



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Ethical Governance & Personnel Committee 12 October 2022

Wards affected: All wards

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS 2021-22

Report of the Monitoring Officer

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform members of complaints received under the council's two-stage complaints process and the outcome of these, and complaints received via the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The report be endorsed.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 The council operates a two-stage complaints procedure which deals with complaints about council services (including those carried out on behalf of the council by contractors or partners) and actions or lack of action by the authority or its officers.
- 3.2 At the first stage, a complaint will be sent to the relevant manager for a response, which should be provided within ten working days. The response should usually state whether or not the complaint is upheld and give reasons for the decision. If, due to the level of investigation required, it is not possible to respond within this timescale, the responding officer must contact the complainant to explain the reasons for this and to let them know when they may expect a response.
- 3.3 If a complainant is not satisfied with the response received to their complaint at stage 1, they may request a review of the matter. The review ("stage 2") is

reviewed by a more senior officer or an officer from a different service area who has not been involved in the case.

- 3.4 Should the complainant remain dissatisfied after stage 2 of the process, they have the opportunity to put their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman, who will usually contact us to ask for further details of the case, copies of correspondence and later in the process, a response from officers.
- 3.5 The complaints and Ombudsman process is administered by Democratic Services, and a record is kept which includes a summary of the complaint and the outcome in order to monitor patterns and learn from complaints.
- 3.6 Under the constitution, monitoring of the complaints process is the responsibility of the Ethical Governance & Personnel Committee, and as such these reports are brought to the committee annually.

Breakdown of complaints received 2021/22

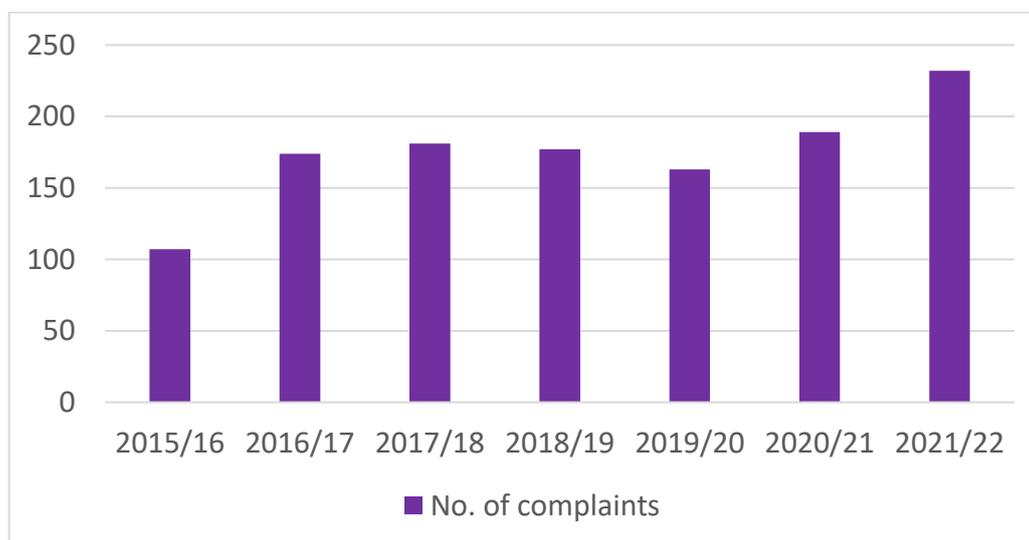
- 3.7 During the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 a total of 232 complaints were processed under the formal complaints procedure.

The number of complaints in 21 service categories is as below:

Car Parks	3
Clean Neighbourhoods	7
Communications	1
Cultural Services	2
Democratic Services	3
Electoral Services	4
Environmental Health	16
Finance	3
Green Spaces	3
Housing – Allocations	13
Housing – Anti-Social Behaviour	8
Housing – Options	2
Housing – Repairs	17
Housing – Tenancy Management	6
Housing – Private Sector Housing	1
Planning	29
Planning/Environmental Health	1
Refuse & Recycling	77
Revenues & Benefits	36
Total number of complaints	232

3.8 The number of complaints received compares with the previous years as follows:

2021/22	232	2017/18	181
2020/21	189	2016/17	174
2019/20	163	2015/16	107
2018/19	177		



3.9 There has been a 22.5% increase in complaints to the authority this year. In previous years, complaints increased in part due to the introduction of an online complaints form, which made accessibility easier for customers to make a complaint. This led to an increase in complaints that would previously have been dealt with in the course of business following a phone call to Customer Services or the appropriate team.

3.10 Of the 232 complaints processed, the following outcomes were recorded:

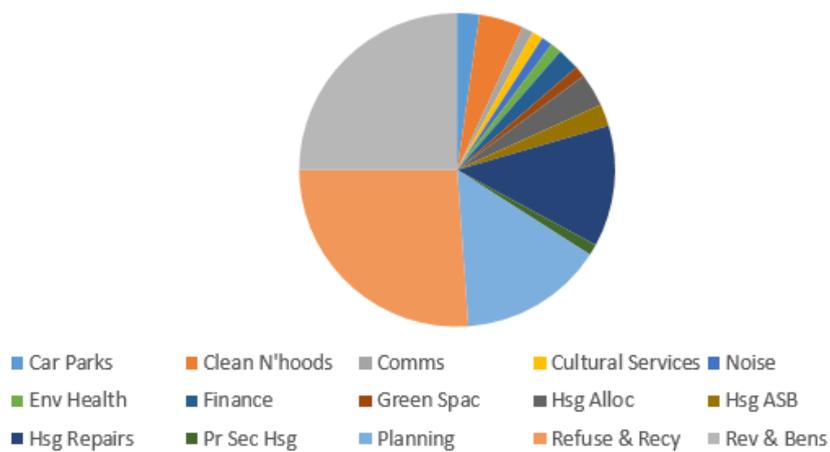
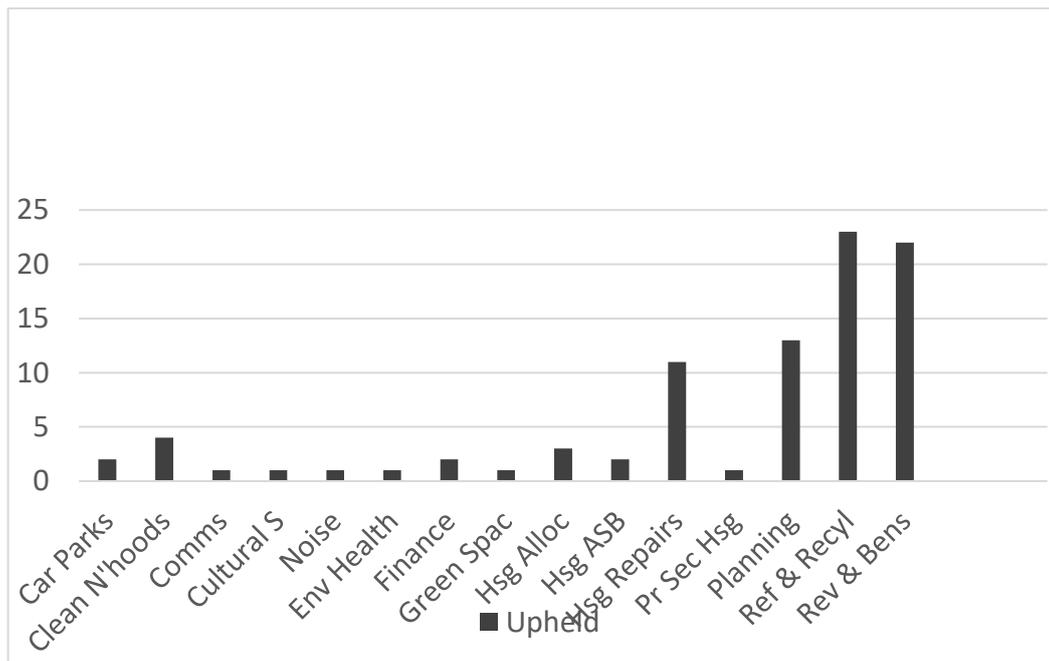
Complaint upheld	72
Complaint upheld in part	16
Complaint not upheld	122
Other/Neither/Withdrawn	22

3.11 In order to learn from complaints and, more importantly, the instances where complaints have been upheld or upheld in part, these can be broken down as follows:

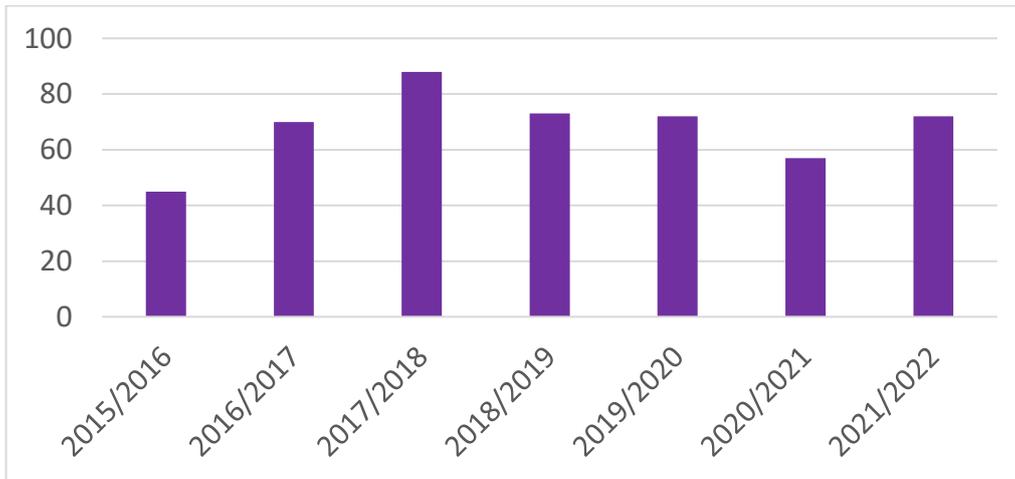
Car Parks	2
Clean Neighbourhoods	4
Communications	1
Cultural Services	1
Environmental Health	2
Finance	2
Green Spaces	1
Housing Allocations	3

Housing Anti-Social Behaviour	2
Housing - Repairs	11
Housing - Private Sector Housing	1
Planning	13
Refuse & Recycling	23
Revenues & Benefits	22
Total upheld or upheld in part	88

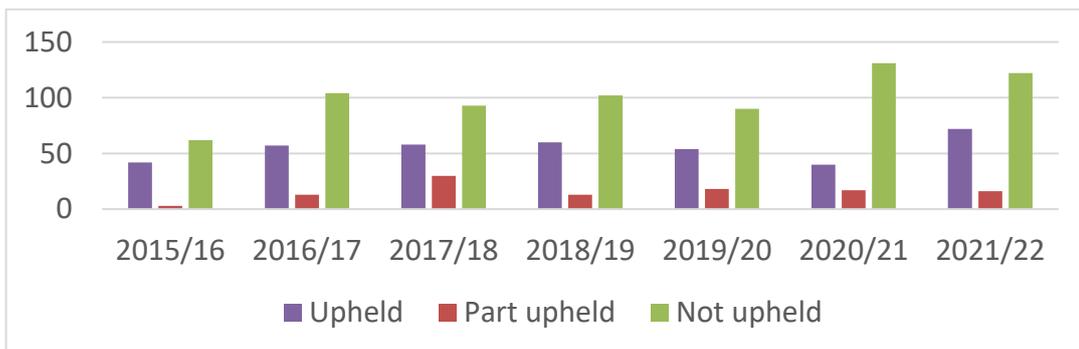
3.12 The following charts show the subject of complaints that have been upheld or upheld in part for 2021/22.



3.13 The following chart shows the number of complaints upheld from 2015/16 to 2021/22.



3.14 The following chart shows complaints upheld, upheld in part and not upheld from 2015/16 to 2021/22.



3.15 Compensation was offered as a result of one stage 1 complaint during 2021/22 with a value of £380.00 which related to a planning fee returned to the applicant due to the length of time taken to deal with a planning application.

3.16 Of the 232 complaints received, 192 went no further than stage 1, suggesting that the complainant was satisfied with the response, and 40 were reviewed at stage 2.

These stage 2 complaints related to the following service areas:

Car Parks	1
Clean Neighbourhoods	1
Democratic Services	3
Environmental Health	10
Finance	1
Green Spaces	2
Housing – Allocations	2
Housing – Anti-Social Behaviour	2
Housing – Private sector	1

Housing – Repairs	2
Housing – Tenancy Management	1
Planning	8
Refuse & Recycling	4
Revenues & Benefits	3
Total	41

Learning from Complaints

- 3.17 The Ombudsman requests that when reporting on local complaints, authorities should focus on learning and on implementing recommendations for improvements that can help prevent the same thing going wrong again. Complaints are a valuable source of information which helps to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements.
- 3.18 All of the complaints where the complaint was upheld and fault has been found have been reviewed to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault, and any wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future.

Due to the nature of the complaints that were upheld, measures to resolve the complaint are largely corrective action where we have been at fault for poor service. Corrective action typically consists of both individual redress, for example an apology, carrying out overdue work, reminder to staff of policies and procedures or additional training identified.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints

- 3.19 During 2021/22 eight complaints on this authority were lodged with the LGSCO (not including complaints received by the Ombudsman but dismissed at an early stage without asking us for information). This was two more than the previous year.
- 3.20 Four of the complaints were investigated and no fault or injustice was found. The remaining four were not investigated.
- 3.21 The annual review letter from the LGSCO is attached as an appendix. The data may not align with our own records due to the number of complaints dismissed without having contacted us for any information and the conclusion of complaints from the previous year within the figures.

Housing Ombudsman complaints

- 3.22 One complaint was lodged with the Housing Ombudsman during 2021/22. The outcome is awaited.

Persistent and unreasonable complainant behaviour policy

3.23 The Persistent and unreasonable complainant behaviour policy is in place to address unreasonable behaviour where the frequency or nature of a complainant's contact with the council takes up unjustifiable officer time and resources, making it hard for officers to handle their complaint and/or those of other people, or where their behaviour is offensive or abusive.

3.24 The policy has not been applied to any persons in 2021/22.

4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

4.1 This report is to be taken in open session.

5. Financial implications (IB)

5.1 None.

6. Legal implications (MR)

6.1 None.

7. Corporate Plan implications

7.1 This report supports all aims and objectives by ensuring the public and external organisations have the opportunity to raise issues with the authority which assist in improving services to the public.

8. Consultation

8.1 None.

9. Risk implications

9.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision/project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

9.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Failure to provide satisfactory services or service improvements	Ensure service areas learn from complaints	Service managers

10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 10.1 The complaints process about which this report is written is in place to ensure equality in service provision and to protect the rights of the individual. The process is available and accessible to all customers.
- 10.2 Assistance is offered and provided to support complainants in completing the form and in providing all relevant information, and complaints are accepted in the format that is most appropriate for the individual
- 10.3 Where there is a proposed new service, change of service, or a new or reviewed policy, an Equality Impact Assessment is required and has been undertaken and can be viewed here: None required – this is not a new service or a review of policy.

11. Climate implications

- 11.1 This report is not proposing a new policy or service and therefore has no impact on climate change.

12. Corporate implications

- 12.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:
- Community safety implications
 - Environmental implications
 - ICT implications
 - Asset management implications
 - Procurement implications
 - Human resources implications
 - Planning implications
 - Data protection implications
 - Voluntary sector

Background papers: Previous years' complaints reports

Contact officer: Rebecca Valentine-Wilkinson, Democratic Services Officer
Rebecca Owen, Democratic Services Manager

Executive member: Councillor S Bray