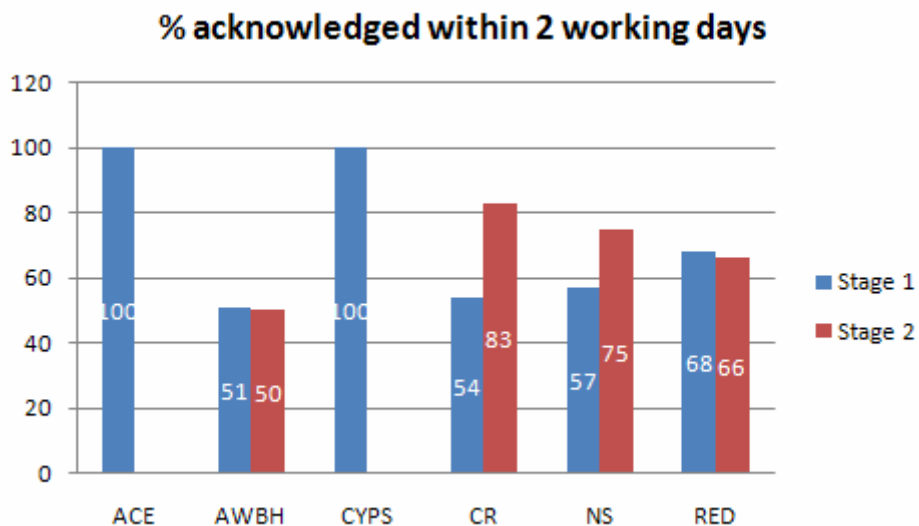
- 9 During 1 July 2010 and the 30 September 2010, a total of 366 complaints were received. The following chart shows a breakdown of these complaints by service grouping.



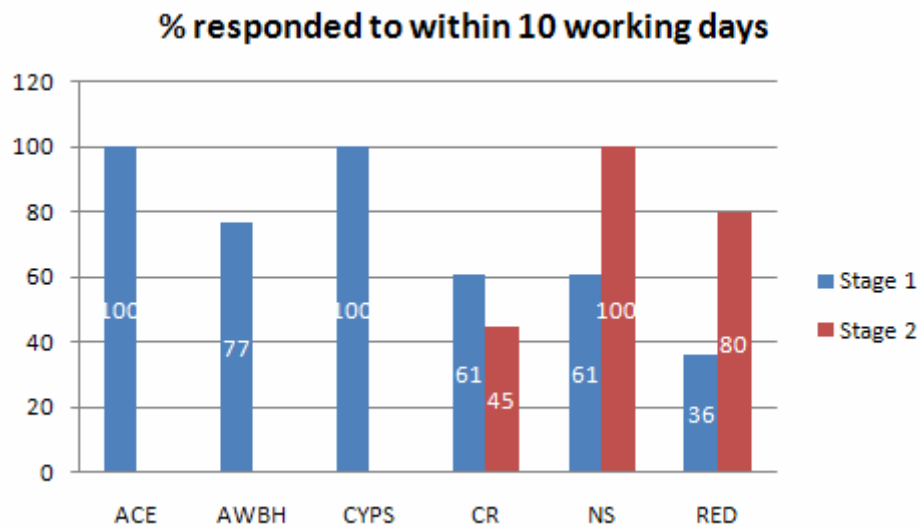
- 10 As can be seen, the majority of corporate complaints related to NS (48%), reflecting the front facing nature and scope of its service provision e.g. customer services, waste collection, street cleansing. RED and NS collectively account for 78% of all complaints
- 11 It is possible to compare the number of complaints received with the number received for the same period, 12 months earlier. The following graphs shows the change in complaints received during quarter 2, 2010/11 and complaints received during quarter 2, 2009/10. The graph on the left shows the actual change (number). The graph on the right shows the percentage change.



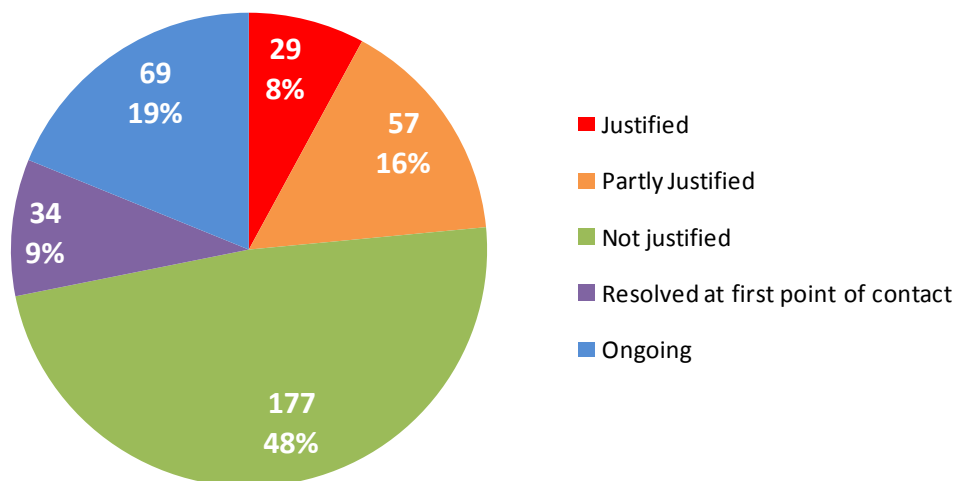
- 12 During 1 April 2010 and 30 September 2010, Durham County Council acknowledged 66% of stage 1 complaints and 69% of stage 2 complaints within the target time of 2 working days. The following table shows a breakdown by service grouping.



- 13 During 1 April 2010 and 30 September 2010, Durham County Council responded to 61% of stage 1 complaints and 75% of stage 2 complaints within the target time of 10 working days. The following table shows a breakdown by service grouping.



- 14 Although reporting quarterly information is important, the data has its limitations due to seasonal influences, e.g. the number of complaints received by NS tends to increase significantly through periods of bad weather due to the resulting effect on service provision. This was evident throughout last year's bad winter. Therefore, future reports will have a section that presents the data as a 12 month rolling total as this ensures each data point has all aspects of the year included. This makes it possible to see if the trend in relation to complaints is upwards or downwards.
- 15 The following chart depicts the breakdown of complaints by their overall status. Of the 366 complaints received 177 were not justified (48%).



16 The following table provides a breakdown by service grouping

Service Grouping	Justified	Partly Justified	Not justified	Resolved at first point of contact	Ongoing	Total
ACE	0	0	0	1	0	1
AWBH	0	5	4	1	1	11
CR	3	12	34	8	12	69
CYPS	0	0	0	0	0	0
NS	21	35	71	20	30	177
RED	5	5	68	4	26	108
Total	29	57	177	34	69	366

17 On occasions when complaints are received and we have not been able to respond within the timescales 'keep warm' letters are sent out explaining the reasons for the delays. There are 5 outstanding complaints that go back over 6 months. These relate to ongoing planning matters where either the complainants have asked us to place the matter on hold for personal reasons or they have come back to us with more comments. This has required further investigation which has delayed the response process. With all these outstanding complainants we do keep in touch with the complainant to update them on progress.

18 The following table below gives a breakdown of compliments, comments and suggestions for each service grouping for the second quarter. It should be noted that while CYPS shows a nil return 60 compliments have been received directly by the service grouping. These compliments have not been recorded on the system.

Service Grouping	Compliments	Suggestions	Comments
ACE	0	0	1
AWBH	106	2	3
CR	51	0	3
CYPS	0	0	0
NS	94	17	13
RED	72	2	3
Total	323	21	23

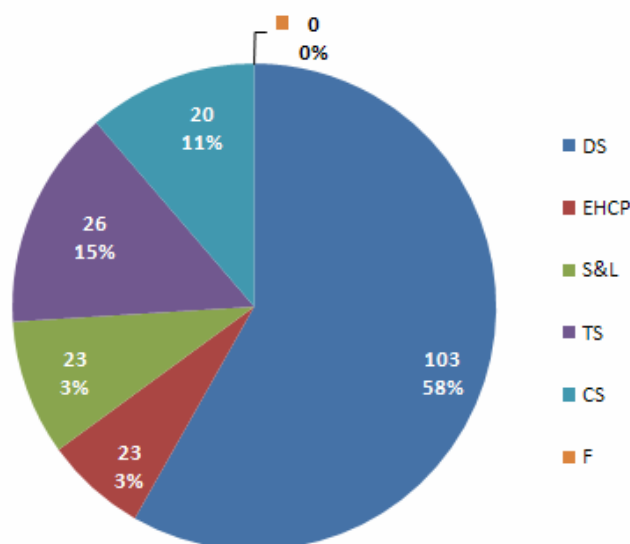
19 The following sections provide more detail in relation to the types and numbers of corporate and statutory complaints received across the service groupings during quarter 2 of 2010/11:

Neighbourhood Services (NS)

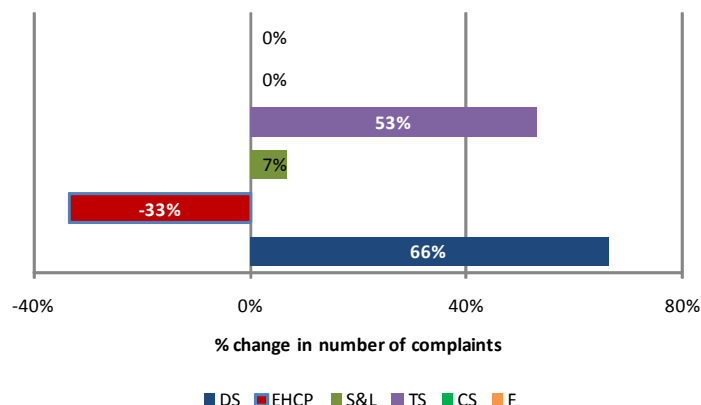
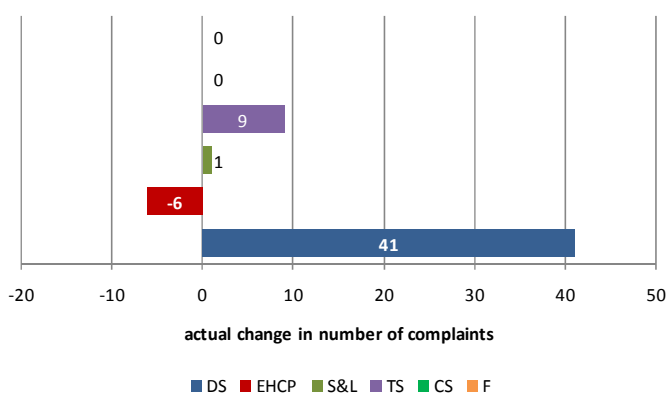
- 20 The following table shows the 6 main service areas of NS. It should be noted that the following abbreviations are used to identify service areas throughout this section of the report

Abbreviation	Service Area
DS	Direct Services
EHCP	Environmental Health & Consumer Protection
S&L	Sport and Leisure
TS	Technical Services
CS	Customer Services
F	Finance, HR and Business Support

- 21 During 1 July 2010 and 30 September 2010, 177 complaints were received by the NS service grouping. The following graph shows the breakdown by service area.



- 22 It is possible to compare the number of complaints received with the number received for the same period, 12 months earlier. The following graphs shows the change in complaints received during quarter 2, 2010/11 and complaints received during quarter 2, 2009/10. The graph on the left shows the actual change (number). The graph on the right shows the percentage change.



23 During Quarter 2:

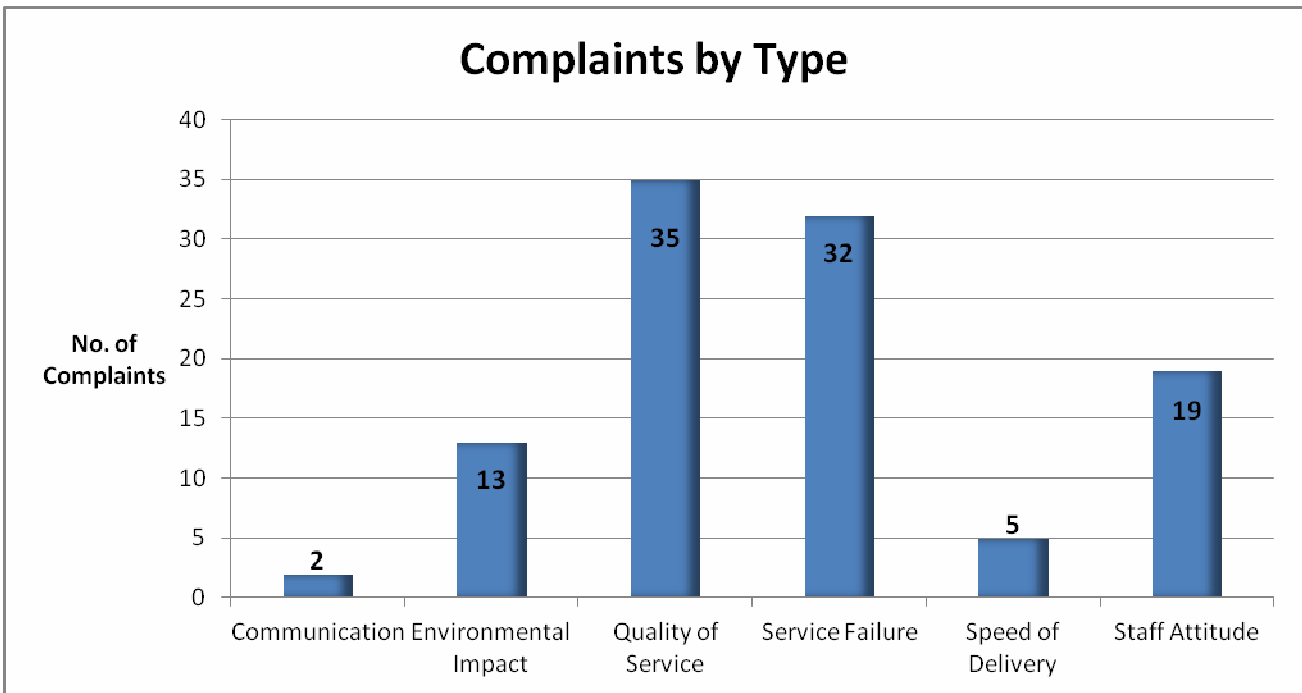
- Of stage 1 complaints
 - 57% were acknowledged in 2 working days
 - 61% responded to within 10 working days
- Of stage 2 complaints
 - 100% were acknowledged in 2 working days
 - 100% were responded to within 10 working days

24 Further investigation into the complaints received in this quarter shows that there are 71 records in which the complaint was not upheld, indicating that although service users were dissatisfied with services received, the service had in fact acted properly and followed appropriate procedures.

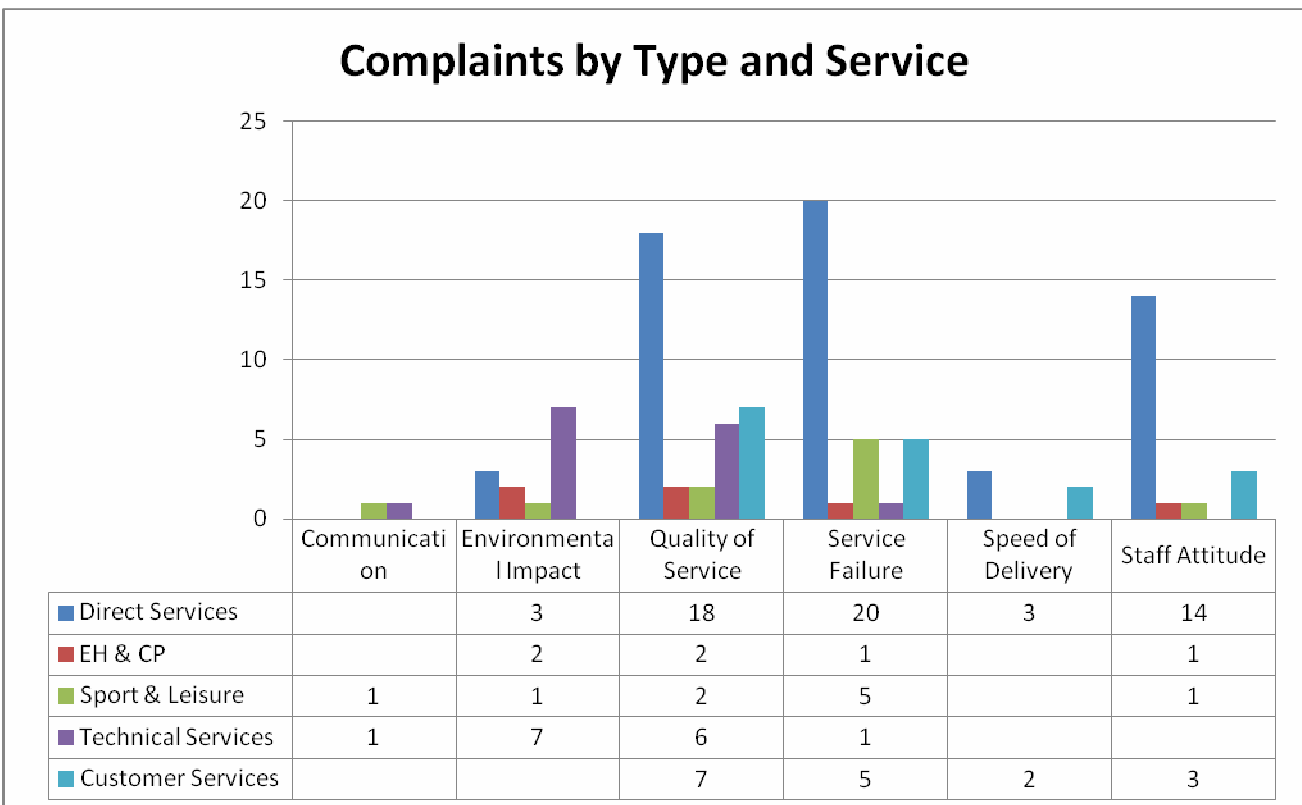
25 If these 71 records are removed, Neighbourhood Services is left with 106 legitimate complaints from which there is possibility of learning. Of those, 35 were partly justified complaints. The following table shows the breakdown across the service areas of the complaints deemed to be “justified”:

Service Area	No. of complaints (after not justified removed) 1 Jul 10 – 30 Sep 10	% of complaints received
Direct Services	58	54.72%
Environment, Health and Consumer Protection	6	5.66%
Sport and Leisure	10	9.43%
Technical Services	15	14.15%
Customer Services	17	16.04%
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES TOTAL	106	100%

26 Analysis of the complaints has shown that the 106 complaints can be classified as belonging to one of the following 6 categories.



27 Analysis of the types of complaints received by Service and type.



- 28 The following section provides further analysis of complaints, by service area, and the associated learning outcomes:

Environment, Health and Consumer Protection (EHCP)

- 29 6 complaints were received in relation to EHCP during quarter 2, compared with 4 in quarter 1. The complaints related to
- noise issues
 - the keeping of livestock
 - quality of service/staff attitude over parking fines.
- 30 No learning outcomes have been identified by the Service.

Sport and Leisure Services (S&L)

- 31 10 complaints were received in relation to S&L during quarter 2, compared with 2 in quarter 1. These complaints related to
- late and repeated cancellation of fitness classes at leisure centres
 - attitude of staff
 - quality of the service provided at specific leisure centres
 - cleanliness / maintenance of facilities at Bowlees Visitors Centre and Oakley Park.
- 32 The service accepts that the key areas which need to be addressed to drive improvement relate to increasing the speed of effective maintenance through more efficient maintenance regimes and to improve the quality of customer communications following service failures. These are being looked at as part of the service review, there is a specific intention to improve the consistency of the swim teaching at Chester-le-Street and the pricing systems and policy is being reviewed for consistency / harmonisation across all leisure centres.

Customer Services (CS)

- 33 17 complaints were received in relation to CS during quarter 2, compared with 4 in quarter 1. The complaints received were fairly wide ranging, however 4 clear trends can be identified:
- Delays in handling telephone calls within contact centres (6 complaints)
 - Technical problems causing telephone calls to be lost or cut off (4 complaints)
 - Recovery of rent and council tax (4 complaints)
 - Staff attitude (3 complaints)
- 34 The overarching issue in relation to the technical problems associated with the telecommunications system is its complexity. As a council we currently have 14 different telephone systems supporting the customer services teams across the Council. However, plans are being put in place to implement a single telecommunications solution by the Head of ICT. A detailed report will be considered by CMT in November/December 2010.

In relation to any complaint regarding staff attitude, we take this extremely seriously and the 3 members of staff in question have met with managers and the importance of good customer service outlined. In addition, training requirements have been explored to support staff in dealing with difficult customers.

Direct Services (DS)

- 35 58 complaints were received during quarter 2, compared with 51 in quarter 1. The key trends are
- Refuse/Recycling Services (24 complaints). These related to
 - Residents not receiving replacement bins (7 bins, 2 green bags, 3 green recycling boxes and 2 green waste bins).
 - bins are not being put back in their rightful place (5 complaints)
 - bins or recycling boxes not being collected (8 complaints)
 - Street Cleaning Services. These related to
 - overgrown vegetation (6 complaints)
 - the standard of the service (5 complaints), for example, 1 complaint was regarding the grass cutters cutting too low and other complaints relating to cutting smaller areas where different size grass cutters would have been more appropriate.
- 36 As communication is vital to resolving complaints as early as possible, both Managers and Technical Support Officers liaise on a daily basis to resolve them and they work in conjunction with team leaders and supervisors across various sections to ensure that we remain efficient and effective. Streetscene Area Managers meet their staff regularly to ensure that trends are identified and measures are put in place to resolve any trends that have been identified.

Technical Services (TS)

- 37 15 complaints were received during quarter 2, compared with 16 in quarter 1. 13 of these complaints were identified as environmental impact (7 complaints) or quality of service (6 complaints). Due to the small number of complaints received and the wide range of topics, it is not possible to determine any trends. Complaints were wide ranging and included
- maintenance of paths, roads and verges
 - erection of a sign
 - parking issues
 - diversion due to roadworks
- 38 Although Technical Services actions all complaints on receipt, steps are being taken to ensure any resulting learning outcomes are captured. Therefore, Highways Operations and Strategic Highways are adding 'complaints update' as a regular, standing item on team meeting agendas. This will ensure that any trends are identified and learning outcomes implemented.

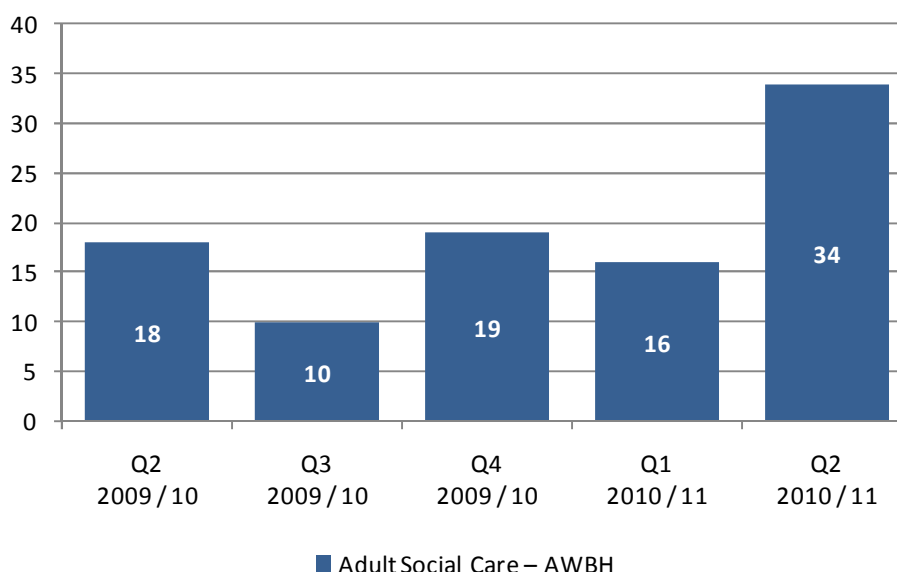
Compliments, comments and suggestions

- 39 During quarter 2, NS received 94 compliments, 13 comments and 17 suggestions. Further details are shown below;
- 40 In terms of compliments, the following provides a breakdown of these in accordance with the service areas:

Service	Number of compliments
Direct Services	48
Technical Services	4
Customer Services	9
Environment, Health and Consumer Protection	33
Sport and Leisure	0
Total	94

Adults, Well-being and Health (AWBH)

- 41 This section provides details on complaints, compliments and comments in AWBH for quarter 2, 2010/11.
- 42 During 1 July 2010 and 30 September 2010, 34 complaints were received by the AWBH service grouping. The following graph compares complaints received each quarter.



- 43 During the quarter, 34 complaints were received. This is a 112.5% increase on the previous quarter and a significant increase in comparison to quarterly figures over the last twelve months. The increase relates to a more thorough approach in assessing peoples' needs so that operating procedures and eligibility criteria are consistently applied.
- 44 The following table shows a breakdown of complaints by service area

Complaints Received by Service Area (previous Quarters figures shown in brackets)			
Service Area	Learning Disabilities	Older People	Total
Social Work Teams (Learning Disability /Mental Health/Carers)	15 (6)	0	15
Social Work Teams (Older Persons /Mental Health Services Older Persons/Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support)	0	16 (6)	16
Finance	0 (2)	1 (1)	1
County Durham Care and Support	0	2(1)	2
Total	15	19	34

- 45 All complaints were acknowledged within three working days maintaining performance at 100%.
- 46 Of the 34 complaints, Complaint Resolution Plans (CRPs) were completed in 31 cases. In the remaining 3 cases, 2 were referred to the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust as they were identified as the lead agency and in the third, the client declined to give their consent for the complaint to be made on their behalf and the complaint could not therefore be progressed.
- 47 Of the 31 complaints received in the quarter for which CRPs were completed, 22 were completed within the timescales negotiated and agreed. The remaining 9 cases were not concluded within the quarter but had not breached their agreed completion timescale.
- 48 The following table shows the outcome of the complaints completed in the quarter

Outcome of Complaints completed in the quarter				
Service Area	Not Justified	Partially Justified	Justified	Total
Social Work Teams (Learning Disability /Mental Health /Carers	2	5		7
Social Work Teams (Older Persons /Mental Health Services Older Persons/Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support)	6	3	3	12
Finance			1	1
County Durham Care and Support	2			2
Total	10	8	4	22

- 49 Of the 22 complaints received and completed in the quarter 10 were not upheld, 8 were partially upheld and 4 were upheld.
- 50 In all of the 22 cases concluded, full explanations and apologies where appropriate for any inconvenience/distress were provided. Examples of remedies include:-
- Re-assessment of need following the termination of a day care placement.
 - Home Care service reinstated for someone with complex care needs in order to stabilise the care package before it transferred to another provider.
 - Reinstatement of additional respite following review.

51 The following table shows a breakdown of complaints by Classification

Classification	No of complaints
Lack Of Service - Communications/Information	9
Provision Of Service – Placement Provision	3
Quality of Service – Personal Care	4
Conduct Or Attitude Of Staff	10
Quality Of Service - Personal Financial Issues	2
Provision Of Service - Assessment	1
Quality Of Service – Personal Care	3
Lack Of Service - Restricted Choices Of Current Services	2
Provision of Service - Equipment	1
Lack Of Service – Contact/Visits/Service	4
Change to client’s service/care plan	3
Application Of Service Guidance/Procedures	4

NB A complaint may have more than one classification recorded against it

- 52 Conduct/Attitude of Staff constituted the highest category of complaint. However, this was largely linked to decisions around the funding of care packages and was not necessarily a reflection of individual staff members’ behaviour or professionalism. The second highest category was Communications/Information and this again was linked to clients/carers having no advanced warning of changes to service provision before they occurred.
- 53 One of the 34 complaints received in the quarter was declined for want of consent by the client.
- 54 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) referred 1 complaint during the quarter. In this case the complainant was resurrecting issues from a Stage Three Review from 2007 and the LGO was advised that this was outside of the limitation period for the issues to be heard further. The LGO made a determination that a complaint reported in the last quarter relating to deferred payment of fees was not upheld.
- 55 In this quarter it has become apparent that communication can be improved where there are likely to be changes to service provision following review. A letter for service users explaining the assessment/review process and application of the eligibility criteria has been developed and issued.

56 The following table shows the number of adult Social Care Compliments received

Compliments Received by Service Area	
Service Area	Total
County Durham Care and Support	143 (84%)
Social Work Teams (Older Persons /Mental Health Services Older Persons/Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support)	25 (14%)
Social Work Teams (Learning Disability /Mental Health/Carers	3 (2%)
Total	171 (100%)

57 There were 171 compliments received in the quarter compared to 99 in quarter 1, 122 compliments in quarter 4 (09/10) and 84 in quarter 3 (09/10). The ratio of compliments to complaints is 5:1, compared to 6.7:1 in the previous quarter.

58 No comments were recorded for Adult Social Care

Corporate Service Complaints

Libraries, Learning and Culture

59 3 complaints related to misleading information in County Durham news regarding free admission to the Bowes Lyon Museum. Visitors found that the free admission was to the Reading Room only and this had to be booked in advance. No key trends were capable of extraction from the other 6 complaints received.

60 Greater attention will be paid to the content of articles to avoid a repetition of people being misled about free admission and similar incentives. In all cases information, explanations and apologies were provided to complainants which resolved the enquiries satisfactorily.

61 The service received 3 compliments this quarter compared to 8 the previous quarter.

Policy, Planning and Performance

62 No complaints were received in this service area

Finance

- 63 No complaints were received in this service area

Adult Social Care

- 64 No complaints were received in this service area

Social Inclusion

- 65 2 complaints were received this quarter the same as the last quarter. Both complaints related to a traveller encampment at Shotton. No key trends were identified. The service responded with site visits and actions to minimise disruption to local residents.
- 66 The service received 103 compliments this quarter compared to 130 the previous quarter. Both Welfare Rights and Workable Solutions continue to receive highly complimentary feedback on the work they undertake for their clients receiving 76 and 22 compliments respectively. 5 compliments were also received about the help and support provided by the Traveller Liaison service to local communities where there were no encampments.

Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)

- 67 1 complaint was received by ACE this quarter. The complaint related to the non-delivery of Durham County News. There have been issues with the delivery company and in order to resolve these issues the contract has been re-negotiated.
- 68 We are aware that not all complaints within ACE are being recorded and further work is underway with the service grouping to ensure the correct information is being captured

Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

- 69 CYPS actions complaints under two distinct processes: the statutory representations process for complaints about social care services (which are provided by Safeguarding and Specialist Services within CYPS), and the corporate complaints process for all other complaints about CYPS. Both have a 2 working day timescale for acknowledgement; the statutory process has a 20 working day timescale for response, whereas the corporate processes response timescale is 10 working days. Service users are informed at the outset which process their complaint will be taken through and target response date.
- 70 Where services users 'complain' about a decision regarding home-to-school transport, school place allocation or Special Educational Needs provision, these 'complaints' are captured on CRM but are not taken through the corporate complaints process as there are separate appeals processes in place for these issues. (Therefore the numbers are not recorded as formal corporate complaints.) Again, the service user is informed of the process that the 'complaint' is to be taken through. These are noted below as 'enquiries which were actioned outside the complaints procedures'. Sometimes there is a related complaint, for example about staff attitude during an enquiry about a transport application - this *would* be taken through the corporate complaints process as it is a complaint about the *process* rather than the *decision*; *however* the outcome of the complaint would have no effect on the decision that was made, only the appeal process could overturn the decision.
- 71 When service users complain about the transport to school (for example, a bus didn't pick up all the pupils waiting at the school bus stop), the complaint will be notified to CYPS in case there are any actual or potential safeguarding issues; however the complaint will be recorded as a complaint about the Integrated Transport Unit within Regeneration and Economic Development, as it will be their responsibility to investigate and respond to the complaint.
- 72 Against this background, a total of 113 new representations were received by the Representations and Quality Officer during quarter 2. This includes:
- 69 compliments (9 statutory, 60 corporate);
 - 0 comments;
 - 35 new complaints resolved informally (33 statutory, 2 corporate); and
 - 9 new formal complaints (all statutory);
- 73 This compares with 37 compliments, 6 comments and 41 new complaints (11 formal, 30 informal) received and actioned in Q1 2010/11 (total 84 representations).
- 74 In addition, there were 7 enquiries which were actioned outside the complaints procedures.

75 A breakdown of new formal complaints by service area and theme is shown in the table below:

	Poor Service	Staff Conduct	Poor Service & Staff Conduct	Decision re Service	Staff Conduct & Decision re Service	Other	Totals
Statutory Complaints	3 (4)	3 (2)	2 (0)	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (10)
Corporate Complaints	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (2)	0 (1)
Totals	3 (5)	3 (2)	2 (0)	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (11)

(numbers in brackets refer to Q1 2010/11)

76 78% (7 of 9) of new statutory Stage 1 were acknowledged within the target timescales (2 working days), compared with 100% in Q1. The two that were acknowledged outside timescale had not been sent directly to the PQRT.

77 11% of formal statutory Stage 1 complaints were resolved within the target timescale of 20 working days, as shown in the table below. In Q1, 40% of statutory complaints were resolved in timescale.

Formal complaints: resolution and outcome

	No. (new) resolved in timescale	% (of new) resolved in timescale	No. ongoing - outside timescale	No. ongoing (potentially in timescale at time of writing)	No. upheld	No. partially upheld	No. not upheld
Statutory	1 out of 9	11%	5	3	0 (2)	1 (1)	0 (2)
Corporate	-	-	-	-	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (3)

78 More statutory complaints were received in the quarter than the previous quarter (42 in Q2, compared with 33 in Q1), and than in Q2 of 2009/10 (28). However, more were resolved informally, that is, at a local level by discussing the issues with the complainant and without the need for a formal investigation by a senior manager.

79 Fewer corporate complaints were received this quarter (2 this quarter, compared with 8 last quarter, and 29 in Q2 2009/10), and both were resolved informally.

80 Performance in resolving statutory complaints within timescale has declined again, with 56% of complaints remaining unresolved outside of timescale at the time of writing. This is due to the increased workload of SaSS managers who are required to investigate complaints at Stage 1 of the formal process.

81 Complainants continue to have a perception of poor service and/or unsatisfactory staff conduct. This is reflective of the fact that the Local Authority must make decisions based on statutory policies and procedures, often relating to safeguarding children, but which parents are unhappy about.

- 82 During the quarter, 2 complaints were taken to Stage 2 of the process for statutory complaints:
- One was from a young person, and centred around the fact that she remained unhappy about being made the subject of a child protection plan some months previous.
 - One was from the grandfather of a child in need, about a number of issues relating to his granddaughter's case.
- 83 The investigations into these complaints are still ongoing, and are being undertaken by independent Investigating Officers from North East Consortium (part of NYAS).
- 84 The number of recorded compliments notified to the Representations and Quality Officer increased. Compliments have been broken down by service area / team, as shown in the table below:

Service area	Team/function	Number
SaSS	Full Circle	3
“	CiN Durham	3
“	LAC Aycliffe	1
“	Disabled Children and Families Team	1
“	Children's Homes	1
Strategic Commissioning	Commissioning (1), HR (2), PQR team (1)	4
Extended Services	Sure Start (29), CDYOS (2)	31
Access and Inclusion	Admissions & Transport (4), EMA team in EMTAS (5), BSS (1), EWS (4), SEN (5)	19
Achievement Services	School Funding Team (3), EDS (1) Other (2)	6

Regeneration and Economic Development

- 85 During 1 July 2010 and 30 September 2010, 108 complaints were received by the RED service grouping.

Economic Development

- 86 There have been no complaints for the last 3 quarters

Planning

- 87 The number of complaints has risen this quarter to 68 compared to 37 in quarter 1. No specific trends in relation to quality of service observed. However only 2 complaint (3%) were upheld and that 34 (50%) related to the Council's decision to grant planning permission in the face of significant objections for a contentious development in Wolsingham. To date this decision has been found to be procedurally correct.
- 88 These types of complaints, against the Council's decision to grant planning permission, are an inevitable part of the council's business. The fact that appeals allowed throughout the county is low (23% at Quarter1) coupled with the fact that the service has been free of LGO maladministration findings, suggests that despite such complaints the decision making process applied is essentially sound.
- 89 There are no learning outcomes in relation to general complaint trends; learning outcomes from individual complaints are discussed at management teams with improvements to procedures implemented thereafter as required.

Transport

- 90 8 complaints were received this quarter compared to 11 complaints received in the last quarter.
- 91 As the complaints received are spread across different service areas there are no learning outcomes although they will continue to be monitored.

Housing

- 92 Housing complaints amounted to 32 for this quarter compared to 13 the previous quarter
- 93 The majority of complaints received were regarding repairs and maintenance of council properties within the Durham City area.

- 94 Other trends relate to the choice based lettings scheme, 'Durham Key Options'. Individual complaints resolved by relevant Officers. No further action required at present.
- 95 The procedure for acting upon and learning from complaints has been reviewed across all Housing Service areas and a new procedure has been agreed. This new procedure aims to ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively and efficiently and that the 'learning' gained from complaints is used effectively to inform service improvement.
- 96 Durham City Homes Delivery Plan sets out how Durham County Council will deliver housing services to Council tenants in the former District of Durham City. It outlines how Durham City Homes intends to take forward the delivery of steadily improving services.
- 97 Durham Key Options is delivered in partnership with a number of the key providers of social housing across County Durham. This partnership is governed by a board that oversees operational and monitoring groups which lead on performance and improvement of the service. These groups are currently developing service standards for the scheme.

Compliments, comments and suggestions

- 98 72 compliments and 5 comments/suggestions were received for this quarter compared to 14 compliments 8 comments and 1 suggestion in quarter 1. They were all general messages of thanks. 63 of these compliments refer to planning and the ability of Planning Development Officers to take a customer focused approach to service delivery, in particular by exhibiting three core characteristics; speed of response, applying a cheerful disposition in dealings with customers and providing help and guidance to customers, over and above some may see as the traditional role of a 'regulatory officer', to proactively help customers navigate statutory processes and produce positive outcomes which are clearly valued by customers. Line Managers ensure that the good efforts of staff and teams are fully acknowledged. 8 compliments referred to housing while the remaining compliment referred to Economic Development. Of the three comments/suggestions one related to Economic Development and the other 2 were planning.

Corporate Resources (CR)

- 99 During 1 July 2010 and 30 September 2010, 69 complaints were received by the Resources service grouping.

Legal and Democratic Services

- 100 Legal and Democratic Services received 5 complaints during quarter 2 compared to 6 in the last quarter. Generally the complaints related to Quality of service and staff attitude. One particular complaint regarding the Registrars service related to delays in responding. The manager of the service has ensured in future that when similar calls are received if the relevant officer is not available then a colleague will pick it up.

Human Resources

- 101 There were no complaints for Corporate Human Resources in quarter 2.

Information and Communication Technology

- 102 There were no complaints for Information and Communication Technology in quarter 2

Finance

- 103 Finance received 52 complaints during quarter 2 compared to 59 in the previous quarter. Revenues received 22 and Benefits 24. The remainder were related to a variety of financial matters i.e. insurance.
- 104 With regard to Revenues 3 of the complaints were directly due to the Council's Bailiffs. These complaints have been addressed with the 3 different bailiffs. 2 complaints were as a direct result of a backlog. 4 new staff have now been appointed and are currently being trained. This should improve the service delivery. Another 2 complaints were due to staff error.
- 105 In Benefits 9 complaints related to delays in assessment 3 incorrect payee and 5 were communication issues. It is acknowledged that backlogs of work have created delays in assessment of claims and communication to customers needs to be improved. In order to resolve these issues resource has been allocated to areas where the oldest work is outstanding. Also training needs have been identified at Chester le Street to ensure letters are checked and edited prior to issue to ensure correct payment information is provided.

Assets

- 106 There were 12 complaints for assets this quarter compared to 9 the previous quarter
- 107 The majority (9) were identified as issues that didn't justify being classed as a complaint, for example, several concerned stray horses which we were able to deal with once we were advised.

Compliments, comments and suggestions

- 108 In total Resources received 51 compliments this quarter compared to 32 the previous quarter.
- 109 9 Compliments for Benefits and 3 for Council Tax were received for this quarter compared to 6 the previous quarter. Compliments are thanking staff for excellent service and help received.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) – current activity

- 110 During the quarter the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) initiated investigations into 11 matters relating to a range of complaints concerning:
- Complaint regarding illegal grazing – outcome awaited.
 - 6 Planning issues – outcomes awaited.
 - Transport and Highways complaint – the matter was concluded as a local settlement.
 - 2 Education/School admissions complaints – the Ombudsman exercised discretion in one of these cases, the outcomes of the other is still awaited.
 - Complaint relating to a Disabled Facilities Grant – outcome awaited.
- 111 The Ombudsman delivered decisions on 2 matters which had been subject to investigations that had been initiated prior to the beginning of the quarter. These matters can be summarised as follows:
- Planning and Building Control – Ombudsman’s Discretion.
 - Benefits – Ombudsman’s Discretion.
- 112 During the quarter the Ombudsman also notified the Council of the outcome in relation to a range of matters which were not subject to full investigation. The Ombudsman’s investigators reached their decisions on the basis of the details supplied by complainants supplemented in some instances with contextual information from Council officers. These matters can be summarised as follows:
- Planning & Building Control – Ombudsman’s Discretion
 - Housing Allocations – No Maladministration
 - 2 Other – Both Outside of Ombudsman’s Jurisdiction

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REASONS

- 113 Members of the Standards Committee note the report.
- 114 When the current reporting regime for complaints handling was introduced it was on the understanding that refinements/further development would take place as a continuing process. The views of Members as part of this process are always welcome.

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