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Notice of Meeting

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Councillors Chris Moriarty (Chair), Mark Howard (Vice-Chair), David Buckley, Maureen Hunt, Helen Price, Gary Reeves, Julian Sharpe, Julian Tisi and Mark Wilson

Tuesday 5 September 2023 7.00 pm

Council Chamber - Town Hall - Maidenhead & on [RBWM YouTube](#)

www.rbwm.gov.uk



Agenda

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1	Apologies for Absence To receive any apologies for absence from Panel Members.	-
2	Declarations of Interest To receive any declarations of interest from Panel Members.	3 - 4
3	Minutes To consider and approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5 th June 2023.	5 - 10
4	Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2022/23 The purpose of the report is to share with Corporate Overview and Scrutiny the annual complaints and compliments report for 2022/23 before it is published on the council's website. Whilst Local Authorities are not required to produce an annual report on complaints relating to corporate activities, and are only required to do so on those submitted about Adults and Children's Services, this report details all compliments and complaints made by or on behalf of customers. The Panel are asked to note the report, agree that the report is published on the council's website and that the annual report continues to be produced and presented at future Overview and Scrutiny Panels.	11 - 32
5	Work Programme To consider what topics the Panel would like to consider over the course of the municipal year.	33 - 34

By attending this meeting, participants are consenting to the audio & visual recording being permitted and acknowledge that this shall remain accessible in the public domain permanently.

Please contact Mark Beeley, Mark.Beeley@RBWM.gov.uk, with any special requests that you may have when attending this meeting.

Published: 25th August 2023



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MEMBERS' GUIDE TO DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

Disclosure at Meetings

If a Member has not disclosed an interest in their Register of Interests, they **must make** the declaration of interest at the beginning of the meeting, or as soon as they are aware that they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) or Other Registerable Interest. If a Member has already disclosed the interest in their Register of Interests they are still required to disclose this in the meeting if it relates to the matter being discussed.

Any Member with concerns about the nature of their interest should consult the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

Non-participation in case of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your DPIS (summary below, further details set out in Table 1 of the Members' Code of Conduct) you must disclose the interest, **not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room** unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest' (as agreed in advance by the Monitoring Officer), you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted by the Monitoring Officer in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a DPI.

Where you have a DPI on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet Member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

DPIS (relating to the Member or their partner) include:

- *Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.*
- *Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses*
- *Any contract under which goods and services are to be provided/works to be executed which has not been fully discharged.*
- *Any beneficial interest in land within the area of the council.*
- *Any licence to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.*
- *Any tenancy where the landlord is the council, and the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest in the securities of.*
- *Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:*
 - a) *that body has a place of business or land in the area of the council, and*
 - b) *either (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or (ii) the total nominal value of the shares of any one class belonging to the relevant person exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.*

Any Member who is unsure if their interest falls within any of the above legal definitions should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to one of your Other Registerable Interests (summary below and as set out in Table 2 of the Members Code of Conduct), you must disclose the interest. **You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.** If it is a 'sensitive interest' (as agreed in advance by the Monitoring Officer), you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Other Registerable Interests:

- a) any unpaid directorships
 - b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
 - c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)
- of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

Disclosure of Non- Registerable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a DPI) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, or a body included under Other Registerable Interests in Table 2 you must disclose the interest. **You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting** but otherwise **must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation**. If it is a 'sensitive interest' (agreed in advance by the Monitoring Officer) you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –

- a. your own financial interest or well-being;
- b. a financial interest or well-being of a friend, relative, close associate; or
- c. a financial interest or well-being of a body included under Other Registerable Interests as set out in Table 2 (as set out above and in the Members' code of Conduct)

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied.

Where a matter (referred to in the paragraph above) **affects** the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise **must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation**. If it is a 'sensitive interest' (agreed in advance by the Monitoring Officer), you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Other declarations

Members may wish to declare at the beginning of the meeting any other information they feel should be in the public domain in relation to an item on the agenda; such Member statements will be included in the minutes for transparency.

Agenda Item 3

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 5 June 2023

Present: Councillors Chris Moriarty (Chair), Mark Howard (Vice-Chair), David Buckley, Maureen Hunt, Helen Price, Gary Reeves, Julian Sharpe, Julian Tisi and Mark Wilson

Also in attendance: Councillor Joshua Reynolds

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor Lynne Jones and Councillor Helen Taylor

Officers: Mark Beeley, Nikki Craig, Andrew Vallance, Louise Freeth and Jesal Dhokia

Officers in attendance virtually: Rebecca Hatch, Ollie Cassells and Jennifer Hardy

Election of Chair

Councillor Howard proposed that Councillor Moriarty be elected Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor Wilson.

As no other nominations were received, a named vote was not required.

AGREED: That Councillor Moriarty be elected Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Election of Vice Chair

Councillor Wilson proposed that Councillor Howard be elected as Vice Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor Moriarty.

As no other nominations were received, a named vote was not required.

AGREED: That Councillor Howard be elected as Vice Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

Minutes

Councillor Howard commented on the actions which were part of the previous meeting.

Mark Beeley, Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview and Scrutiny, explained that after each meeting, an actions table would be produced. This would list all of the actions from the meeting and confirm the answers or outcomes from those actions. The actions from the previous meeting and any from the meeting tonight would be circulated to the Panel in due course.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Cost of Living: a review of RBWM's response

Rebecca Hatch, Head of Strategy and Communications, said that the report was structured around four main aspects of the council's response. Here to Help was the initial response to the increase in cost of living and brought together help and advice from a number of different sources in to one centralised place. The campaign had initially been launched in May 2022 and was refreshed in October 2022 to reflect the winter pressures that many vulnerable residents had faced. The second focus was on central government schemes, for example council tax support and energy rebates. The revenues and benefits team had worked on administering this support to residents. The design and delivery of the Household Support Fund had also been considered, this was a national scheme and RBWM had been allocated a grant sum of funding to spend. The fund had initially been targeted at children who were on free school meals but more recent tranches of funding allowed the council to be more flexible with who they supported. The council had also facilitated a network of warm spaces across the borough, which included community organisations and libraries coming together to offer safe spaces for the community.

Councillor Price thanked officers for the clear and detailed report. She had initially suggested the topic as she wanted to see the effective work which had taken place and whether there were any groups of vulnerable residents which were not being reached. Leaflets had been distributed but this had not provided an uplift in applications for support. Another area to consider was residents who had mortgages but had seen the mortgage rate increase rapidly. It was important for the council to look forward at what it could do to help residents.

David Adam, from Citizens Advice Bureau East Berkshire, explained that Citizens Advice was one the delivery partners for the Household Support Fund. The fund had allowed the organisation to reach out to residents and also for residents to see what support can be provided. There was a national figure of £19 billion worth of benefits which went unclaimed each year and it was therefore important that residents were made aware of the support available. There was concern that more people could find themselves in financial difficulty.

Councillor Howard asked how much of the funding provided by the council had been spent and how much had gone unclaimed.

Rebecca Hatch confirmed that for the Household Support Fund, this had all been spent. A number of residents received funding automatically in the form of vouchers for free school meals. Vulnerable residents were identified by one of the 14 partner organisations which were working with the council, with a range of different organisations being part of the scheme. A big communications push had been launched earlier this year as there had been concern that not enough residents were aware of the additional support which could be provided.

Councillor J Tisi understood that the reason why there were no financial implications in the report was because the council was receiving money and deciding how it should be spent. He asked of the latest tranche funding of £1.175 million, how much of this had been taken up and whether this would be spent in a similar way to previous tranches.

Jesal Dhokia, Partnerships and Community Service Lead, explained that the same model would be used for tranche 4. The council would be using partner engagements to understand which cohorts needed targeting but it would follow a similar pattern to previous tranches. The older age cohort had been difficult to reach and this would be targeted. The partner organisations remained the same.

Councillor Price asked if partner organisations would give holistic support to residents, for example they could signpost vulnerable residents to the relevant support if it was not something that they could provide directly.

Jesal Dhokia said that services would be wrapped around individuals, a wide range of organisations were used to provide support. The community hub information portal was also being revised which would allow residents to understand the range of support available. This was a key theme which had come out of the world cafes, these had been run in wards across the borough.

Councillor Price said that in Dedworth, there was a community champion at Tesco who ensured that the noticeboard displayed different services and support available in an accessible place. Age Concern had also displayed leaflets on things like lampposts, these methods allowed organisations to reach older age groups who may not have access to the internet.

The Chair noted that ward issues had been picked up and that some wards needed to be targeted individually. He asked if Councillors would be contacted to see what they could do to help.

Jesal Dhokia said that last year, the team had reached out to all Councillors. There were plans for the second stage of this project to continue from October onwards.

Councillor Reeves noted that Councillors would be reached out to on an ongoing basis about the project, he asked when the next update would be as there were a number of new Councillors. At a recent world café, Councillor Reeves had suggested that he could print out handouts and put them in places like local shops where they could be easily seen. Leaflets could be given to Councillors at future world cafes to encourage them to help spread information in their wards. Councillor Reeves asked if officers would be monitoring new methods of distributing information and whether they had an effect.

Jesal Dhokia explained that the first year of the world café programme had now been completed. All Councillors would be engaged with as part of the programme going forward. The project was open and transparent on RBWM Together. Leaflets had not been prioritised as feedback from recent world cafes was that the leaflets did not work. The Household Support Fund was reviewed at regular intervals and Jesal Dhokia was happy to speak to any Councillors about the fund at any time.

Rebecca Hatch added that the Household Support Fund application system had been set up so that it captured key information like age, this allowed the council to keep track on which cohorts were being reached. Optalis had been brought in as a partner as they provided an opportunity to reach older people. There was a reluctance amongst older age groups to put themselves forward for support.

Louise Freeth, Head of Revenues, Benefits, Library and Residents Services, said that the requirements of the Household Support Fund had changed. In tranche 2, there had been a requirement for the council to spend up to a third of the funding assisting older individuals. The council had decided that any pensioner who was in receipt of Council Tax support would automatically receive £100 from the fund. This was either directly into their bank account or used as council tax credit. £207,000 had been allocated in tranche 2 using this method.

Councillor Hunt complimented officers and David Adam for their work on supporting vulnerable residents. The world cafes had been very successful, feedback on vouchers had been taken on board.

Councillor Price said that the organisations needed to be considered as they were having their own cost of living issues, for example a rise in utility bills. This then increased the pressure on organisations who were trying to support residents.

Councillor Wilson asked if the council tax system could be used as proof of residency. He suggested that 'word of mouth' could be a useful source of spreading information amongst different communities.

Jennifer Hardy, National Management Trainee in Transformation and Community Service, said that there was a Community Champions magazine which had been recently launched. This was a form of community engagement which was targeting word of mouth and the individual networks that community champions were part of.

Louise Freeth said that linking applications with the council tax database was discussed at the time but it was discounted because not everyone was registered for council tax under their own name, families living together was an example. There was also the issue of individuals needing to know their council tax reference number so that this could be linked on the system. It was more likely individuals would have their driving license or a bank statement proving their address than their council tax number. Louise Freeth would need to explore with the system software provider whether residents could prove their address using their council tax details or other means, as the system was not currently configured in this way.

Councillor Sharpe was interested to see how other local authorities were helping to support residents.

David Adam said that RBWM had a consistent scheme as it had continued to run following the issue response to the cost of living crisis. There were a number of councils across the country where schemes of support had stopped. Some councils gave Citizens Advice the responsibility of administering payments but this took time and resource away from helping residents.

Councillor Reeves noticed that the project had been shortlisted for an award and this was testament to the work that officers had put in. He suggested that this should be promoted on the literature which was distributed about the scheme. Councillor Reeves asked if residents could volunteer to help as part of the scheme and be 'there to help'.

Jesal Dhokia responded by explaining that the skills voluntary programme would be launched shortly and Councillors would be sent details of how they could get involved. RBWM had an adult learning provider where gaps in skills and training could be identified through courses.

Councillor Price commented on the scoping document where it had been mentioned that the scrutiny review could be publicised to increase community involvement.

Jesal Dhokia said that she was happy to work with Councillor Price to see how much of the document could be shared on the website.

Councillor Wilson suggested that a 'quick read' version of the guidance and support could be provided for those residents who did not have time to read about the full support on offer.

The Chair highlighted social media engagement and that it was pleasing to see a good number of impressions and engagements, but it was not clear whether these translated into more applications. The Chair summarised some of the points raised by Panel Members. These included how Councillors could be updated on the progress of the Household Support Fund, widening the net to capture more vulnerable residents that needed support, the ease of application for residents and transparency around the process.

Councillor Reeves said that Age Concern Windsor was a partner organisation which covered the Windsor area, he asked if there were similar organisations which covered Maidenhead.

Jesal Dhokia said that there were organisations which covered other parts of the borough, for example Age Concern Berkshire East. Older residents groups had also been contacted to see how the council could support them.

Councillor Price asked if organisations were being supported by the council, who could then provide direct support to residents. She questioned if this was part of the project.

Jesal Dhokia explained that she was currently working on the voluntary sector engagement strategy. There were plans to have a summit with the voluntary sector in November which would explore capacity and resource building.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report and:

- i) **Looked to provide feedback and relevant recommendations for consideration.**

Work Programme

Mark Beeley explained that the work programme contained information on topics which the Panel would consider over the course of the municipal year. Any topics which were requested by Panel Members needed to have a scoping document completed.

Councillor Hunt commented on the call in on Maidenhead United's proposed move to Braywick Park.

Mark Beeley explained the context of the call in and that the Place Overview and Scrutiny had referred the matter back to the decision maker. The Executive Director of Place, as the decision maker, had considered the recommendations made by the Panel and had decided to refer the matter back to Cabinet. As the decision had already been called in, the decision would not come back to overview and scrutiny.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to share a link to the Officer Decision Notice which had been published following the call in.

Councillor Wilson felt that there had been a number of changes amongst council officers over the past few years. He considered whether some roles had been vacant for some time and whether changes made to roles were appropriate.

Councillor Howard said that the Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 funding was an area of interest, particularly financial implications and how it could be revised for the future.

Councillor Price said that there were a number of items which were always considered by the Panel.

Mark Beeley confirmed that he would work with officers to schedule statutory items into the work programme.

Councillor Reeves understood that the council was engaged in a number of contracts, he was interested to scrutinise the contract management group and what the plans were to ensure that there was a robust contract management process.

Councillor Howard suggested that the Panel could look to understand the council's powers to improve the water pollution situation.

Councillor Tisi said that the corporate risk register was an important document, risks could change over time and this could be explored.

Mark Beeley said that the risk register was under the remit of the Audit and Governance Committee but if this could be explored to see if there was an area which could be scrutinised.

Councillor Howard said an understanding of the RBWM Property Company could be useful. He also suggested a review of parking enforcement in the borough and how it could be improved, particularly in rural areas.

Mark Beeley said that he would contact individual Councillors to discuss their proposals after the meeting and work on the scope of topic items.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.12 pm

Chair.....

Date.....

Report Title:	Annual Complaints and Compliments report (Formal Corporate) 2022/23
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No - Part I
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Hill, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Customer Service Centre & Employment
Meeting and Date:	05 September 2023
Responsible Officer(s):	Nikki Craig, Assistant Director of HR, Corporate Projects and IT
Wards affected:	None

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to share with Corporate Overview and Scrutiny the annual complaints and compliments report for 2022/23 before it is published on the council's website. Whilst Local Authorities are not required to produce an annual report on complaints relating to corporate activities, and are only required to do so on those submitted about Adults and Children's Services, this report details all compliments and complaints made by or on behalf of customers, that are investigated under the:

- Adults Statutory Complaints process
- Children's Statutory Complaints process
- Children's Corporate Complaints process
- RBWM's Formal Corporate Complaints policy

This report supports the council's corporate Value of 'Empowered to improve: Taking ownership of problems, focusing on outcomes, celebrating success and learning lessons when things don't quite work out, innovating and trying new things'. The Lessons Learned section of the report demonstrates the council's commitment to continually strive to make improvements.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the report and:

- i) That the report is published on the council's website.
- ii) That the annual report continues to be produced and presented at future Overview and Scrutiny panels

2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Options

Table 1: Options arising from this report

Option	Comments
That the report is published on the council's website and that the annual report continues to be produced and presented at Overview and Scrutiny panels. This is the recommended option	This is a requirement for Children's and Adults annual complaints information and good practice for other complaints areas.
That the report is not published on the council's website and that the annual report continues to be produced and presented at Overview and Scrutiny panels. This is not the recommended option	Not publishing the annual complaints report on the council's website is against statutory requirements.

- 2.1 The council's complaints and compliments report is compiled annually. Whilst there is a statutory requirement to publish information on Adult and Children's complaints and compliments, and no requirement to publish information on about other services provided by the council, the decision has been taken to include all areas in the annual report. This promotes transparency and provides an opportunity to ensure we maximise the learning opportunities from any outcomes from complaints. The report for April 2022 – March 2023 will be published in October 2023 (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 The report contains details of:
- complaints received
 - themes of complaints
 - timeliness of complaint responses
 - outcomes of complaints
 - learning from complaints
 - number of complaints made to and decided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
 - numbers of compliments received
- 2.3 Table 2 shows the number of complaints received across the council for 2022/23. This is a significant reduction on 2021/22 when 399 complaints were received.

Table 2: All complaints received

Process	No. of complaints
Adults Statutory	16
Children's Statutory	11
Children's Corporate	74
RBWM Formal Corporate	168
Overall	269

Key implication targets

- 2.4 The 2021/22 key implications targets were met, with the exception of completing complaints within published timescales, which was unmet.

Complaints to be considered by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- 2.5 Whilst all council complaints are included in Table 2, the complaints to be considered at Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel are for Corporate Services only.

Complaints highlights (Corporate)

- 2.6 The overall number of complaints received across the council is shown in Appendix 1, 2.3. This shows an overall decrease from 399 in 2021/22 to 269.
- Waste and Recycling received the highest number of complaints, at 29, followed by Development Management (Planning) at 21.
 - The main reasons for complaints was ‘Lack of action – did not do what we said we could do’
 - Overall, 36 LGSCO Corporate complaints and enquiries were received
 - Responding to complaints within timescales has reduced from 46% in 2021/22 to 42%

Complaints made to and decisions made by the LGSCO

- 2.7 Appendix 1, section 2.4 shows the LGSCO received a total of 49 complaints and enquiries about the Council in 2022/23 (Appendix A), a decrease on 2021/22, which was 52 complaints. The highest number of Corporate complaints received by the LGSCO were for Housing and Planning, which is similar to previous years, and reflects the nature of contacts into these teams.
- 2.8 As well as specific feedback given by the Ombudsman on remedies and service improvement recommendations, an overview of Services’ learnings from upheld or partially upheld complaints are included in Appendix 1, 5.1.

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 For 2023/24, the intention is to achieve the following improvements and outcomes:

Table 3: Key Implications

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
Reduced percentage of upheld complaints	60 -100%	59%	50-58%	<75%	31 March 2024
Increased percentage of complaints completed within timescales	0 - 60%	61%	62-75%	>75%	31 March 2024
Reduced percentage of complaints to the LGSCO are upheld	70 - 100%	69%	50-68%	<50%	31 March 2024

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications in the publishing of the annual report. There are implications for the council in getting things wrong including

resources within Services being redirected to complaints handling, remedy payments and reputational damage.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The publishing of Children’s and Adult complaints reports is statutory.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 None

7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

7.1 Equalities. There are no implications under the equality act arising from this report.

7.2 Climate change/sustainability. There are no climate change or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7.3 Data Protection/GDPR. There are no data protections/GDPR implications arising from this report as no personal data has been processed.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation has happened with CLT in August 2023 and the report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny panels in September and October 2023.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 The annual report will be published on the Council website in October 2023.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 This report is supported by 1 appendix:
• Appendix 1 – Annual complaints and compliments report and LGSCO letter

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 This report is supported by LGSCO Annual Letter (see Appendix A). These are the annual summary of statistics on the complaint on complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about the authority for the year ending 31 March 2023. The annual letters and corresponding data tables were published on LGSCO website on 26 July 2023.

12. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Mandatory:</i>	<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy)</i>		

Andrew Vallance	Deputy Director of Finance/ S151 Officer	14.08.23	
Elaine Browne	Deputy Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer	14.08.23	18.08.23
<i>Deputies:</i>			
Julian McGovern	Senior Business Partner - Finance	18.08.23	18.08.23
<i>Mandatory:</i> Procurement Manager (or deputy) - if report requests approval to go to tender or award a contract			
Lyn Hitchinson	Procurement Manager		
<i>Mandatory:</i> Data Protection Officer (or deputy) - if decision will result in processing of personal data; to advise on DPIA			
Samantha Wootton	Data Protection Officer		
<i>Mandatory:</i> Equalities Officer – to advise on EQiA, or agree an EQiA is not required			
Ellen McManus-Fry	Equalities & Engagement Officer	14.08.23	18.08.23
<i>Other consultees:</i>			
<i>Directors (where relevant)</i>			
Stephen Evans	Chief Executive	14.08.23	18.08.23
Andrew Durrant	Executive Director of Place	14.08.23	24.08.23
Kevin McDaniel	Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Health	14.08.23	24.08.23
Lin Ferguson	Executive Director of Children's Services & Education	14.08.23	18.08.23
Elizabeth Griffiths	Executive Director of Resources	01.09.23	
<i>Assistant Directors (where relevant)</i>			
Rebecca Hatch	Assistant Director of Strategy	04.08.23	
Louise Freeth	Assistant Director of Revenue, Benefits, Library and Resident Services	04.08.23	24.08.23
Nikki Craig	Assistant Director of HR, Corporate Projects and IT	04.08.23	
Alysse Strachan	Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services	04.08.23	
Adrien Waite	Assistant Director of Planning	04.08.23	24.08.23
Chris Joyce	Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth	04.08.23	
<i>External (where relevant)</i>			
N/A			

Confirmation relevant Cabinet Member(s) consulted	Highways and Transport, Customer Service Centre & Employment	Yes
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REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?	To follow item?
For information	No	No
Report Author: Vanessa Faulkner, Service Lead – HR People Services, 01628685622		



Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Annual Complaints and Compliments Report **Formal Corporate Complaints** 2022-23

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Every year the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) publishes an Annual complaints and compliments report, which gives an overview of the complaints the Council has received and how they were dealt with. RBWM welcomes customer feedback, as it helps to identify and address problems for customers, and to improve services. This report, covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, details all compliments and complaints made by or on behalf of customers that are investigated under the:
 - Adults Statutory Complaints process
 - Children’s Statutory Complaints process
 - Children’s Corporate Complaints process
 - RBWM’s Formal Corporate Complaints policy
- 1.2. Whilst Local Authorities are required under statute to report complaints submitted on Adults and Children’s services, they are not required to produce an annual report on complaints relating to corporate activities, however the Compliments and Complaints team produces an annual report detailing the volumes of all complaints and compliments, including insights into response rates and the reasons for complaints. This allows the Council to assess how residents experience the Council in its entirety and can inform service improvement.
- 1.3. This report provides an overall summary of the contacts into RBWM, but only provides detailed information relating to the Formal Corporate complaints and compliments. A separate report relating to Children’s and Adults complaints has been produced and is available here [Annual Report - 2022-23 Childrens and Adults.docx](#).

2. Summary of Council-wide activity

- 2.1. In 2022/23 the Council received 1,408 contacts from customers that were initially logged as complaints. This is a 9.5% decrease in contacts to the compliments and complaints team from 2021/22 (1,556) and reflects a continued downward trend since 2020. Contacts that were not progressed as complaints were signposted to an alternative means of resolution, for example a service request or via a specific appeals process, such as parking appeals or statutory tribunals or were withdrawn.
- 2.2. The total volume of complaints progressed through Stage 1 of the complaints process was 269 in 2022/23, a decrease of 32.6% on 2021/22 (399). This decrease could reflect the number enquiries and cases being resolved directly by the Compliments and Complaints team, rather than going to Stage 1. Stage 2 and 3 complaints are escalations of Stage 1 and are therefore not counted as new complaints.
- 2.3. Table 1 summarises the total volume of complaints at Stage 1 over the year, that were recorded by the Compliments and Complaints team, these have been broken down by outcome. The table contains a comparison to 2021/22 (in brackets):

Table 1: 2022/23 Summary of complaints at Stage 1 (2021/22 in brackets)

Process	No. of complaints	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	No Finding	In progress at the time of reporting	Responded to within timescales
Adults Statutory	16 ↓ (22)	25% ↓ (27%)	19% ↓ (23%)	56% ↑ (45%)	0% ↔ (0%)	0%	50% ↑ (32%)
Children's Statutory	11 ↓ (13)	0% ↔ (0%)	82% ↑ (54%)	18% ↓ (38%)	0% ↔ (0%)	0%	45% ↓ (69%)
Children's Corporate	74 ↑ (62)	22% ↑ (6%)	41% ↓ (47%)	38% ↑ (35%)	0% ↔ (0%)	0%	39% ↓ (44%)
RBWM Formal Corporate	168 ↓ (302)	22% ↓ (27%)	22% ↓ (23%)	42% ↑ (40%)	3% ↑ (0%)	11%	42% ↓ (46%)
Overall	269 ↓ (399)	21% ↓ (23%)	29% ↑ (27%)	41% ↑ (39%)	2% ↑ (0%)	7%	42% ↓ (46%)

Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) letter

- 2.4. The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) received 49 complaints and enquiries about the Council in 2022/23 (Appendix A), a decrease on 2021/22 (52). Table 12 details the breakdown as:

Table 2: LGSCO complaints received

Service	Complaints and enquiries
Adult Care Services	3
Benefits & Tax	1
Corporate & Other Services	5
Education & Children's Services	10
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	5
Highways & Transport	7
Housing	8
Null / Other	1
Planning & Development	9
Total	49

3. RBWM Formal Corporate complaints received

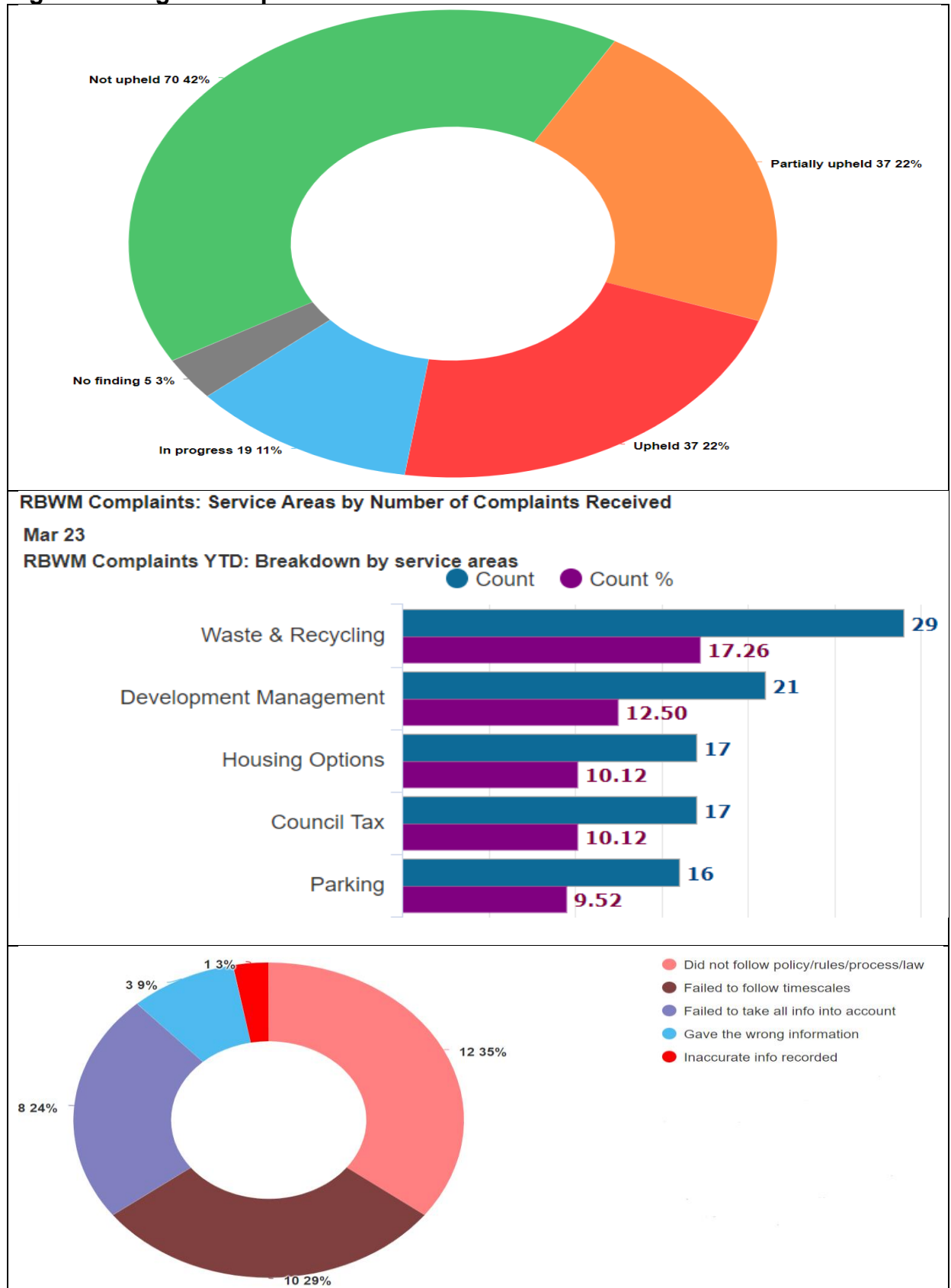
Stage 1 complaints received

- 3.1. 168 Formal Corporate complaints were processed in 2022/23, which is a decrease of 44.4% (302) in 2021/22. Historically Formal Corporate and Children's Corporate complaints were reported together, however for 2022/23 these have been separated.
- 3.2. The majority of Stage 1 complaints (42%) into the Council were not upheld. Most were for Waste & Recycling at 17.26%. This was because contact is more likely to be made with the Waste and Recycling teams, as these services affect all residents in the Borough and therefore generate the highest level of contacts and subsequently

complaints – however this team also received the second highest amount of compliments see Figure 5 in Section 4.1.

3.3. Figure 1 shows the main reason for complaints was because of ‘failure to follow policy/rules/process/law’ (12.35%).

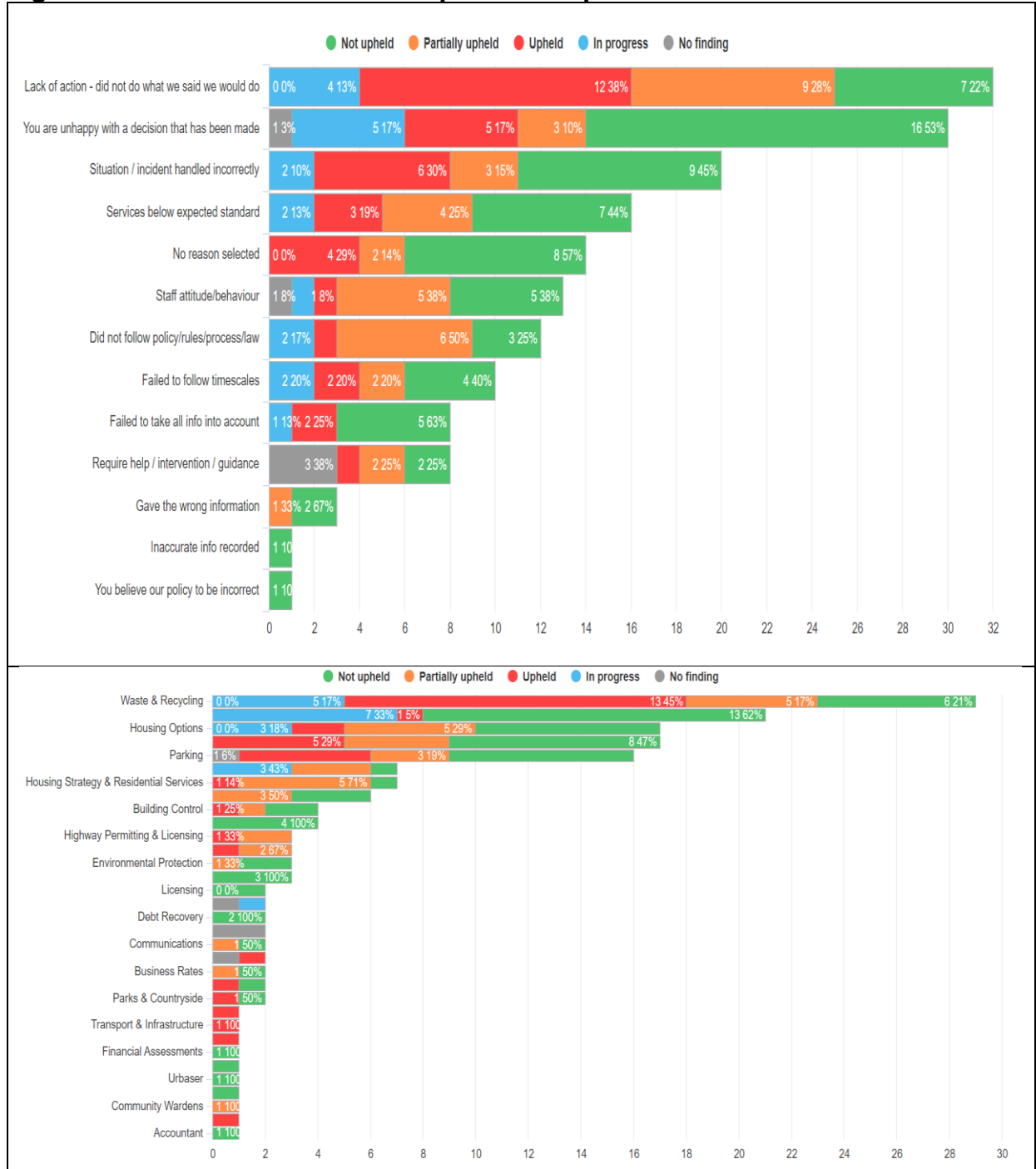
Figure 1: Stage 1 complaints received



Stage 1 Outcomes

3.4 Most complaints related to 'Lack of action – did not do what we said we would do', and this area also had the highest percentage of upheld complaints (12%). The reason for this was due to the nature of the service and most complaints are related to lack of waste/recycling collections which are then remedied following the investigation of the complaint. As detailed in Figure 2, the area with the most complaints that were upheld was Waste & Recycling (14.45%). This is again mainly to do with the nature of the complaints being missed collections which are verified and then rectified.

Figure 2: Outcomes of Formal Corporate complaints

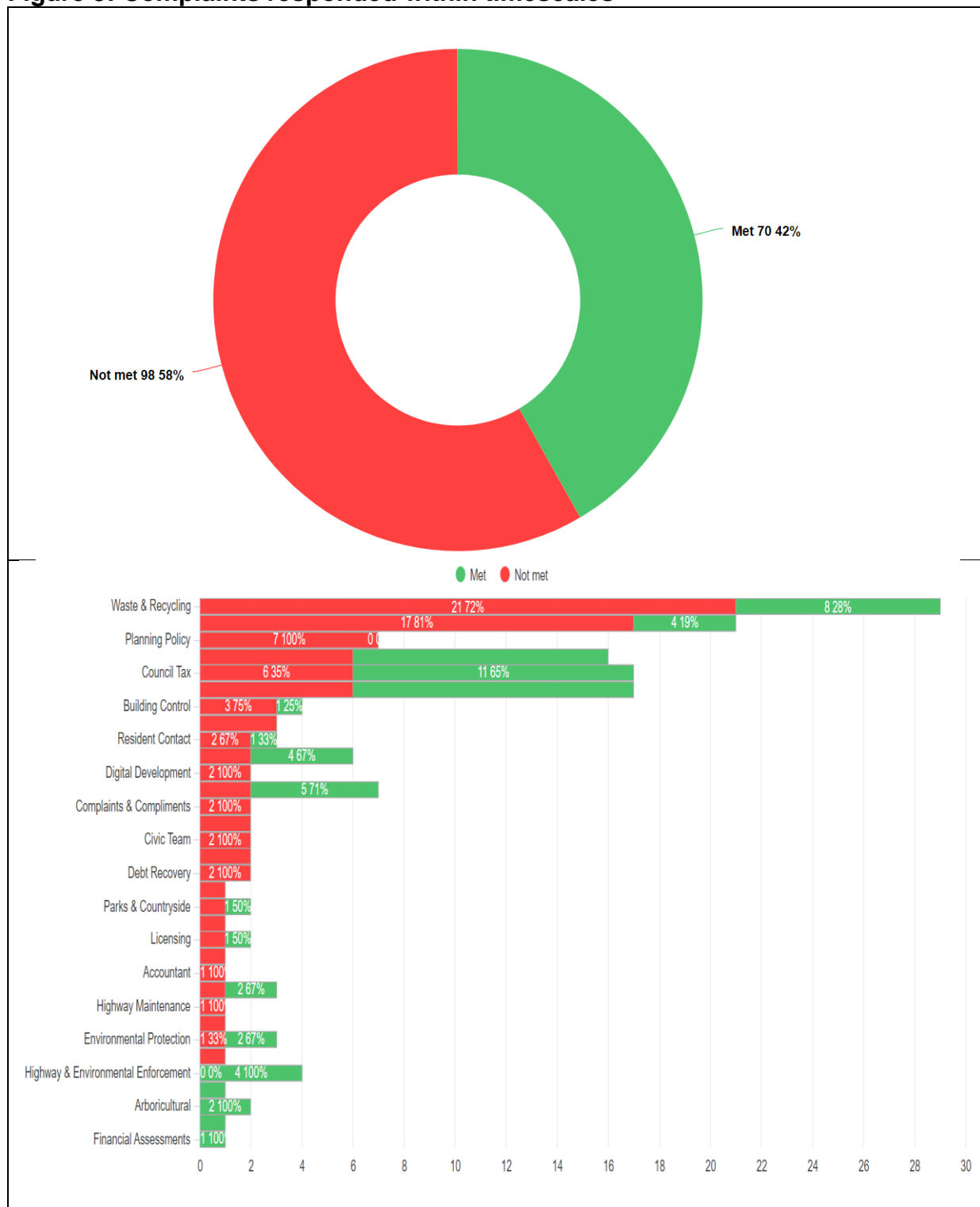


Stage 1 timescales

3.5 Timescales at Stage 1 were not met on 58% of occasions as detailed in Figure 3. The main reasons for this was due to the lack of resource in the Waste & Recycling Team.

There have been difficulties recruiting to vacant posts but we hope to address this shortly with a recruitment drive.

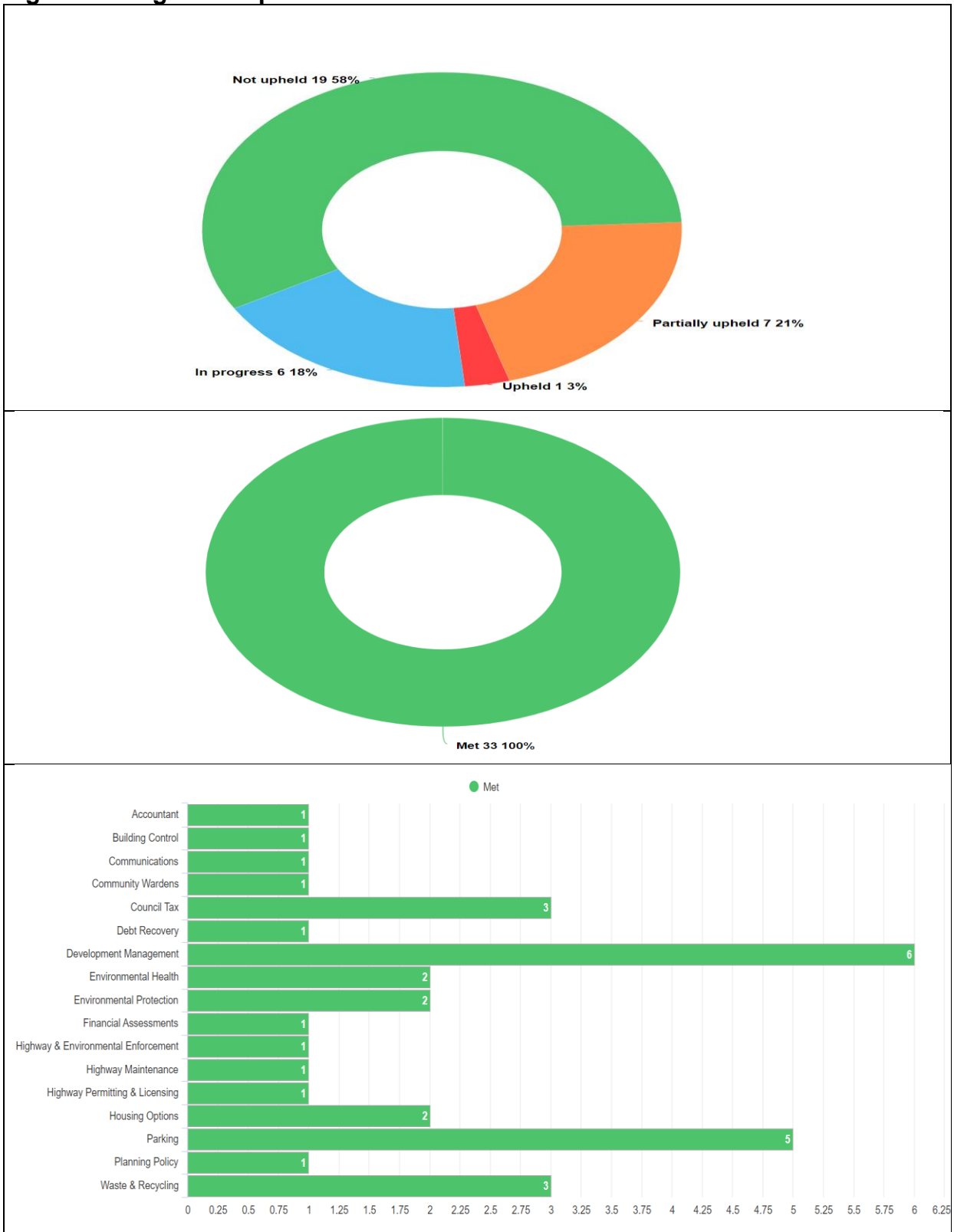
Figure 3: Complaints responded within timescales



Stage 2 complaints received

3.6. Of the 168 Stage 1 complaints, 33 were progressed to Stage 2. Figure 4 shows that 58% of complaints at Stage 2 were not upheld, and that 100% were responded to within published timescales, which is a significant improvement on 2021/22 (65%).

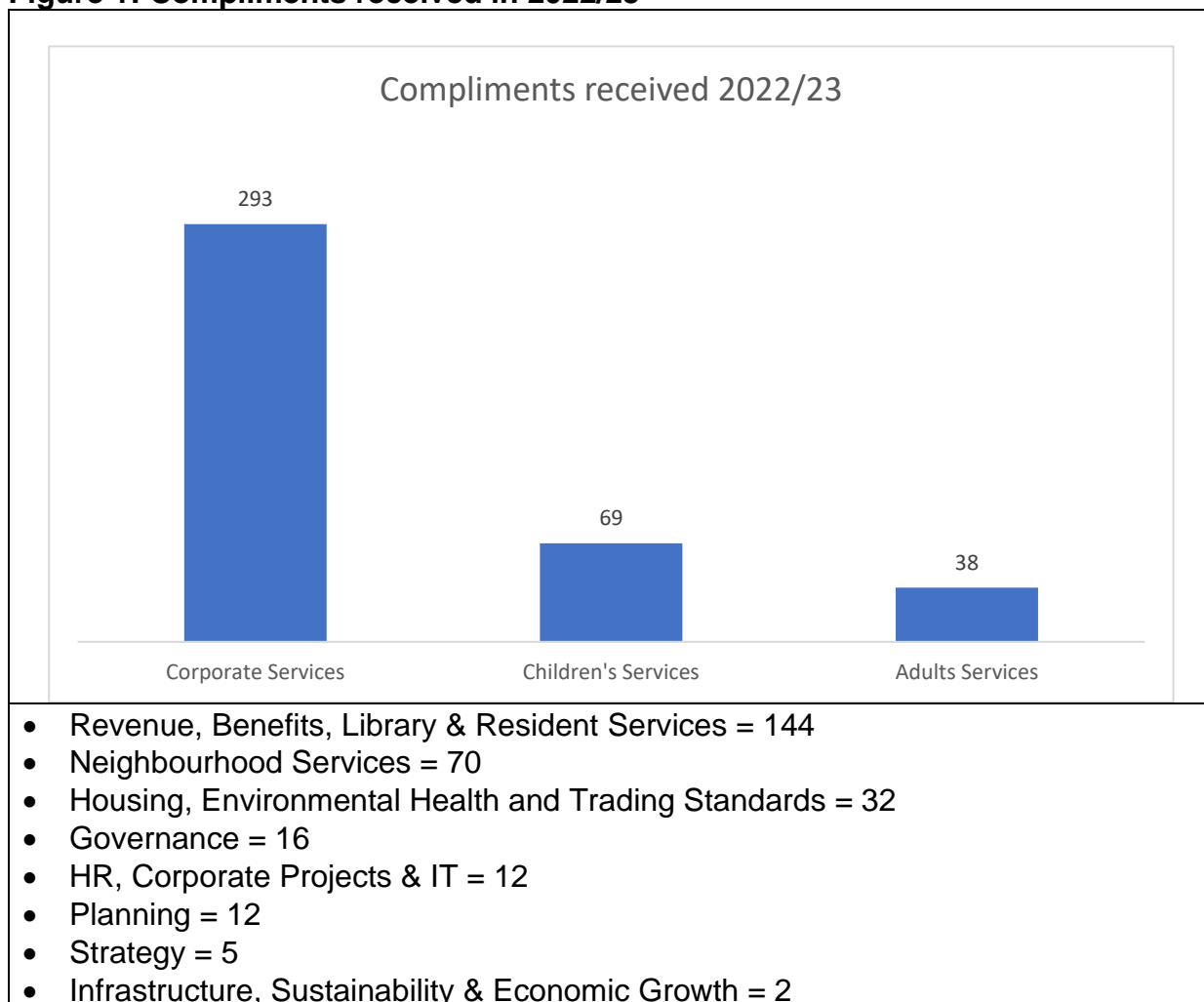
Figure 4: Stage 2 complaints received



4 Compliments received

4.4 In 2022/23 RBWM Corporate Services received 293 compliments. Figure 5 sets out the volume of compliments received and details the teams in receipt of the most compliments:

Figure 1: Compliments received in 2022/23



5 Lessons learned from complaints by Service area

5.1 An important part of the complaints process is capturing the learning and embedding good practice across the Council. Below are the learning that have been identified by various Service areas:

<p>Revenues, Benefits, Library and Resident Services</p> <p>The majority of complaints received result from recovery action taken against those liable for Council Tax, whether residents or non-resident landlords. There were a marked increase in complaints received from “freemen of the land” this year during the annual billing process with residents downloading standard documents from the internet maintaining that the council tax did not have to be paid or could be paid only in relation to selected services. Inevitably, such complaints are time consuming for senior officers therefore standard responses have now been developed to assist.</p>
<p>Planning</p> <p>Following these complaints, recommendations have been implemented to improve communication between officers and applicant/agents as well as internally. Additional monitoring has also been put in place to ensure that applications are being determined in time as far as possible.</p>

Parking / Car parks management

The number of complaints has reduced from 33 in 2021/22 to 21 in 2022/23 which is a positive change.

The team work closely with the Complaints team to monitor progress and reduce the number of complaints not responded to within the set timeframes. Following the review of any complaint, recommendations are made to improve service delivery and customer experience.

Waste Management / Environmental Services

The waste service is one that impacts on every resident and household, as a result the number of complaints received by this service area would be expected to be high in comparison with other some service areas. The total number of complaints has more than halved from 73 for 2021/22 to 32 for 2022/23 which is extremely positive and shows that more people are more satisfied with the service provided.

The Environmental Services area has expanded but continues to have resourcing issues which have had an impact on some response times. Recruitment is currently underway to address some of the resourcing impact.

Following the review of any complaint, recommendations are made to improve service delivery and customer experience. The team work closely with the Complaints team to monitor progress and reduce the number of complaints not responded to within the set timeframes.

Housing

The Council's Housing Team deals with statutory homeless approaches, gives housing advice and where there is a statutory responsibility makes placements of homeless households into temporary accommodation. The Council's duties to the homeless are dictated by legislation and are not a matter of Council policy, the team are required by law to follow the processes laid down for them. The majority of complaints received by the service fall broadly into two categories, complaints from service users that they have not received the services they wished from the team and complaints about the quality of engagement with staff.

In respect of complaints regarding services received the team is limited to providing its services in line with the statutory requirements. This often leads to disappointment from service users who then lodge complaints that they have not received the service they expected. This is analogous to a service such as parking enforcement where complaints are received simply because the service has carried out its functions and there is no error or wrongdoing by the service. As the team must follow the legislation it is difficult to draw practical learning outcomes from such complaints as the Council must follow the requisite legislation and rules and cannot determine its own functions.

Complaints in respect of interaction with staff are usually cases where service users feel that they have not been treated with empathy or understanding or that staff have been rude or discourteous. These complaints do offer opportunities for learning and service improvement and such complaints are raised with the individual team leaders and also highlighted to staff. The Housing Service holds quarterly all-staff meetings that discuss various topics and two sessions have been held with staff as a follow up to such complaints. One session discussed the differences in perception between the service that staff thought they provided and that perceived by service users and one session dealt with the elements that made up good customer service and customer

service standards. It is planned to continue to use our complaints feedback to inform our services and further sessions will be held at future quarterly meetings.

Trading Standards

A sizeable number of complaints spanned other services areas, such as Planning and Housing. This occasionally led to a convoluted and delayed approach to complaint handling in some cases. There has been a significant reduction in resources which has impacted response times in some cases. Recruitment is being progressed to fill vacancies, including a Team Leader position.

A more sophisticated monitoring approach within the service has been put in place to review, progress, and check that complaint responses have been sent on time. Where complaints span other services areas, early contacts are made with relevant teams/service leads to coordinate a joint response. The service also works closely with the Complaints Team to monitor progress and redirect complaints to the approach team/service area.

6. Lessons learned - final summary

- 6.1. The Council welcomes and recognises the importance of complaints and all customer feedback. We use this in discussion at our leadership meetings and to help drive our services forward. Our complaints processes and procedures are regularly reviewed, and whilst found to be compliant a small number of improvements have been made. This includes the centralisation of the complaint's management processes under the responsibility of the Deputy Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer. In addition, complaints data is being reviewed on a monthly basis by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) for performance and improvement purposes.
- 6.2 These initiatives will ensure a consistent methodology to the reporting, investigation and response to all complaints made to the council. Over the next 18 months a new computer system will be procured, which will lead to improved monitoring, better performance recording and the ability to react earlier to patterns and trends highlighted within the complaints report.

7. Appendix A: LGSCO Annual Review 2023 letter

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

19 July 2023

By email

Mr Evans
Chief Executive
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council

Dear Mr Evans

Annual Review letter 2022-23

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2023. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints. As always, I would encourage you to consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Leader of your Council and Chair of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, to encourage effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer such valuable opportunities to learn and improve.

The end of the reporting year, saw the retirement of Michael King, drawing his tenure as Local Government Ombudsman to a close. I was delighted to be appointed to the role of Interim Ombudsman in April and look forward to working with you and colleagues across the local government sector in the coming months. I will be building on the strong foundations already in place and will continue to focus on promoting improvement through our work.

Complaint statistics

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic.

Over the past two years, we have reviewed our processes to ensure we do the most we can with the resources we have. One outcome is that we are more selective about the complaints we look at in detail,

prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate. While providing a more sustainable way for us to work, it has meant that changes in uphold rates this year are not solely down to the nature of the cases coming to us. We are less likely to carry out investigations on 'borderline' issues, so we are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall.

Our average uphold rate for all investigations has increased this year and you may find that your organisation's uphold rate is higher than previous years. This means that comparing uphold rates with previous years carries a note of caution. Therefore, I recommend comparing this statistic with that of similar organisations, rather than previous years, to better understand your organisation's performance.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and we were satisfied with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and credit organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your organisation with similar authorities to provide an average marker of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data, and a copy of this letter, will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), on 26 July 2023. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

Your organisation's performance

During the year, we [issued a public report](#) about your Council's failure to properly manage Free Early Education Entitlement after a parent raised concerns they were being charged a top-up fee. We also found the Council failed to ensure the nursery administered clear and transparent invoices. We recommended the Council should apologise and make payments to the complainant, and work with the nursery to ensure its invoices are clear and transparent. I am satisfied with the Council's actions in this case.

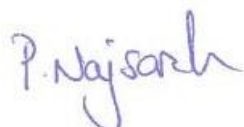
During the year some responses to our enquiries were late. These included three out of four responses from your Children's Services department and a long delay in a response from the Housing department. Investigations that are delayed can further frustrate complainants and I ask that you consider what steps can be taken to address these matters so that your liaison with us improves.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

I know that complaints offer organisations a rich source of intelligence and insight that has the potential to be transformational. These insights can indicate a problem with a specific area of service delivery or, more broadly, provide a perspective on an organisation's culture and ability to learn. To realise the potential complaints have to support service improvements, organisations need to have the fundamentals of complaint handling in place. To support you to do so, we have continued our work with the Housing Ombudsman Service to develop a joint complaint handling code that will provide a standard for organisations to work to. We will consult on the code and its implications prior to launch and will be in touch with further details.

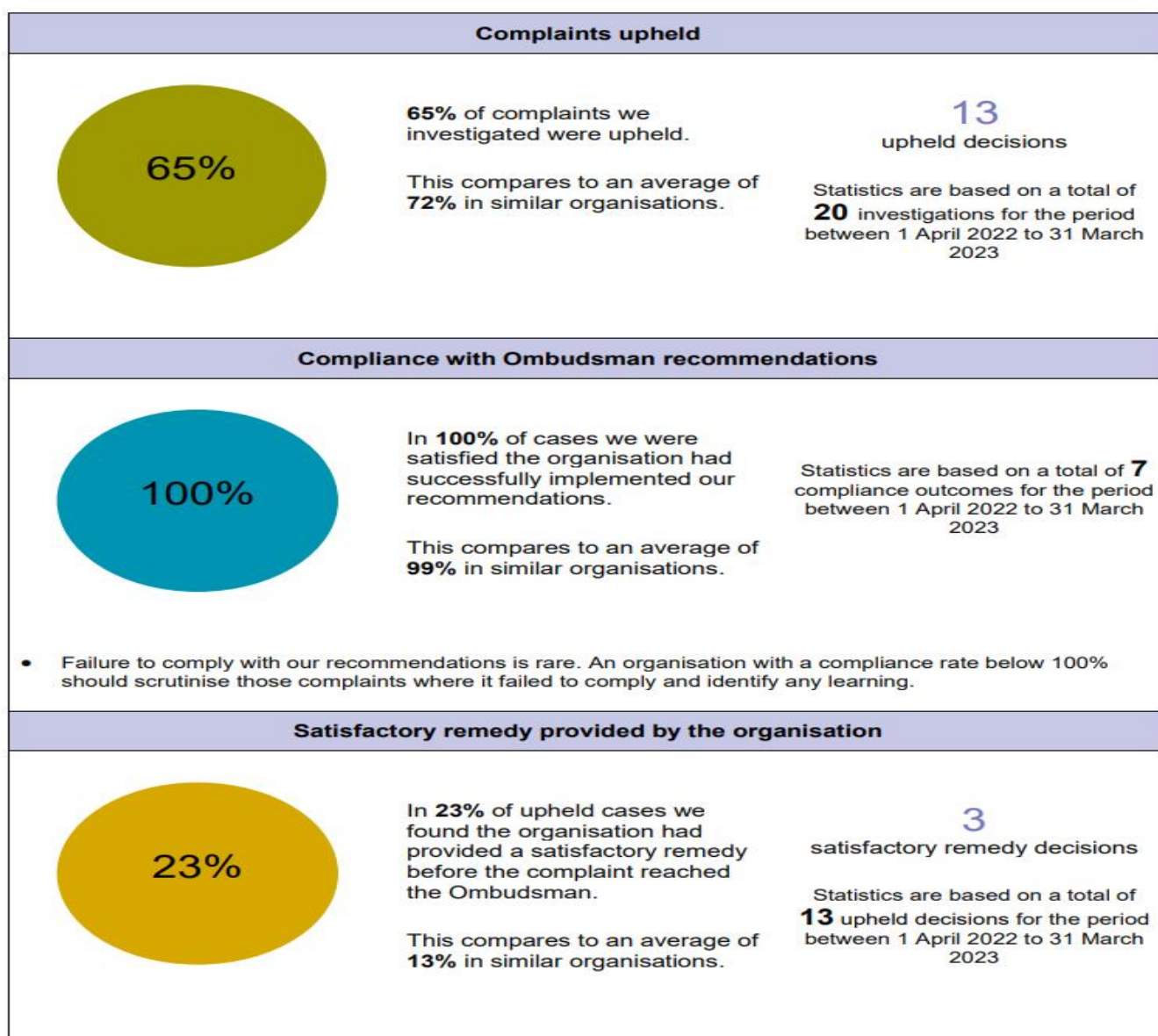
In addition, our successful training programme includes practical interactive workshops that help participants develop their complaint handling skills. We can also offer tailored support and bespoke training to target specific issues your organisation might have identified. We delivered 105 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1350 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training or get in touch at training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Najsarek
 Interim Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
 Interim Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council
For the period ending 31/03/23



8. Appendix B: Council's complaints processes

The stages of the Council's process is detailed in the table below:

Stages	Adult services complaints	Children's services complaints	Formal Corporate complaints	Not within the formal complaints process
Stage 1	Statutory No specific timescale but aim to respond within 10 working days. Response from Service Manager or higher.	Statutory Up to 10 working days. Can agree extension for a further 10 working days. Response from Head of Service.	Up to 20 working days. Can agree extension for a further 10 working days. Response from Head of Service.	N/A
Stage 2	N/A	Statutory 25-65 working days. Completed by independent complaints investigators and report produced. Adjudicating letter in response to report completed by Children's Director of Social Care.	Up to 20 working days. Review of stage 1 complaint and response by Director.	N/A
Stage 3	N/A	Statutory Stage 3 independent panel. Up to 70 working days. Panel of three independent members who produce a report. Letter in response to the report completed by the Directors of Children's Services.	N/A	N/A
LGSCO	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	N/A
Alternative appeal process	N/A	N/A	N/A	Customer given timescales for response

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WORK PROGRAMME - CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen Evans (Chief Executive) • Elizabeth Griffiths (Executive Director of Resources) • Andrew Durrant (Executive Director of Place) • Kevin McDaniel (Executive Director of Adult Services and Health) • Lin Ferguson (Executive Director of Children’s Services and Education)
LINK OFFICERS & HEADS OF SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Vallance (Deputy Director of Finance) • Elaine Browne (Deputy Director of Law and Governance) • Nikki Craig (Assistant Director of HR, Corporate Projects and IT) • Louise Freeth (Assistant Director of Revenues, Benefits, Library and Resident Services)

MEETING: 6th NOVEMBER 2023

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Work Programme	Mark Beeley , <i>Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview & Scrutiny</i>

MEETING: 19th DECEMBER 2023

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Work Programme	Mark Beeley , <i>Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview & Scrutiny</i>

MEETING: 29th JANUARY 2024

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Work Programme	Mark Beeley , <i>Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview & Scrutiny</i>

MEETING: 11th APRIL 2024

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Work Programme	Mark Beeley , <i>Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview & Scrutiny</i>

ITEMS SUGGESTED BUT NOT YET PROGRAMMED

ITEM	COMMENTS
Staffing levels from across the organisation – is the structure correct?	<i>Councillor Wilson</i>
Contract management process	<i>Councillor Reeves</i>
RBWM Property Company Review	<i>Councillor Howard</i>

[Terms of Reference for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel](#)

[Cabinet Forward Plan](#)