

7 July 2022

**Customer Feedback Report,
Year End update, 2021/22**



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

**Councillor Susan McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital and
Customer Services**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To bring together a wide range of information collected from our customers that describe their experiences of using our services. The information relates to the latest 12 months (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022), compared to the same period in the previous year.

Executive summary

- 2 Information relating to our customers, such as their satisfaction / dissatisfaction with, and general experiences of the services and support we provide, is an important aid to improve customer service and align our actions with customer need.
- 3 This report covers the following range of feedback:
 - an overview of contact through our Customer Services team,
 - a summary of customer satisfaction outcomes through completed surveys and compliments received,
 - a selection of customer suggestions and their outcomes,
 - an overview of comments relating to our policies, procedures, and decision-making,
 - our performance in dealing with complaints (both statutory and non-statutory corporate complaints), and
 - recent developments that enhance the customer experience.

- 4 Throughout the 12 months ending 31 March 2022 we received more than 1.8 million contacts through our reported channels – an increase of 26% on the previous year. All channels, except social media, showed increased contact, but the telephone remained the most frequently used channel for contacting us.
- 5 The increased call volume over the last 12 months is due to a combination of transferring lines to the ACD system, and reinstating lines closed due to the pandemic, such as coroners and leisure centres.
- 6 More recently, the £150 energy rebate has driven increased levels of telephone contact (more than 6,400 contacts were received, 3,500 via telephone, the remainder through our digital channels).
- 7 More than 164,000 households now have an online account for requesting services through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. In addition, an increasing number of residents are setting up accounts to access council tax and housing benefit information through the Revenues and Benefits Portal.
- 8 In line with previous reports, around a quarter of all contact led to the creation of a service request in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The remaining three quarters were from customers seeking advice, information, wanting to be transferred to another team, book an appointment, or request a progress update.
- 9 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received. Over the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, although there was a 1% decrease on the previous year (5,538 fewer), the number remains 28% higher than the pre-COVID level (additional 92,226).
- 10 To help monitor delivery timescales of service requests logged within our CRM system, we have applied performance standards within the system where possible.
- 11 At the end of quarter four, a reportable and accurate performance standard had been applied to 58 service requests. Improvement work will continue during 2022/23.
- 12 49% of service requests processed during the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, were assessed against a performance standard with the standard met in 72% of cases.
- 13 Our CRM system enables customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to be automatically sent to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.

- 14 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022 we e-mailed almost 172,000 surveys to our customers and received almost 20,000 responses (11%) which is almost 6,500 more than the previous year (+49%).
- 15 Dissatisfaction continues to be mainly linked to not keeping customers informed of progress, not explaining our decision making, taking too long to complete tasks, and not resolving the issue long-term. It is important to note that the ongoing response to the pandemic and increased demand have led to extended service delivery times over the reporting period.
- 16 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, we received 2,466 corporate complaints – 68 fewer than the previous year. Of those investigated, 48% were upheld.
- 17 During this same period, 128 complainants were dissatisfied with the response to their complaint and asked for it to be escalated to independent investigation by the Customer Feedback Team. Further analysis that 26% could have been avoided through either timelier or more comprehensive updates from services, and/or completion of the agreed action in the first instance.
- 18 As of 31 March 2022, around 19,500 adults and 3,900 children and young people were being supported by Adult and Health Services (AHS) and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) respectively. And we continue to monitor our performance for statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority.
- 19 AHS received 78 complaints over the reporting period, 4% more than the previous year. Of these, 30% were upheld and 32% partially upheld. This correlates with a 6% increase in adults open to services (19,557 compared to 18,460 last year).
- 20 The most frequent reasons for making a complaint were dissatisfaction with charges (24 complaints), speed of service (20 complaints), and three categories all receiving 12 complaints: the application of service guidance/procedures; lack of communication (other) and lack of explanation/explanation not understood.
- 21 CYPS received 34 complaints over the reporting period, 17% fewer than on the previous year. Of these 9% were upheld and 50% partially upheld.
- 22 Due to the complexity of these complaints, up to three reasons can be recorded for each. During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, the most frequently recorded reasons for making a complaint (14 complaints) was communication and staff behaviour (14 complaints). Nine complaints featured disagreement (with action/ assessment/ decision/ recorded information).

- 23 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, the Ombudsman delivered decisions relating to 69 complaints. Of the 22 decisions delivered during the latest quarter, seven (32%) were upheld.
- 24 In order to ensure that the contents of this report support learning and continuous improvement, the format and data content of the report are currently under review; there will therefore be a refreshed format of the report from Q1 of 2022/23.

Recommendation(s)

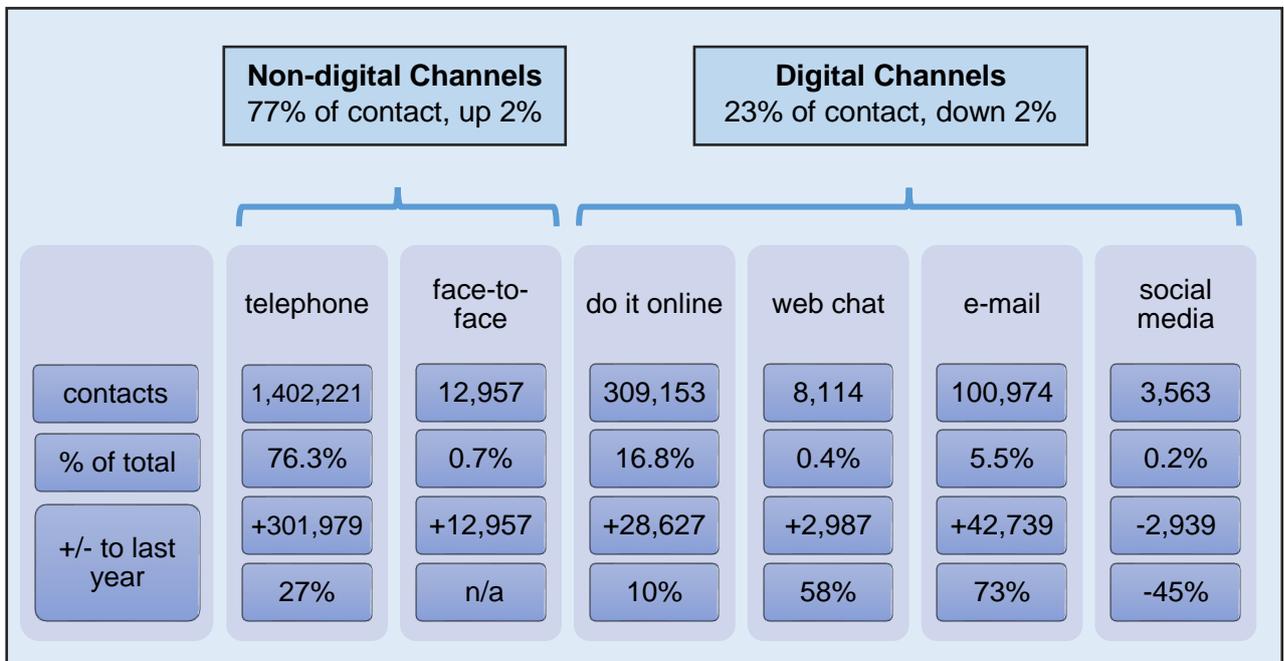
- 25 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is asked to note the contents of the report.

Background

- 26 Successful organisations listen and respond to their customers and one way to gain this valuable insight is by gathering and utilising customer feedback.
- 27 The customer feedback report brings together a wide range of information collected from our customers which describes their experiences of using our services.

Contact through our customer services team

- 28 As summarised in the infographic below, more than 1.8 million contacts were received through our reported channels during 2021/22. Of these, more than half (around one million contacts) were handled by our corporate Customer Services Teams.



- 29 Contacts increased across all channels, except social media, compared to the previous year.

Non-Digital Channels

- 30 In line with previous reports, the telephone remains the most frequently used channel for contacting us.
- 31 Broadly speaking, we receive telephone calls either through our Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents based on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD).

- 32 Only calls received via our ACD system are included in our telephone statistics so in line with our initiative to develop a customer-focused, one-council approach to service delivery, we are transferring non-ACD lines into the ACD system. This will allow us to see a more holistic view of telephony demand and performance across the council, and to monitor and identify opportunities to improve and enhance the customer experience.
- 33 The increased call volume over the last 12 months is due to a combination of transferring lines to the ACD system, and reinstating lines closed due to the pandemic, such as coroners and leisure centres.
- 34 More recently, the £150 energy rebate has driven increased levels of telephone contact (more than 6,400 contacts were received, 3,500 via telephone, the remainder through our digital channels). Most contact was from customers asking when they would receive the rebate, but we also received a noticeable increase in demand from customers requesting to set up a direct debit to ensure they receive their rebate as soon as possible.
- 35 The increase in face-to-face contact reflects the re-opening of our Customer Access Points (CAPs). Except for helpdesk services at County Hall, which continued throughout the pandemic, the remainder of the CAP estate was open only between 30 September 2021 and 13 December 2021.
- 36 Therefore, the helpdesk at County Hall represents 93% of the face-to-face contact for the 12 months ending 31 March 2022.

Digital Channels

- 37 Although the telephone remains the most popular method overall, more customers are choosing to interact with us via our digital channels.
- 38 More than 164,000 households now have an online account for requesting services through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. In addition, an increasing number of residents are setting up accounts to access council tax and housing benefit information through the Revenues and Benefits Portal.

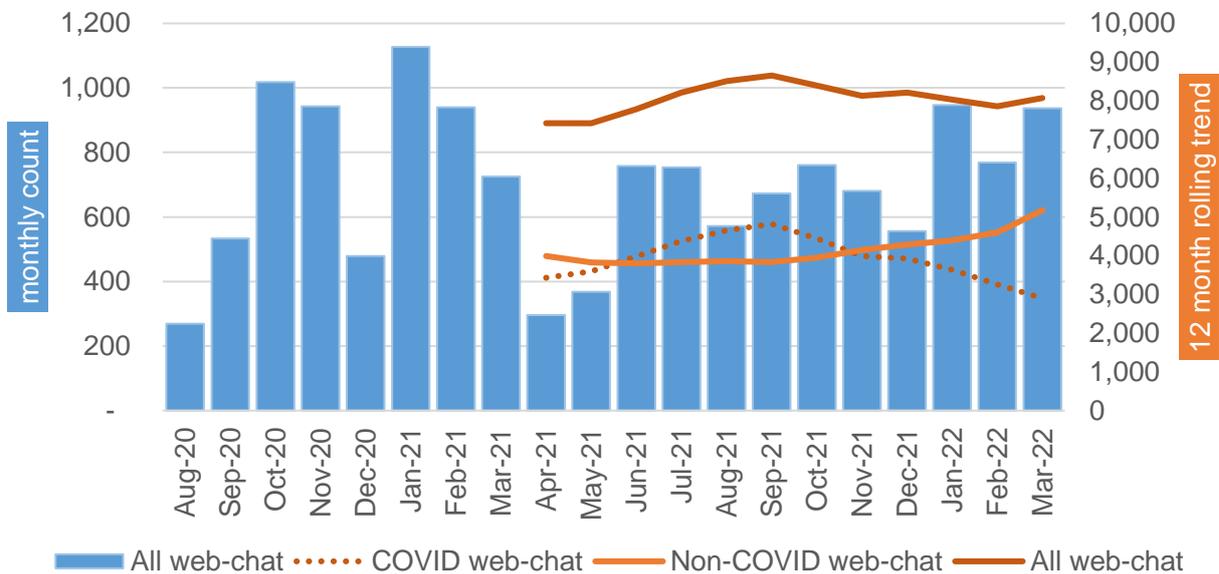
Account		2020/21	2021/22	Change	
Do-it-online (CRM)		147,425	164,617	+17,192	+12%
Revenues & Benefits	Open Portal	24,225	28,387	+4,162	+17%
	Council tax e-bills	31,027	32,616	+1,589	+5%

39 The movement from non-digital to digital channels is particularly noticeable across customers logging service requests within our CRM system. The shift from telephone to online can be seen, as per the table below:

		proportion of service requests logged by channel – 12 months ending 31 March	
		2021	2022
Non-digital	Telephone	30%	24%
	Face-to-face	0%	0%
	Total	30%	24%
Digital	Do it online portal	64%	71%
	Other digital*	6%	5%
	Total	70%	76%

*social media (Facebook and Twitter), webchat, e-mail, virtual appointments

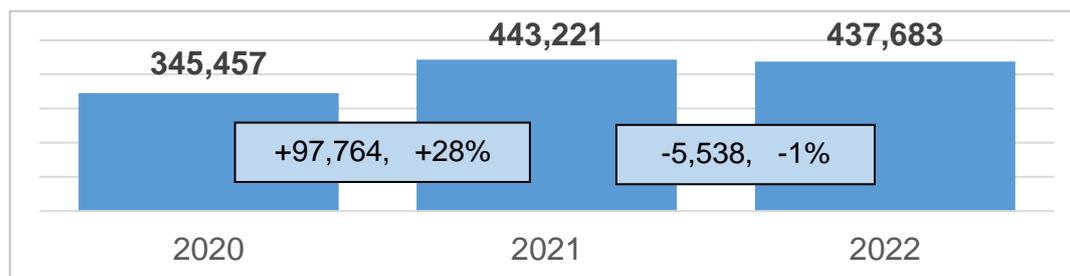
40 Although webchat is showing a slight declining trend, analysis has shown this is mainly due to decreasing demand for our COVID-19 related services.



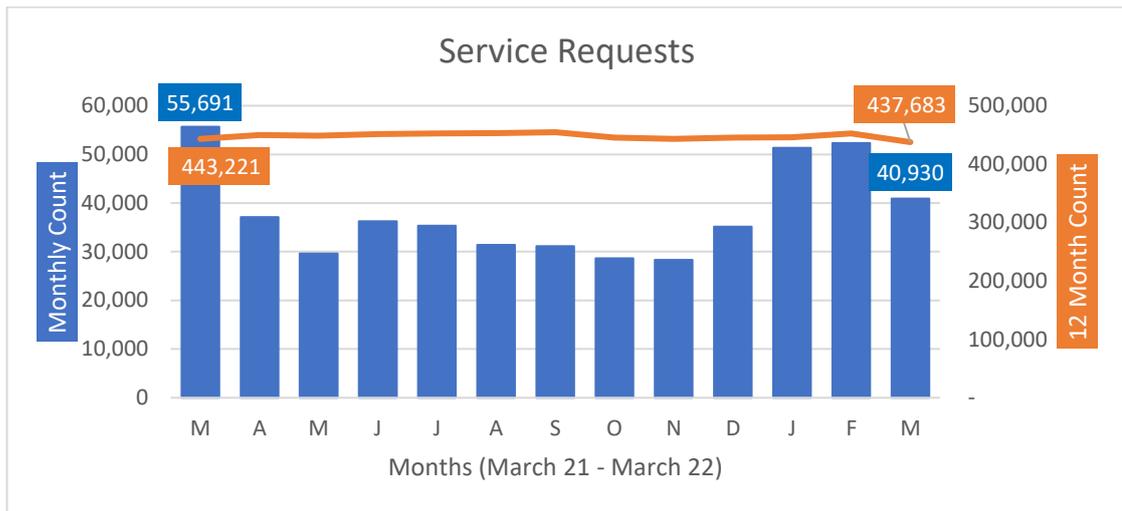
41 The increase in non-COVID related contact is driven by increases across general enquiries (+250, +32%) and council tax (+66, +15%) enquires in the main, driven by queries relating to the £150 council tax rebate.

Service Requests

- 42 Around 25% of customer contact leads to the creation of a service request in our CRM system. The remaining 75% relates to customers seeking advice or more information, wanting to be transferred to another team, booking an appointment, or requesting a progress update.
- 43 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received. However, latest data shows a decrease on the previous year.



- 44 The increase at the start of the pandemic (2020) was driven by residents contacting us to seek financial help (both personal and business related) or report issues arising from spending more time at home (especially environmental issues such as litter and fly-tipping, and anti-social behaviour issues such as noise complaints), and the need to enforce various COVID-19 restrictions. However, the scale of this initial increase is masked by corresponding decreases across service requests linked to services which were required to temporarily close due to COVID restrictions, most notably waste permits and bulky waste collections.
- 45 By the end of 2021, we were dealing with fewer COVID-related service requests, but the overall total continued to increase. This mainly followed the reinstatement, and increased demand for, those waste services which were temporarily closed.
- 46 Latest data shows around 5,500 fewer service requests were received in the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, a decrease of 1% on the previous year.

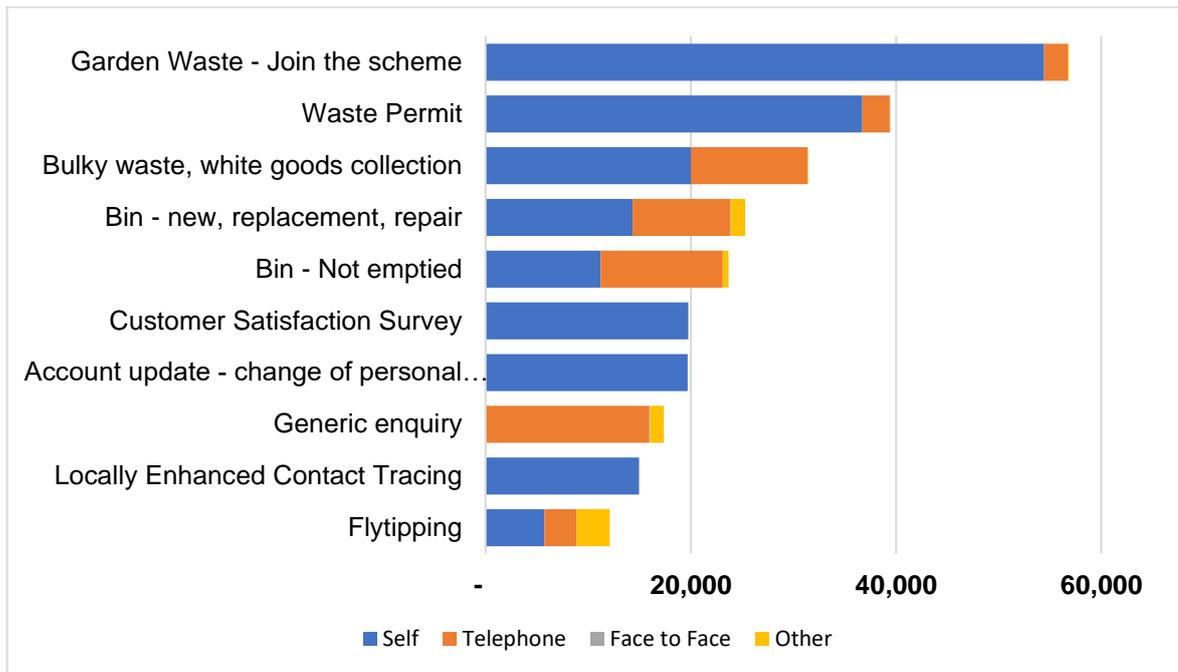


47 Notable changes during the 12 months ending 31 March 2022 include:

- 27% reduction in reports of fly-tips (-4,560). This means that the number of reported fly-tips has returned to its pre-COVID number of around 12,000 per year.
- 23% reduction in missed bin collections (-7,379). However, the number of missed collections remains 40% higher than the pre-COVID number of almost 17,000.
- 11% increase in bulky waste collections (+3,108) with more than 31,000 collections requested, 23% higher than the pre-COVID number.
- 17% increase in requests for a waste permit (+5,759) with more than 39,000 requests received, 14% higher than the pre-COVID number.

48 These changes have had a knock-on effect to our customer satisfaction survey, with more surveys distributed and almost 6,500 additional people responding (up 49% to almost 20,000).

49 Over the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, the ten most frequently requested services were:



Performance Standards

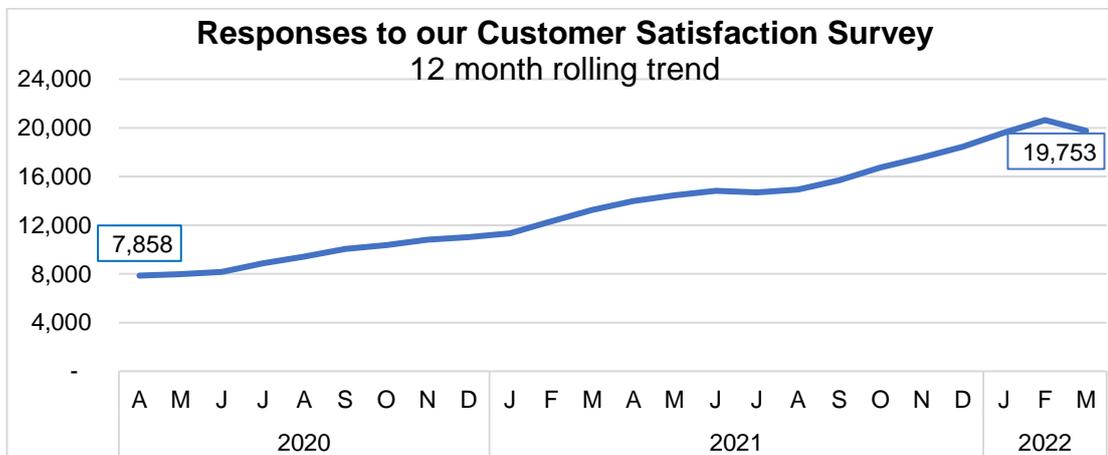
- 50 To enable us to monitor delivery timescales of service requests logged within our CRM system, we have applied performance standards within the system where possible¹.
- 51 At the end of quarter four, a reportable and accurate performance standard had been applied to 58 service requests. We have also identified a further eight processes where we could apply a performance standard and work to implement is continuing.
- 52 However, several outstanding processes are linked to multiple performance standards, so they are more difficult to apply. For example, the performance standard for the removal of graffiti is three working days, unless it is offensive then it changes to within 24 hours of notification. The application of performance standards for service requests linked to multiple performance standards could potentially be addressed through data dashboard development during quarter one 2022/23.
- 53 49% of all service requests processed during 2021/22 were assessed against a performance standard, and of these, the performance standard was met in 72% of cases. This is four percentage points higher than the previous quarter.
- 54 During quarter four, 80% of service requests with a measurable performance standard related to one of six areas:

¹ We do not apply performance standards if the process is not fully managed within the CRM which accounts for 48% of processes. We also did not apply performance standards to many of the COVID-related service requests, partly due to the speed of the set-up, but also due to the complexity and unknown elements of the request which often resulted in required modifications as the pandemic progressed.

	Performance standard (days)	Service requests received	Completed within timeframe
Join the garden waste scheme	1	39,464	79%
Waste permit	1	9,844	96%
Bin – not emptied	3	4,672	32%
Street lighting	10	1,905	75%
Fly-tipping	3	2,925	46%
Road or footpath	10	1,812	50%

Customer satisfaction - surveys and compliments

- 55 Our CRM system enables customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to be automatically sent to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.
- 56 Although our overall survey response rate as a proportion of service requests is low – as seen below – it has improved over the last two years.



- 57 The improved response rate is due to a combination of essential maintenance work which has resolved previous system closure issues, linking the survey to more service requests, and capturing more customer email addresses.
- 58 The table below provides a summary of survey responses; the return rate remains low overall.

	12 months ending 31 March...		
	2021	2022	Change
Service Request types	105	127	22
Service Requests received	333,541	324,356	-9,185 (-2.75%)
Surveys emailed to customer	111,547 (33%)	171,701 (53%)	+60,154 (53.9%)
Responses to survey	13,263 (11.9%)	19,753 (11.5%)	+6,490 (48.9%)
Responses as a % of service requests	4%	6.1%	+2.1pp

- 59 Although the satisfaction survey is linked to 127 service request types, 82% of the survey responses received throughout 2021/22 related to only 21 service request types (see appendix five). Eight service request types, summarised in the table below, made up 60% of total responses.

	Response Rate	
	Surveys returned / total SRs	
	12 months ending 31 March...	
	2021	2022
Bin: missed collection	10.0% 4,327 / 31,042	18.2% 4,311 / 23,663
Bulky Waste	0.1% 21 / 28,351	12.1% 3,820 / 31,459
Complaint	11.8% 552 / 4,692	18.6% 794 / 4,257
Council tax – change of payment method	12% 642 / 5,342	5.9% 428 / 7,302
Fly-tipping	6.1% 1,015 / 16,654	6.7% 811 / 12,094
Join the garden waste scheme	1.0% 576 / 58,205	0.7% 401 / 56,835
Road or footpath	7.6% 568 / 7,488	7.4% 507 / 6,852
Street lighting	12.2% 790 / 6,470	10.5% 701 / 6,703

- 60 Although overall response rates have increased for four of the eight service request types, there was significant variance for individual service requests, ranging from 0.7% to 18.6%. This variation is linked to both the

volume of requests and the nature of the requests themselves. We are continuing to identify options to reduce this variance and additional ways to capture feedback.

- 61 We have analysed all survey responses received during the 12 months ending 31 March 2022 against our nine key measures as per the following infographic.



- 62 Satisfaction rates vary significantly across different service request types.

63 Analysis of satisfaction with service delivery shows seven areas attained satisfaction ratings of at least 90%: early help (94%), bulky waste collections (97%), waste permit requests (97%), birth death and marriage certificate requests (98%), joining the garden waste scheme (95%), applying for free school travel (96%), and changing the payment method for council tax (91%).

64 Six areas recorded a satisfaction level of less than 70%: requesting a new, replacement, or repair to bin (39%), service complaints (51%), dog and litter bins (62%), drainage and flooding (70%), clearing litter (67%) and tree or hedge pruning / removal (67%).

- 65 We have investigated the reasons for these low satisfaction levels:

- **New, replacement or repair to bins:** although supply issues relating to new and replacement bins have now been resolved, we now have issues with the supply of bin lids. Therefore, we are now unable to fulfil requests for lid repairs / replacements. We expect new stock to arrive

in June 2022. In addition, throughout the year staffing levels were impacted by COVID-19 so the service prioritised essential activity such as refuse collection over bin repair and replacement activity.

- **Dog and litter bins:** requests at the beginning of the year were impacted by the bin supply issue. Although we have now received stock (prices have increased by 30%) and lead in times have reduced, the time to action requests is longer than we would have like.
- **Drainage and flooding:** A series of storms and heavy rain brought challenges to the service and unprecedented demand, all service requests were prioritised and dealt with in accordance of priority.
- **Service level complaints:** timeliness of both acknowledgement and responses is the biggest driver for dissatisfaction.
- **Clearing litter:** Throughout the year, staffing levels were impacted by COVID. However, our teams are now back to normal working.
- **Tree or hedge pruning/removal:** there three storms between December and February had a significant impact on our works and we are currently catching up with the programme.

Customer Compliments and Star Rating Feedback

- 66 Throughout the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, we received 770 compliments, 305 fewer (-28%) than the same period the previous year.
- 67 In line with previous reports, most of the compliments related to satisfaction with service provision – although we did also receive praise due to the actions of specific individuals.
- 68 A small sample of the 188 compliments received during quarter four, 2021/22 is attached at Appendix two.
- 69 In addition to compliments, we collect star ratings from customers who request a service via an online form. The rating helps us understand the customer’s experience when logging their request and identifies opportunities for improvement.

All Service Request Types 12 months ending 31 March...	Star ratings received	Proportion of star ratings received				
		5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star	1-star
2021	104,869	65%	17%	10%	2%	5%
2022	85,739	69%	17%	7%	2%	5%

- 70 86% of respondents rated service request handling as four or five stars during the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, up four percentage points on the previous year.
- 71 50% of ratings received during the 12 months ending 31 March related to the following five service areas.

Service Request Type	Star ratings received	Proportion of star ratings received				
		5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star	1-star
Joining the garden waste scheme	16,865	69%	19%	7%	2%	3%
		88%				
Customer satisfaction survey	13,769	64%	18%	8%	3%	8%
		82%				
Waste permit	6,180	84%	10%	3%	1%	2%
		94%				
Bin – Not emptied	3,492	62%	15%	8%	2%	14%
		77%				
Bulky waste, white goods collection	2,949	71%	18%	7%	3%	2%
		89%				

Customer suggestions

- 72 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, we received 532 customer suggestions, 97 fewer than the same period last year.
- 73 Whilst we receive and review a considerable number of suggestions, the majority have been addressed previously and/or considered as part of service development.

Comments relating to policies, procedures, decision-making and feed and charges.

- 74 To understand the impact of our policies, procedures and decision making and to support development in these areas we capture and analyse the comments we receive. We then provide feedback to the relevant service areas / teams to support opportunities for improvement and development of policies and procedures.
- 75 The following table summarises the feedback received over the 12 months ending 31 March 2022.

39 objections to our decisions (-7)	Four objections related to operating hours / building closures and three for planning decisions. The remainder were mainly operational decisions, e.g., road closures.
81 dissatisfied with fees and charges (-25)	24 related to leisure centres, 14 to replacement bins, 2 to garden waste, and 6 to council tax.
82 comments about policies / procedures (-109)	71% of comments related to policies and procedures linked to waste collection and disposal. - 27% to our Household Waste Recycling Centres (22) - 15% to our Refuse and Recycling Service (12)

Priority Correspondence

- 76 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, we received 1,962 items of priority correspondence².
- 77 All teams are working to a response deadline of 10 working days from receipt of enquiry, except the Resources service grouping which is working to a response deadline of four working days. There is currently a pilot in place looking at Members feedback to support improvements in relation to enquiries received:

	Enquiries received	Responses on time		Responses late	
1 Oct to 31 Dec 2021	385	293	76%	92	24%
1 Jan to 31 March 2022	503	328	65%	175	35%

Our performance in dealing with complaints (both statutory and corporate)

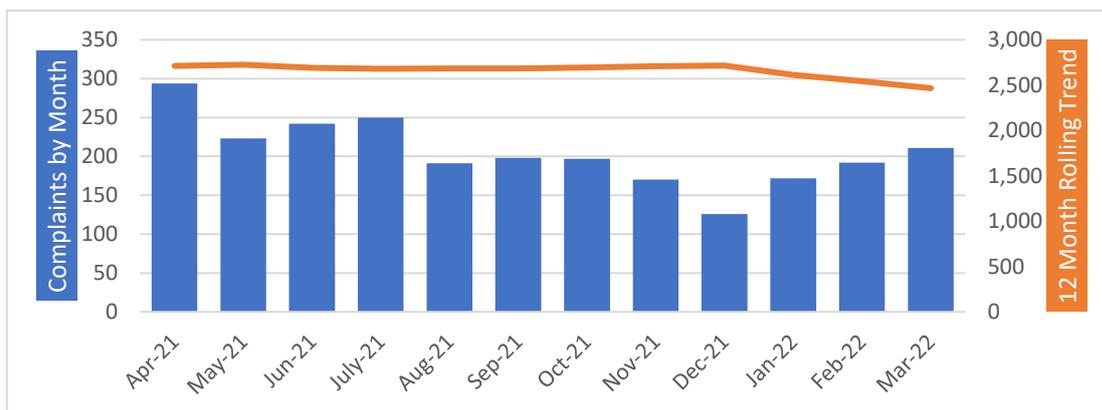
- 78 Each of the complaint types (statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints that cover all other complaints) is subject to its own processes and policy, so is reported separately.

² Priority correspondence relates to correspondence sent directly to the Chief executive, Member of Parliament or Corporate Directors

Corporate Complaints

79 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, we received 2,466 corporate complaints, 68 fewer (-3%) than the previous year. Of those investigated, 48% were upheld.

80 It is worth noting that the ratio of complaints received during the latest 12 months to service requests was 0.6% or six complaints for every 1,000 service requests. This is the same as the previous year.

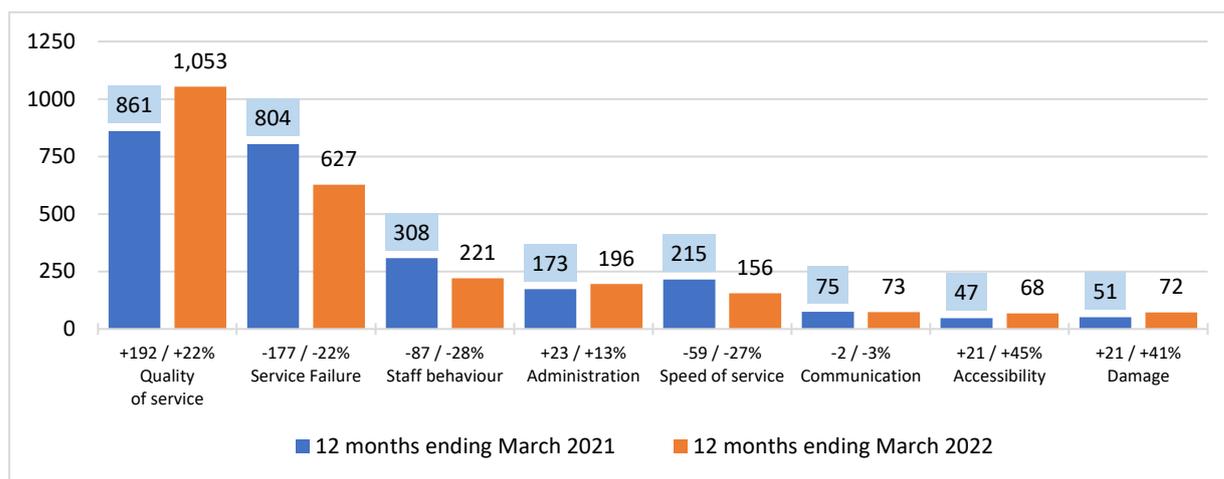


81 Almost two thirds of service level complaints were completed and responded to within timescale, which is broadly in line with the previous year.

82 During quarter four, the following service areas recorded the best performance: 76% of planning complaints were completed and responded to within timescale, 73% of social services complaints and 67% of parking complaints.

83 Broadly speaking, corporate complaints can be categorised across eight specific areas.

Complaint Area	Complaint Area Description
1. Accessibility	We were inaccessible to the customer
2. Administration	Our administrative processes were poor causing inconvenience to the customer
3. Communication	We did not communicate effectively
4. Staff Behaviour	Our staff behaved badly
5. Service Failure	We did not do what we said we would
6. Speed of Service	We did not provide the service when we said we would
7. Quality of Service	We did not provide the service to the expected standard
8. Damage	We caused damage whilst carrying out our duties



84 'Quality of Service' (not providing the service to the expected standard) and 'Service Failure' (not doing what we said we would) remain the most frequent causes for complaint.

85 In line with previous reports, the most frequent cause for complaint, representing 15% of all complaints, was missed bin collections. Of those investigated in the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, 78% were upheld.

86 However, it is important to note that whilst we received 381 missed bin complaints over this period, we collected 13 million bins, a complaint to delivery ratio of just 0.003%. In addition, a smaller proportion of service requests due to missed collection are progressing to complaints.

	2020/21	2021/22	change
service requests (SR)	31,042	23,663	-7,379 (-24%)
No. complaints	578	381	-197 (-34%)
% of SRs	1.9%	1.6%	

Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation

87 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, 128 complainants were dissatisfied with the response to their complaint and asked for it to be escalated to independent investigation by the Customer Feedback Team.

88 Although 70% of these complaints were responded to within the performance standard, it is slightly lower than the 78% achieved in the previous year. This is due to the increased complexity of complaints resulting in increased time for information to be received from service areas. If we are unable to meet the performance standard, we issue a holding response with an explanation of the delay and an expected response date.

89 Analysis of a sample of complaints suggests that 26% could have been avoided if there had been a timelier or more comprehensive update from the service, and/or the agreed action had been completed in the first instance. This is in line with previous quarters.

90 55 complaints were escalated to an independent investigation during quarter four:



*45 investigations were completed during quarter four - 14 were received before quarter four. Nine outcomes were delivered – five related to complaints received before quarter four.

91 Details of complaints upheld by independent investigators during quarter four are included in Appendix three.

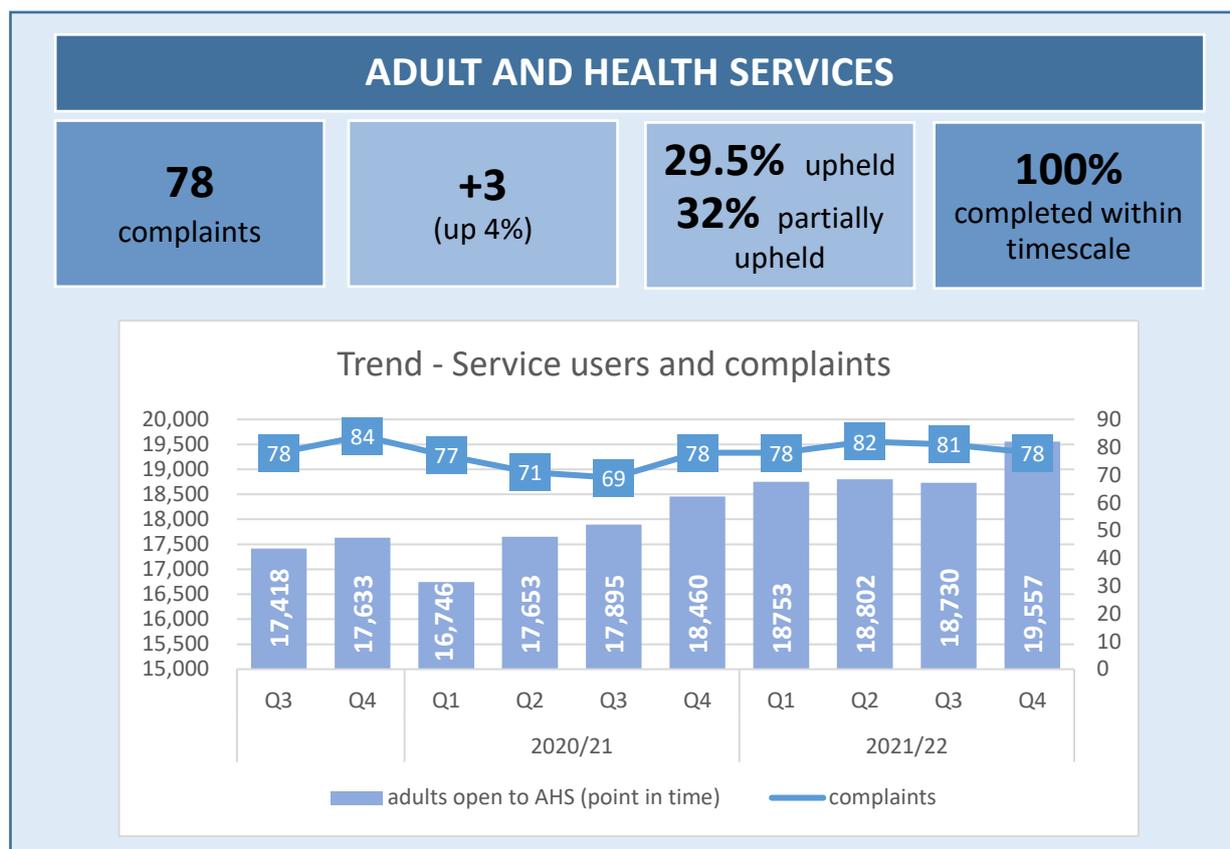
Statutory Complaints

92 As of 31 March 2022, around 19,500 adults and 3,900 children and young people were being supported by Adult and Health Services (AHS) and Children and Young People’s Services (CYPS) respectively.

93 Each service has its own distinct statutory complaints procedures, so the complaints made under each of these procedures are not directly comparable. Broadly speaking, users of AHS have voluntarily requested access to the service whereas the involvement of CYPS is primarily due to a child or young person being in need or at risk of significant harm.

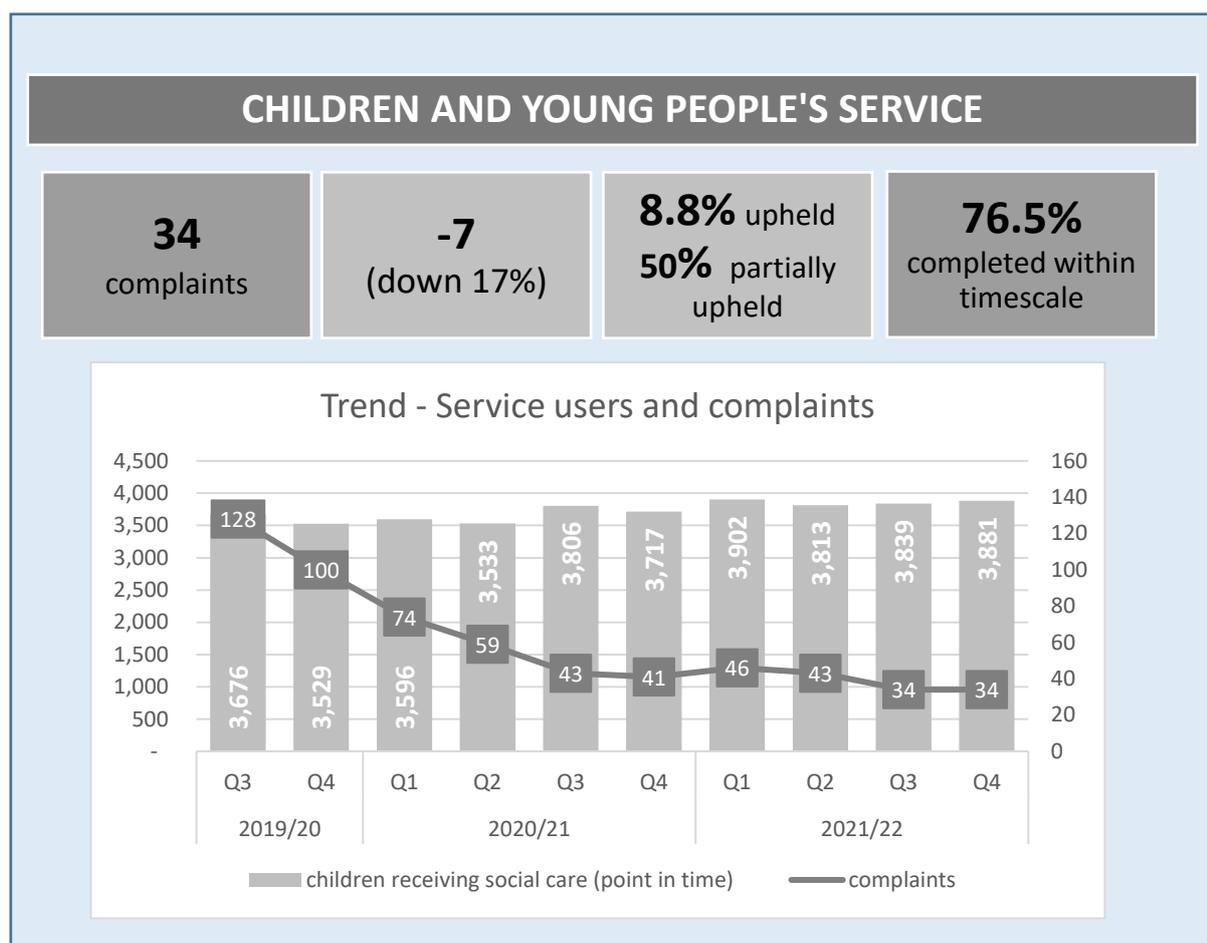
94 Statutory complaints have traditionally been logged and tracked through a clerical system, overseen by a complaints officer who monitors progress, adherence to timescales, quality of response and completion of recommended actions.

Adult Health Services



- 95 Of the 78 statutory AHS complaints received during the 12 months ending 31 March 2022: 36% related to older people/physical disabilities/sensory impairment (28 complaints), 33% to Transactional Services (26 complaints) who deal with financial assessments/charging and 15% to learning disabilities/mental health/substance misuse (12 complaints).
- 96 The most frequent reasons for making a complaint were dissatisfaction with charges (24 complaints), speed of service (20 complaints) with three further categories all receiving 12 complaints: the application of service guidance/procedures; lack of communication (other) and lack of explanation/explanation not understood.
- 97 During quarter four, actions taken in response to complaints included:
- Undertaking a Mental Capacity Act (MCA) assessment.
 - Reminding our Billing Team of the correct way to add temporary and permanent residential placements to the new adult social care computer system.
 - Putting actions in place to ensure service users receive timely updates in relation to any changes in personnel.

Children and Young People's Services



- 98 Of the 34 statutory CYPS complaints received during the 12 months ending 31 March 2022: 70% (24 complaints) related to the Families First teams (responsible for children in need, child protection plans, child, and family assessments (in cases of parental dispute)), 18% (six complaints) related to teams involved with Children Looked After, and 9% (three complaints) related to the Children with Disabilities team.
- 99 Due to the complexity of these complaints, up to three reasons can be recorded for each. During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, the most frequently recorded reason for making a complaint (14 complaints) was communication, and staff behaviour (14). Nine complaints featured disagreement (with action/ assessment/ decision/ recorded information).
- 100 During quarter four, actions taken in response to complaints included:
- Making changes in the Looked After Children teams so that a duty social worker is available for parent or carers to contact when the child's social worker is not immediately available.
 - Ensuring explanation is given to parents about the child protection process and what happens when a child is no longer subject to a

Child Protection Plan (and Core Group Meetings) but becomes a Child in Need and the subject of team Around the Family (TAF) meetings.

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

- 101 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, the Ombudsman delivered decisions relating to 69 complaints. Conclusions were reached based on details supplied by complainants, and in some instances, supplemented with contextual information from council officers.
- 102 Of the 22 decisions delivered during the latest quarter, seven (32%) were upheld. Details are included in Appendix four. Additional information regarding complaints escalated to the Ombudsman is available [here](#).

Recent developments that enhance the customer experience

- 103 We are continuing to drive improvements across customer services and enhance the customer experience through our Integrated Customer Service initiative and Unified Communications Strategy.
- 104 In February 2022, we implemented a new Video Relay Service within our corporate contact centre. This provides immediate telephony support for customers who wish to communicate via British Sign Language (BSL) over video telephones and similar technologies.
- 105 This new service will run alongside existing solutions of face-to-face interpreter and text relay. Its aim is to increase the ease and speed of contact for service users at first point of contact.
- 106 Initial feedback has been positive, and we have put mechanisms in place to gather user feedback over a trial period to support our understanding of further improvement prospects.
- 107 72% of council services have been fully migrated to ACD system technology. Migrating these lines enables us to see an enhanced view of demand and performance statistics for all telephony contact, and thereby allows us to identify opportunities to improve the customer experience. Migration plans will continue into quarter one of 2022/23.
- 108 During quarter four, the following CRM improvements were delivered in response to customer feedback or as part of service improvement activity:
- improvements to performance standards across multiple processes to better inform customers of service delivery timeframes, and ensure that the performance standards can be monitored and reviewed

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Information on financial remedies in relation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is included within the report.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Complaints regarding any equality and diversity aspect are handled in consultation with the Council's Equality Team.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

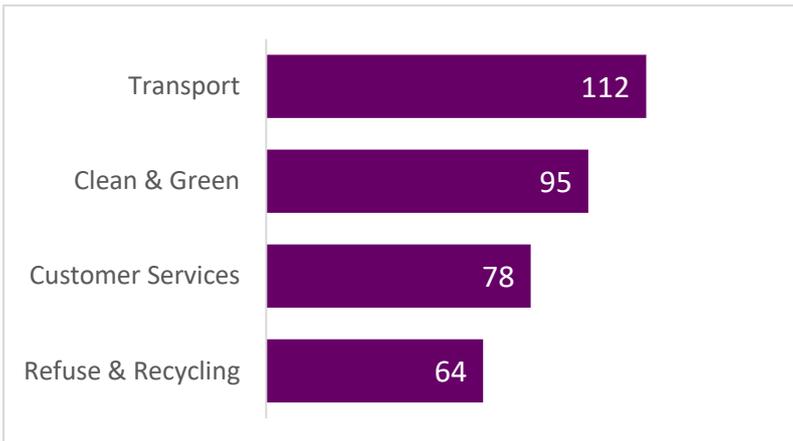
Risk

None.

Procurement

None.

Appendix 2: Sample of compliments received during quarter four, 2021/22



a big thank you to the wardens and the Clean and Green team for the work done in their village. "It has really tidied up the place, thank you."

wanted to pass on thanks to Customer services team in regards to her marriage certificate.

Thanks to Bereavement services for help locating a grave.

thanks to the Housing Solutions team for attending and resolving a blocked drain issue.

wanted to thank the Highways team for helping him obtain a new road sign.

would like to pass on sincere thanks to the Clean and Green team who have been out to cut trees. Customer states that they were very polite and asked how she wanted them cutting. She could not thank them enough.

would like to pass on gratitude to the Assets team for the excellent work that has been put into the Fyndoune work and the Langley Park/PRU negotiations.

Thanks to the Highways team for resurfacing a footpath. The workmen have been friendly and efficient, and the improvement is huge!

would like to thank the clean and green team for the speedy repair of a fence. Really appreciates it since it was a danger to the public.

"The service I have received from yourselves has been superb" (comment relating to the Records Office)

pleased with the quick service and clear response received from the Records Office.

a big thank you to the Welfare Rights team for all the help with their blue badge

pass on thanks to the Culture and Sports team for helping sort out a thrive card for her two daughters. Customer states the employee was very helpful and nice.

It's very refreshing to be able to compliment good service. I have recently started to use your E-library and had a few teething problems that I required help/ support with.

a huge thanks to the driver of the refuse truck today. (Easington Colliery route)
"I'd forgotten to put my bin out, and went outside and mouthed if I could bring it out. He nodded, and when I put it out he give me a thumbs up to confirm it would be emptied. He did, and I'm grateful, if you could please pass on my thanks."

I e-mailed your ebook support 'helpline' and ended up in contact with a lovely employee. The help and advice given was prompt, very well explained and managed to sort out all of the issues I had raised.

I lodged a complaint a few weeks ago about parking at the back of St Leonards school at the end of the school day.

I don't know what measures have been taken but it certainly seems to be working. Thank you for taking the matter seriously as it was becoming very distressing and dangerous. Please keep up the good work.

delighted with the untidy garden request being delt with swiftly by the Neighbourhood Wardens team

wants to compliment the Highways team for quick and efficient repair of pothole.

Appendix 3: Independent investigations by Customer Feedback Team where corporate complaints were upheld

Complaint upheld	Recommendation
Customer reported multiple times that their bins were either not emptied or not returned properly.	Apologise to the customer for our response and for the inconvenience caused to them.
Customer is unhappy with the time taken to remedy the customer's initial complaint.	Apologise to the customer for the service provided

Complaint partially upheld	Recommendation
Customer dissatisfied with the time taken to investigate their complaint regarding street permits. Also unhappy with the level of communication received regarding this matter.	Apologise for the delay in responding.
Customer dissatisfied with the outcome of the council's investigations into noise complaint. Also unhappy with time taken by DCC to respond to enquiries.	No issue found with initial complaint however some fault found with delays, therefore apologise for the delay in responding.
Customer unhappy with the consultation process relating to planning application.	Acknowledge the time taken in pursuing this matter.
Customer unhappy not to receive a garden waste bin within 10 working days of subscribing to the Garden Waste Collection Service.	Apologise for the level of service.
Customer is dissatisfied with information relating to how to appeal a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).	Apologise for errors that occurred once the FPN was issued.

Appendix 4: Complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

Ombudsman's final decision	Agreed action
<p>The complainant was unhappy about the council's handling of their reports of an unpleasant odour emanating from a neighbouring property.</p> <p>There was fault by the council because it prematurely closed the customer's complaint before considering the full scope of its powers.</p>	<p>The fault did not cause customer significant injustice to warrant further pursuit of the matter by, or a remedy from, the Ombudsman.</p>
<p>Although the trust clearly communicated a dementia diagnosis, it did not develop a care and support plan.</p> <p>The council's poor communication with the patient's wife, about care and support, leaves her uncertain as to whether her husband would have received different care and support before he died.</p>	<p>Council to apologise and pay £200 in recognition of the uncertainty caused.</p> <p>Council to ensure relevant staff are aware of the importance of effective communication with service users and carers, regarding decisions about their care and support.</p>
<p>The complainant felt the council wrongly refused their child free school transport when they moved to a new school.</p> <p>The council is at fault for failing to provide a school transport appeal process for the complainant as set out in statutory guidance.</p>	<p>Council to apologise for the uncertainty caused and review its school transport policy.</p> <p>The council has agreed to provide the complainant's child with free school transport.</p>
<p>The complainant felt the council failed to provide suitable home to school transport. Although there was no fault in the council's decision making (it offered the child a door-to-door taxi service, suitable for their needs), there was some fault in the council's complaint handling.</p>	<p>Council will pay a time and trouble payment of £100.</p>

Ombudsman's final decision	Agreed action
<p>Council failed to offer an appropriate remedy for the identified failings in the care provided to customer's father at residential home.</p>	<p>Council to apologise to the customer and pay £250 to acknowledge the time and trouble spent pursuing the complaint.</p> <p>Council will also pay an additional £250 in recognition of the customer's distress and waive the outstanding care fees.</p> <p>The council is taking action to address the overall standard of care provided by the care home.</p>
<p>Found fault in the Council's actions in the way it considered customers application for a discretionary benefit, but this did not lead to an injustice.</p> <p>The council also failed to refer customer to the welfare rights team which caused them uncertainty.</p>	<p>Council to apologise for the uncertainty caused by failing to refer the customer to the welfare rights team.</p> <p>Council to complete the referral for customer for a benefit check</p> <p>Council to remind relevant staff of the importance of consistency in considering expenditure and to follow the procedure for considering universal credit advance payment recovery in financial assessments.</p>
<p>Council was at fault for the way it has handled customers Council Tax Reduction (CTR) application.</p>	<p>Council to apologise for the level of communication received by the customer.</p> <p>Council to pay £150 to recognise the distress suffered.</p> <p>Council to remind its staff of its CTR reduction published process and the need to give clear reasons for the decisions they make.</p>

Appendix 5: Customer Satisfaction Survey: response rates and satisfaction with service delivery

Top 24 by number of survey responses – equates to 82% of responses

	Response Rate Surveys returned / total SRs		Satisfaction with service delivery (change is only significant if it is =>2pp)		Main reason(s) for dissatisfaction
	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	31 March 2021	31 March 2022	31 March 2021	31 March 2022	
Anti-social behaviour	3.7% 106 / 2,879	4.1% 70 / 1,704	78%	81%	The issue has not been resolved long term.
Bin: new, replacement or repair	0.5% 128 / 26,121	0.6% 152 / 25,291	45%	39%	Not keeping customers informed of progress. Taking too long to complete task. Not Completing task.
Bin: Not emptied	10.0% 4,327 / 31,042	18.2% 4,311 / 23,663	76%	74%	Time taken to return for the bin. Issue has not been resolved long term.
Birth, death, or marriage certificate	9.7% 312 / 3,223	11.6% 509 / 4370	95%	98%	Communication Issues
Bulky Waste Collection	0.1% 21 / 28,351	12.1% 3,820 / 31,459	62%	97%	Time taken to complete the task. The issue has not been resolved long term.
Complaints	11.8% 552 / 4,692	18.6% 794 / 4,257	57%	51%	Not keeping customers informed of progress nor providing them with clear information. Taking too long to complete task.
Council tax – change of payment method	12% 642 / 5,342	5.9% 428 / 7,302	94%	91%	Communication issues.
Dog bins or litter bins	7.2% 125 / 1,733	7.8% 123 / 1,574	69%	62%	Not explaining our decision when unable to install/ relocate/ renew bin. Not completing task when we agreed

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	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	31 March 2021	31 March 2022	31 March 2021	31 March 2022	
					to action in line with our existing schedule.
Dog fouling	8.7% 182 / 2,090	9.5% 155 / 1,624	70%	77%	The issue remains unresolved.
Drainage and flooding	7.3% 152 / 2,096	10.1% 210 / 2,070	78%	70%	The issue remains unresolved.
Early help referral	9.4% 156 / 1,666	5.9% 113 / 1,897	97%	94%	Communication issues.
Fly-tipping	6.1% 1,015 / 16,654	6.7% 811 / 12,094	86%	85%	The issue remains unresolved. Time taken to complete task. Communication issues.
Free school travel - apply	13.2% 223 / 1,684	12.3% 220 / 1,787	100%	96%	Taking too long to complete task
Garden waste – join the scheme	1.0% 576 / 58,205	0.7% 401 / 56,835	95%	95%	The issue remains unresolved. Communications issues.
Litter	5.1% 185 / 3,605	6.2% 240 / 3,854	68%	68%	The issue remains unresolved.
Move – Start your journey	N/A	17% 1,325 / 7,790	N/A	85%	The issue remains unresolved. Communication issues.

Appendix 5: Customer Satisfaction Survey: response rates and satisfaction with service delivery

Top 24 by number of survey responses – equates to 82% of responses

	Response Rate Surveys returned / total SRs		Satisfaction with service delivery (change is only significant if it is =>2pp)		Main reason(s) for dissatisfaction
	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	31 March 2021	31 March 2022	31 March 2021	31 March 2022	
Road or footpath	7.6% 568 / 7,488	7.4% 507 / 6,852	82%	77%	The issue remains unresolved. Not keeping customers informed of progress.
Rubbish in gardens and yards	3.7% 185 / 4,254	3.6% 159 / 4,409	80%	76%	Not keeping customers informed of progress. The issue remains unresolved.
Street lighting	12.2% 790 / 6,470	10.5% 701 / 6,703	86%	79%	The issue remains unresolved. Not keeping customers informed of progress.
Tree or hedge pruning, removal	9.9% 469 / 4,730	10.3% 562 / 5,439	69%	67%	The issue remains unresolved. Not keeping customers informed of progress.
Warm homes	10.1% 167 / 1,661	14.3% 211 / 1,474	74%	73%	Nobody contacted the customer. The issue remains unresolved.
Waste permit	0.4% 151 / 33,680	1.1% 423 / 39,439	95%	97%	The time taken to receive the permit.