



Annual Corporate Customer Feedback Report

2023/2024

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council operates a Corporate Complaints policy and procedure which is overseen by the Customer & Cultural Services Division. Complaints, compliments and comments are managed through the corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, Oracle Service Cloud. Any member of staff can record complaints and compliments through the corporate intranet using the online form. Customers can log complaints, compliments and comments online or can request them to be recorded through their preferred access channel.
- 1.2 Service Cloud holds records of all complaints, compliments and comments and is used to manage the status and timescales of corporate complaint handling within the organisation. The related data is also analysed to identify trends and lessons learned to help us to improve our services and the customers' experience.
- 1.3 Complaints about Adults Social Care and Support and Children's Services, including Children's Special Educational Needs (SEN) are dealt with by the Adults and Children's Complaints Team. There were 80 further corporate complaints; Children's Services (76) and Adults Social Care (4) that were investigated through this team. Further information can be found in the end of year reports for both Children's & Adults Services which can be found by following this link: [Tell us \(solihull.gov.uk\)](https://www.solihull.gov.uk)
- 1.4 Complaints about Council housing landlord services are handled by our Arm's Length Management Company, Solihull Community Housing (SCH), including liaison with the Housing Ombudsman. The complaints process operated by SCH is in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. The SCH complaints statistics are summarised in the Tenant's Annual Report which is usually published in the Autumn or Winter edition of the tenant's magazine.

2. Corporate Complaint Process

- 2.1 The Corporate Complaints policy is reviewed and updated annually. The procedure is as follows:
 - **Stage one**, complaints are investigated and responded to by the appropriate service area. Complaints should be responded to within a maximum of 20 working days. Where complaints are considered more complex, with the agreement of the customer and of the appropriate Head of Service or Complaints team, a complaint may be responded to within 30 working days.
 - **Stage two**, if a customer remains dissatisfied with the response that has been given, a complaint is escalated to the final stage of the complaint's procedure. The appropriate Head of Service or senior officer will review the complaint and the stage one response and respond to the customer within 10 working days or for more complex complaints within 20 working days, in agreement with the customer.

2.2 The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) carried out a consultation on the Complaints Handling Code with the Housing Ombudsman in November 2023, which subsequently led to a relaunch of the complaints handling framework in February 2024. This will provide a single standard for complaints handling in local councils. This is believed to provide more certainty for people on how their complaints should be handled and give local councils a better understanding of what good practice looks like. Some local councils are already piloting this code which the LGSCO intend to start considering as part of their processes from April 2026. For more information follow this link: [Complaint Handling Code - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

3. Summary of complaints and compliments

3.1 628 complaints were received for 2023/2024, a decrease of 1 (0.16%) compared to the previous year when 629 were received.

Of the 628 complaints received, 76 (12.1%) progressed to the second and final stage of the complaint's procedure compared to 69 (11%) in 2022/2023.

3.2 The complaints team review all complaints logged and it was identified that a further 181 complaints had been logged which had been cancelled and were recorded as service requests with the agreement of the customer.

3.3 The council's website includes a copy of the Complaints Policy and process and information about how to complain. The website is accessible for people with visual impairment or literacy issues via the 'Text resize' option and the 'Recite' button. The web pages can be translated into various languages by the reader.

3.4 The preferred access channel for customers to make a complaint continues to be digital, consisting of online forms/emails (55.6%), telephone (41.2%), post (1.8%) and walk in centres (1.4%). Customers are encouraged to use the online methods where possible.

3.5 The Council also offers a translation and interpreting service for users of Council services where the first language is not English or due to a disability or impairment, the customer requires alternative formats such as British Sign Language or large print. We have had no translation requests for the year 2023/2024.

3.6 Key trends for the year were:

- Service areas that provide services to all residents received the most complaints as forecast and reflected in previous years.
- 64.2% of all customers chose dissatisfaction with service delivery as the main reason for complaints.

3.7 931 compliments were received in 2023/2024, compared to 969 for the previous year, a decrease of 38 (3.9%).

Table one shows complaints and compliments for the last three years. The proportion of complaints compared with compliments is reasonably constant at around 40:60 complaints to compliments.

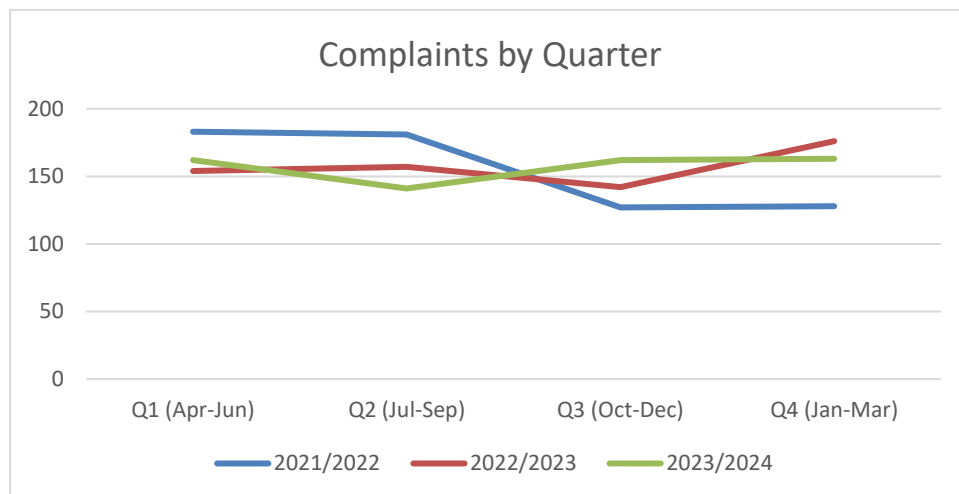
Table One: Complaints and compliments by year 2021/2022 to 2023/2024

	2021/22	%	2022/23	%	2023/24	%
Complaints	619	39.3	629	39.4	628	40.3
Compliments	957	60.7	969	60.6	931	59.7
Total	1576		1598		1559	

4. Corporate Complaints Quarterly Service Area Analysis

Analysis has helped us to understand how and when complaints are received, it allows us to monitor the impact on seasonal services and trends in service delivery. To demonstrate this, complaints numbers have been broken down further. Graph One shows complaints received by quarter.

Graph One: Total Number of complaints by Quarter 2021/2024



Further analysis into quarterly data has shown that the following service areas have had an increase or decrease in the quarters mentioned.

- 4.1 Bereavement Services had an increase in complaints in quarter one, with regards to removal of items from grave plots and overall maintenance and services. There was a decrease in the remaining three quarters.
- 4.2 There were fewer Highway Maintenance complaints received across all quarters and as recorded in previous years Parking Services continue to get the most. These relate to enforcement officer’s behaviour (retraining is offered where an officer is found at fault), equipment faults and the Pay by Phone payment system which have all been investigated and any learning shared with both the contractors and suppliers in order to reduce the risk of similar concerns being raised in the future.
- 4.3 Parks grass shrubs & trees had an increase in complaints in quarter one which is seasonal, with it being the start of the peak season for grass cutting and increase in parks being used. It is important to stress that this service

trend does fluctuate and is very much influenced by weather and growing conditions depending on the year.

- 4.4 Planning Design and Engagement mainly planning services saw decreases in both quarter one and two. The team have worked really hard on matters of customer service and expectations, in particular, which was seen as a primary driver of complaints in previous years. They are continuing to work on this area with reviews of standard correspondence and will be reviewing their website too to try and better manage expectations and engagement with customers.
- 4.5 Resources Directorate, in particular Insurance services have seen an increase in all quarters, this area doesn't tend to get many complaints and although still low numbers of complaints logged, they have had more than usual. This increase is related to a combination of actual and perceived delays by the Insurance team in how they are responding to claims and how they are communicating with claimants. This is due to vacancies within the team over the last 9 months which the team are trying to recruit to.
- 4.1 Streetcare have had an increase across all quarters, the team do not get a lot of complaints with 58 complaints logged, which is an increase from 34 in the year 22-23. The complaints related to various issues across different locations, albeit we know a lot of these complaints relate to weather conditions impacting on the service, such as excessive grass and vegetation growth.
- 4.2 Waste & Recycling – In March 2023, Veolia carried out a re-route of collection rounds which resulted in a collection day/cycle change for over half of the properties in the borough. Kerbside collections have had an increase in all quarters – there was an increase relating to the rerouting of collection days, other issues related to frozen green recycling bins and missed bin collections.
- 4.3 To help put the level of complaints into context, table two shows some of the activities undertaken by key service areas which tend to be the subject of complaints, with the number of complaints received.

Table Two: Key Council Activities 2023/2024

Service Areas	Activity level	No. of Complaints
Waste & Recycling		
• Household waste & recycling collections	10,716,380	190 (0.002%)
• Bulky Waste available collections	5,301	6 (0.11%)
• Visitors to Household Waste Recycling Centre	126,826	5 (0.004%)

Service Areas	Activity level	No. of Complaints
Income & Awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council tax bills issued New HB claims paid New CTR claims paid Council Tax support fund awards 	<p style="text-align: right;">167,100</p> <p style="text-align: right;">756</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3,454</p> <p style="text-align: right;">9,738 (Mandatory) 1,401(Discretionary)</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">61 (0.04%)</p>
Streetcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained grass (m²) Maintained hard ground (m²) 	<p style="text-align: right;">8.5million m2</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4.2million m2</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">58 (% N/A)</p>
Planning & Building Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Applications Building Control Applications Initial Notices* 	<p style="text-align: right;">2,512</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1,023</p> <p style="text-align: right;">777</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">28 (0.65%)</p>
Customer & Cultural Services Solihull Connect Number of contacts by channel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Centre Walk in Centres Digital: Email/ Webforms/ Chat Cemeteries & Crematoria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cremations/burials & Cremated remains burials Memorial headstone permits Scatters Grave reserves Reassignments Memorial sales Registration Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Birth, Death & marriage Regs. Births registered on behalf of Birmingham Registration srvs British Citizenship ceremonies Notice of marriages or civil partnership Copy certificates Libraries & Arts Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor numbers 	<p style="text-align: right;">226,821</p> <p style="text-align: right;">33,721</p> <p style="text-align: right;">18,988</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4032</p> <p style="text-align: right;">540</p> <p style="text-align: right;">348</p> <p style="text-align: right;">203</p> <p style="text-align: right;">64</p> <p style="text-align: right;">194</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2,263</p> <p style="text-align: right;">498</p> <p style="text-align: right;">228</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1,185</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2,690</p> <p style="text-align: right;">334,629</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">17 (.0001%)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">40 (0.74%)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3 (0.04%)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4 (0.001%)</p>
Parks Area of maintained shrubs (m ²)	<p style="text-align: right;">708,153</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">15 (0.002%)</p>

Service Areas	Activity level	No. of Complaints
Parking Services		
• Parking spaces maintained	2,799	79
• Penalty Charge Notices issued	34,004	(0.22%)
Highway Infrastructure		
• Potholes filled	1340	
• Streetlights maintained	1583	46
• Drainage gullies cleansed	31,290	(% N/A)
• Roads resurfaced	18.7 Km.	
• Highway Improvement Schemes	11 new pedestrian crossings Facilities for Vulnerable users HS2 new highway layouts Footpath improvement schemes	
Highway Management		
• Highway Permits processed	12,863	
• Traffic Regulation Orders made	20 (permanent)	
• Bikeability training courses	253 (Temporary)	
• Parking spaces maintained	219	
• Penalty charge notices issued	2,799	
	34,004	

*Initial Notices are issued by private companies to advise that they have been engaged to manage Building Regulations compliance.

5. Categories of Complaint

5.1 Complaints are categorised so that we can understand why customers complain. The categories for complaints are provided in Table three. The top three reasons continue to remain the same as per previous years:

- Service delivery
- Decision making (policy)
- Impoliteness, rudeness, unfairness, bias or prejudice

Table Three: Categories of complaints

Complaint reason	2021/ 2022	% of Total	2022/ 2023	% of Total	2023/ 2024	% of Total
Dissatisfaction in service delivery	371	59.9	375	59.6	403	64.2
Dissatisfaction with the way we apply policy, a decision or a procedure	156	25.2	155	24.6	120	19.1
Impoliteness, rudeness, unfairness, bias or prejudice	63	10.2	72	11.5	74	11.8
Refusal to answer reasonable questions, misleading or unsuitable advice	26	4.2	25	4.0	24	3.8
Inappropriate use of personal Info.	3	0.5	2	0.3	7	1.1
Total	619	100%	629	100%	628	100

- 5.2 Complaints indicating dissatisfaction with service delivery represented the greatest proportion at 64.2%.
- 5.3 19.1% of complaints related to dissatisfaction with the way policy or a decision was applied.
- 5.4 11.8% (74) complaints were made because of impoliteness and rudeness, of which 26 related to Waste & Recycling for crew behaviour. It is important to note that on investigation we often get a counter report from the crews regarding the complainant's poor behaviour which are often substantiated. 23 for Highway Services for parking enforcement officers.
- 5.5 In line with the Council's legal obligations under part seven of the Immigration Act 2016, the Council's complaint procedure has incorporated a measure in which a customer can make a formal complaint to the Council, should any member of the public feel that a customer-facing council officer has insufficient fluency in spoken English in the performance of their role. Since the implementation of the Act, we have received no complaints in relation to this category which is a positive indicator on the quality of English fluency used by staff employed in the team.

6. Complaint Timescales

Table four shows the complaints resolved by complaint stage and timescale.

Table Four: Complaint Resolution Timescales 2023/2024

	Complaints at Stage 1	Complaints at Stage 2
Resolved in 15 days	368	
Resolved in 16 to 20 days	143	
21 – 30 days	107	
Over 30 days	10	
Stage 2 in 20 days		72
Stage 2 over 20 days		4
Total	628	76

- 6.1 Of the 628 complaints registered at stage one, 511 were responded to within the 20 days, 107 were identified as complex or needed further time to investigate and responded to within 30 days in line with the policy and with the agreement of the complainant. 10 complaints exceeded 30 days and a breakdown by service area is provided in table five.

Of the 76 complaints escalated to stage two, 72 were responded to within 20 days with four complaints that took longer. The complaints team continued to work with the co-ordinators during this period. A breakdown by service area and reasons for exceeding timescale is provided in table six.

- 6.2 If at stage one or two a complaint is more complex, the deadline can be extended and should be negotiated with the customer and agreed by the Corporate Complaints Lead.
- 6.3 The complaints team monitor all complaint timescales to identify those approaching target completion, reminders are sent out through the complaints system. The complaints team will liaise with the relevant co-ordinators or investigating officer/Head of Service where timescales are a concern.
- 6.4 There are a number of reasons for a complaint to exceed timescale, this year the complaint delays were defined as:
- A. Complexity of the complaint: complaint relates to multiple services, requires monitoring or site visit required
 - B. Delay caused by further information required from the customer.
 - C. No recorded reason for delayed response.

Table Five: Complaints exceeding 30 days at stage one by Service Area

Service Area Team	Total out of SLA	A	B	C
Regulatory Services	1			1
Highways Services	1	1		
Income & Awards	8	2	4	2

Table Six: Complaints exceeding 20 days at stage two by Service Area

Service Area Team	Total out of SLA
Customer & Cultural Services	2
Growth Programmes	1
Parks, Shrubs and trees	1

- 6.5 The four complaints that exceeded timescales were monitored and the complaints team continued to work with all areas to ensure responses were sent out and customers were kept informed. They were all complex and required either a site visit or input from other areas before the stage 2 response could be sent out.
- 6.6 It is important to note that one of the highest service areas to receive complaints, Waste & Recycling, dealt with all complaints at stage one and two within the timescales.
- 6.7 Some complaints are being responded to outside of the timescales and we continue to work with the areas concerned and provide on-going training and support. We continue to work with co-ordinators to ensure responses where possible are sent within timescale, customers are kept informed with deadline extensions and systems updated in a timely manner.
- 6.8 To mitigate the impact of poor response time to the customer and to support investigating officers there is an automated reminder sent as part of the

complaints process as well as reminders from the complaint co-ordinator for each area.

7. Learning from Complaints

7.1 One of the most important outcomes of investigating complaints is to learn from them. Categories of learning are used so that we can understand how feedback can be used to improve or shape services in the future. Table seven shows the categories recorded after a complaint has been investigated.

Table Seven: Categories of learning

Learning Category	2021/2022		2022/2023		2023/2024	
	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of Total
Improve revised service delivery process	324	52.3	267	42.4	263	41.9
Customer comments included in review of how policies & procedures are applied to inform decision making	121	19.6	195	31.0	223	35.5
Improvements in communication	124	20.0	91	14.5	88	14.0
Review behaviours and/or training needs for individuals or a team	48	7.8	74	11.8	51	8.1
Review of confidentiality procedures, carried out in accordance with the Data Protections Act.	2	0.3	2	0.3	2	0.3
Complaint outstanding					1	0.2
Total	619	100%	629	100%	628	100%

7.2 The following learning categories were identified with a summary of the trends:

- Improve service delivery process – predominately relate to Waste and Recycling with complaints relating to missed collections, crew behaviour, bins not returned correctly and/or blocking access.
- Customer comments included in review of how policies and procedures are applied to inform decision making – majority relate to Highways Services with no particular trend – various issues across the borough.
- Improvements in communication – This is across all service areas and some examples are shown below:
 - Council Tax- Wording on bills, not happy with reminders/summons, issues with Jacobs
 - Customer & Cultural Services- call waiting times, live chat unavailable
 - Highways - Obstructive parking- Parking on footpaths/verges. Parking services- no acknowledgement when appealing PCNs, general car parking issues

- Planning- No communication from officers
 - Streetcare- Various issues with no trends to report
 - Waste & Recycling - Having to wait until after four to log missed collection, issues with booking tip slots online or unable to book and bulky waste bookings not working as they should.
- Review behaviours and/or training needs for individuals or a team – Predominantly Highways with majority relating to traffic enforcement officers’ behaviour and Waste & Recycling with regards to crews’ behaviour.

7.3 The complaints team run quarterly reports on recorded learning and work with service areas to discuss how this has been implemented to ensure service improvements.

7.4 As an important part of the response to customers, officers will advise of any learning and how it is intended to be implemented. Learning is part of the recorded outcome of all complaints. The complaints team work closely with officers to monitor where learning is identified and ensure that it is followed up.

7.5 Examples of learning from complaints investigated during 2023/2024 have been included as appendix 3.2 alongside two case studies to show how a complaint is investigated from start to end.

8. Complaints by Ward

8.1 To gather a further insight into complaints table eight shows complaints by Ward in which the complainant lived. This enables us to see if there are any new trends or exceptions that could be analysed further. Whilst ward reporting is an important insight into complaints activity, it is often difficult to identify any particular trends.

Table Eight: Complaints by Ward

Ward	2021/ 2022	% of total	2022/ 2023	% of total	2023/ 2024	% of total	% of the borough’s population
Out of borough or no address given	137	22.1%	157	25.0%	108	17.2%	
Elmdon	35	5.7%	42	6.7%	34	5.4%	5.8%
Silhill	29	4.7%	38	6.0%	39	6.2%	6.0%
Shirley South	35	5.7%	33	5.2%	40	6.4%	5.7%
Blythe	43	6.9%	28	4.5%	36	5.7%	7.4%
St Alphege	36	5.8%	38	6.0%	31	4.9%	6.1%
Knowle	24	3.9%	17	2.7%	18	2.9%	5.1%
Smiths Wood	25	4.0%	23	3.7%	30	4.8%	5.9%

Ward	2021/ 2022	% of total	2022/ 2023	% of total	2023/ 2024	% of total	% of the borough's population
Shirley West	42	6.8%	36	5.7%	40	6.4%	6.1%
Shirley East	24	3.9%	22	3.5%	23	3.7%	5.6%
Bickenhill	28	4.5%	23	3.7%	31	4.9%	6.0%
Meriden	24	3.9%	28	4.5%	26	4.1%	5.8%
Dorridge & Hockley Heath	21	3.4%	36	5.7%	26	4.1%	5.1%
Lyndon	28	4.5%	29	4.6%	34	5.4%	6.4%
Kingshurst & Fordbridge	12	1.9%	24	3.8%	39	6.2%	6.1%
Chelmsley Wood	17	2.7%	23	3.7%	33	5.3%	6.1%
Olton	33	5.3%	17	2.7%	18	2.9%	5.7%
Castle Bromwich	26	4.2%	15	2.4%	22	3.5%	5.3%
Grand Total	619	100%	629	100%	628	100%	

8.2 There has been a decrease in customers logging complaints where no address has been provided, majority of these are out of borough customers. An address does not need to be provided to log a complaint, however where a complaint is property specific, we do ask for the address.

8.3 In the wards for Elmdon, St Alphege, Dorridge and Hockley Heath, compared to 2022/2023 there has been a decrease in complaints relating to waste and recycling. We forecast an increase in complaints due to the change to collection routes in March 2023. Decrease for both Planning services and income and awards with no trends.

8.4 There was an increase in complaints for Blythe, Bickenhill, Kingshurst, Fordbridge, Chelmsley Wood and Smiths Wood relating to Waste & Recycling due to route changes introduced in March 2023 as well as complaints for green bins not being emptied due to being frozen and bins not being returned to households. Highways services had a slight increase with no trends identified.

9. Compliments

9.1 931 compliments were received in 2023/2024, a decrease of 38(3.9%) compared to 969 compliments in 2022/2023. Table nine shows the top five service areas to receive compliments.

Table Nine: Compliments Service Area Top Five

Service Area	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Highway Services	425	489	480
Cultural & Customer Services	322	293	253
Waste and Recycling	96	74	88
Streetcare	27	45	52
Parks, Shrubs, Trees	14	15	15

- 9.2 Compliments are shared with service areas quarterly and at year end.
- 9.3 All service areas are encouraged to log compliments on the corporate system.
- 9.4 Table 10 shows the reasons for receiving compliments. The majority of compliments were made for named employee helpfulness, at 74.7%.

Table 10: Categories of Compliments

Category	2021/ 2022	% of total	2022/ 2023	% of total	2023/ 2024	% of total
Named employee helpfulness	688	71.9	718	74.1%	695	74.7%
High standard of service	129	13.5	134	13.8%	123	13.2%
Helpfulness of service	119	12.4	96	9.9%	94	10.1%
Other	21	2.2	21	2.2%	19	2.0%
TOTAL	957	100%	969	100%	931	100%

10. Customer Comments

- 10.1 Customer comments are captured where a customer has a suggestion for service improvement or is not happy with the way we are currently delivering a service or policy and indicate they do not want to log a formal corporate complaint. 78% of comments are received by telephone following a customer enquiry, web (12.2%) and email (7.6%).
- 10.2 Customer comments are shared with all relevant service areas for learning and improvement suggestions. In cases where a customer has requested a response, this will be provided by the service area responsible.
- 10.3 Table 11 shows the number of comments recorded over the last three years.

Table 11: Number of comments for last three years

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Number of comments	808	823	831

10.4 Table 12 shows the service areas that received the most customer comments. Majority of comments relate to Waste and Recycling which is consistent with previous years.

Table 12: Comments by Service Areas

Service Area	Total
Waste and Recycling	401
Highway Services	141
Income and Awards	45
Streetcare	72
Customer Services	43

10.5 Key trends of customer comments registered in 2023/2024 relate to:

- Waste & Recycling - The majority of comments relate to an operational change in March 2023 where collection rounds were changed for over 40,000 properties. Comments were also received regarding the HWRC booking system.
- Customer and Cultural Services - Various comments about recorded message repeating and waiting times.
- Highway Services – Blossomfield Road cycle track, various roadworks around the borough.
- Income & Awards - Mostly relate to letters received (council tax/benefits). The wording and tone is found to be intimidating or confusing.
- Streetcare- Comments around wildlife ways and grass being left to grow and that grass cuttings are being left after grass cuts.

11. Surveys

11.1 It is important to extend the understanding on the make-up of the community who log complaints and how council services can be made more inclusive. A survey has been developed which is sent out on a complaint being resolved. Unfortunately, the response rate on these has been very low. The team will continue to send these out.

12. Local Government Social Care Ombudsman

Each year the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provides feedback to Local Authorities about the complaints it has received about them in the past year. The feedback provided can be found by following this link: [Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

12.1 For the year 2023/2024 the LGSCO received 9 corporate complaints. Complaints referred to the LGSCO are monitored. No corporate complaints were upheld.

13. Looking Forward

- 13.1 Moving forward during the remainder of 24/25, the complaints team will lead the project to implement the new complaints handling code. This will include revised timescales, performance reporting and monitoring. The frequency of monitoring and reporting of complaints to the elected officer will increase in line with recommendations in the new code. These should provide an insight on the complaints handling performance with regular updates on the volume, categories, and outcomes of complaints with issues and trends arising from complaint handling.
- 13.2 We will also undertake a full review of the policy, guidance, and letter templates. We will also work with colleagues in ICT to implement the development of the complaints system, service cloud, to implement the proposed changes. The complaints team will also develop a communications plan and refresher training for co-ordinators and investigating officers.
- 13.3 To continue to focus on timescales and improve support and training for those areas struggling with complaint response timescales.
- 13.4 Continue with customer surveys to gather feedback and Equality & Diversity data.

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