

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Resources, Performance And Development Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Date of Committee 27th February 2007

Report Title 2007 Half-Year Report: Corporate & Social Care Complaints and Compliments

Summary This report comments on the half-year reports each Directorate have produced. It also asks Members to comment on how the corporate complaints procedures might be developed for the future.

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Would the recommendation decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision] No.

Background papers 2006-7 Corporate Complaints Annual Report

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees Adult and Community Services, Children and Families, Community Protection, Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- Local Member(s) NA
- Other Elected Members Cllr Booth, Cllr Hicks, Cllr Atkinson
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive
- Legal Sarah Duxbury
- Finance
- Strategic Directors David Carter

- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION NO

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The number of compliments received between April and September 2006 increased to 1909.63% of these related to services provided by Adult Health and Community Services Directorate.
- 1.2 The number of complaints received decreased slightly to 552. Again, Adult Health and Community Directorate registered the highest numbers, at 47% of the total. Children Young People and Families Directorate registered 25%, and Environment and Economy Directorate registered 21%
- 1.3 Of the complaints received, 96% were resolved locally before reaching Stage 2 of the complaints procedures
- 1.4 39% of complaints were felt to be justified
- 1.5 34% of complaints related to poor service, 20% related to council policies, and 13% related to staff behaviour
- 1.6 Members are asked to reflect on how well existing information about compliments handling supports them in their scrutiny role, and are asked to comment on what changes or enhancements they would like to see to the existing corporate complaints procedure and how it is reported to Members.

Agenda No

Resources, Performance and Development Overview And Scrutiny Committee

22nd February 2007

2007 Half-Year Report: Corporate & Social Care Compliments & Complaints

Report of the Strategic Director, Performance and Development Directorate

Recommendation

That Members:

- Note the half-year reports provided in each Directorate to their relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Note the variation in reporting practices and levels of analysis
- Express views and help to inform the debate on how the corporate complaints procedures might be developed for the future

1.0 Background

1.1 This report comments upon the half-year reports each Directorate has produced.

2.0 Current Situation

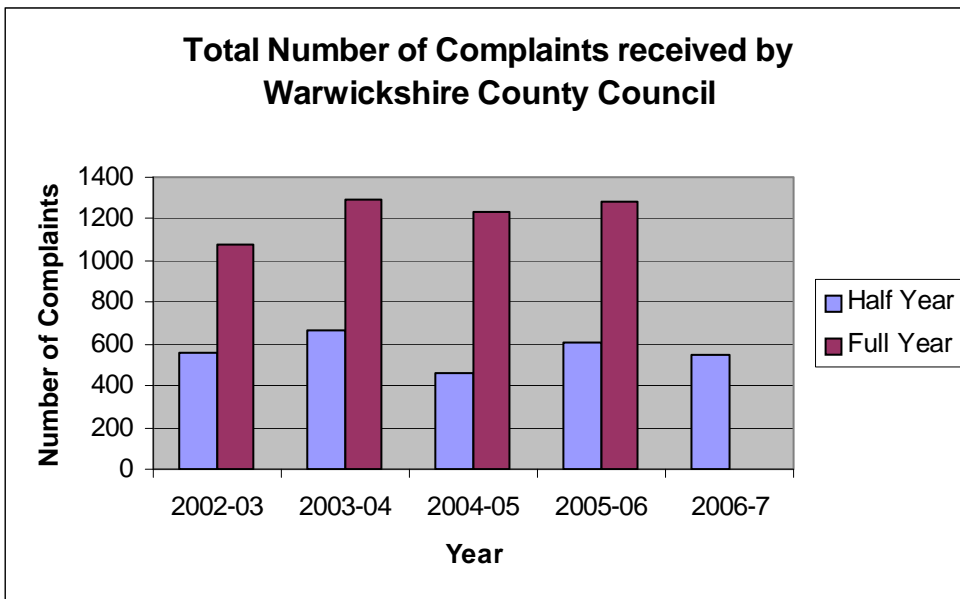
2.1 Directorates were asked this November to provide a separate report on their compliments and complaints activity to their relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees, based on the framework of information which had previously been in Chapter 3 of the Half Year Performance Report. This has been reproduced as an appendix to assist Members in considering the attached reports from each Directorate.

3. Important Considerations

- 3.1 Considerable organisational change occurred over this reporting period, requiring new performance reporting mechanisms and re-organisation of existing resources. For many Directorates, lead people with responsibility for complaints and representations activity left, were re-allocated or had changes of responsibility.
- 3.2 Some Directorates are conscious that the reporting for this half year period leaves much room for improvement and are committed to ensuring that changes are made which result in much improved reporting for the full year report.
- 3.3 Review of the way in which Directorates have collated and reported on information for this period has exposed a flaw in the way in which the information has been reported to this Committee to date. The existing corporate reporting process fails to properly differentiate between complaints and compliments from external customers (ie, members of the public), and complaints and compliments which relate to internal customers, complaints between Directorates, complaints about Traded Services, etc. This means that the aggregated tables that have been used to provide trend information on performance over time must be viewed with some caution, and the aggregation of this half-year report figures must be viewed with similar caution. They do NOT reflect external customer satisfaction, or internal customer satisfaction, but an undifferentiated amalgam between the two. Some Directorates do differentiate in their reporting between these types of complaint, but this is not uniform, and is not currently reflected in the corporate aggregation data.

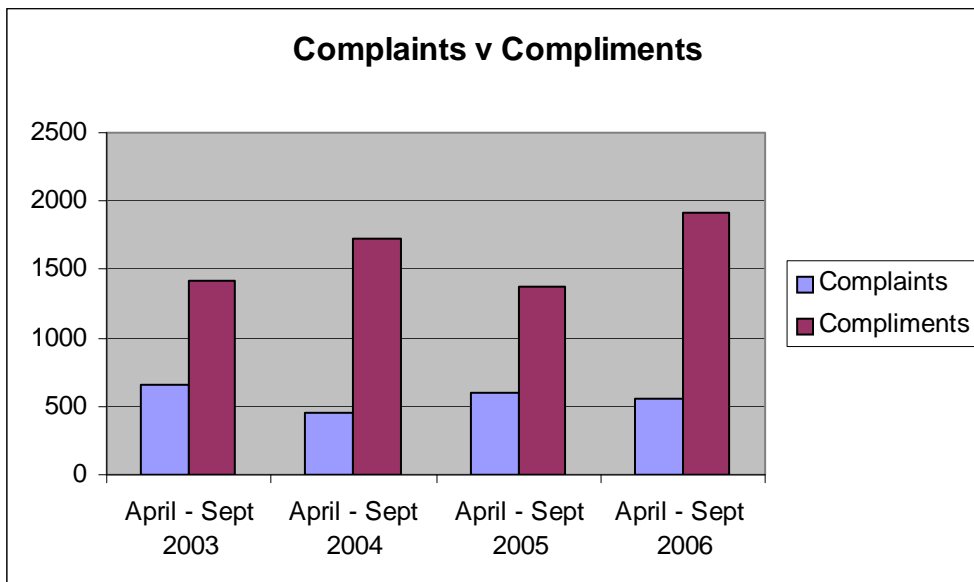
4. Key Findings

- 4.1 The number of complaints to the Council as a whole from April – September 2006 reported through the corporate complaints procedure and the social care complaints procedures is 552, a slight decrease on the same period last year. The trend for complaints figures over the past five years is illustrated below (for more detail see Appendix 1 Fig 1).



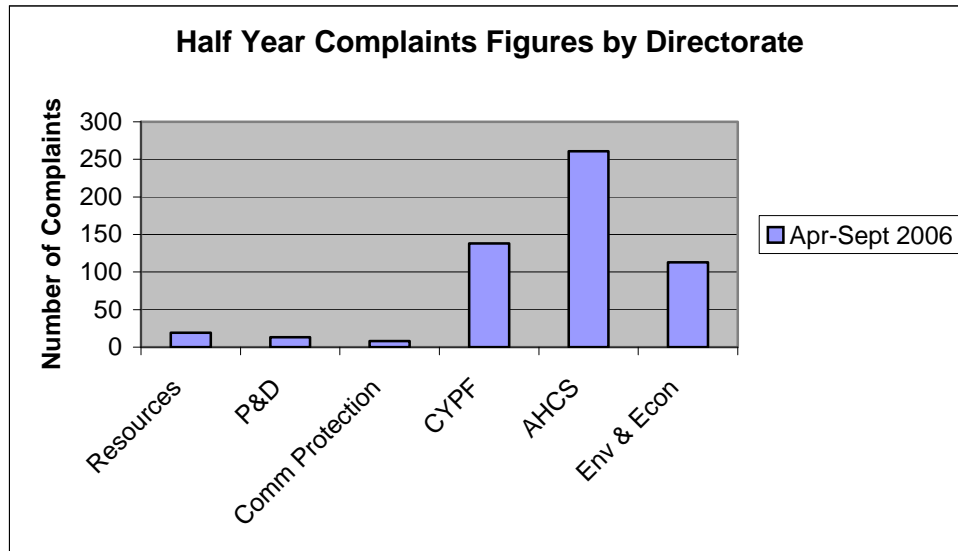
4.2 Of the 552 complaints received this half year, 212 were found to be justified complaints (see appendix Fig 5).

4.3 A total of 1909 compliments were received during April to September 2006, of which the majority are from Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate. The graph below shows the number of compliments compared with the number of complaints received over the last 3 years. This puts the number of complaints we receive into perspective. These figures do not include complaints or compliments which go directly to schools. For more detail on the numbers of compliments received see appendix Fig 7.



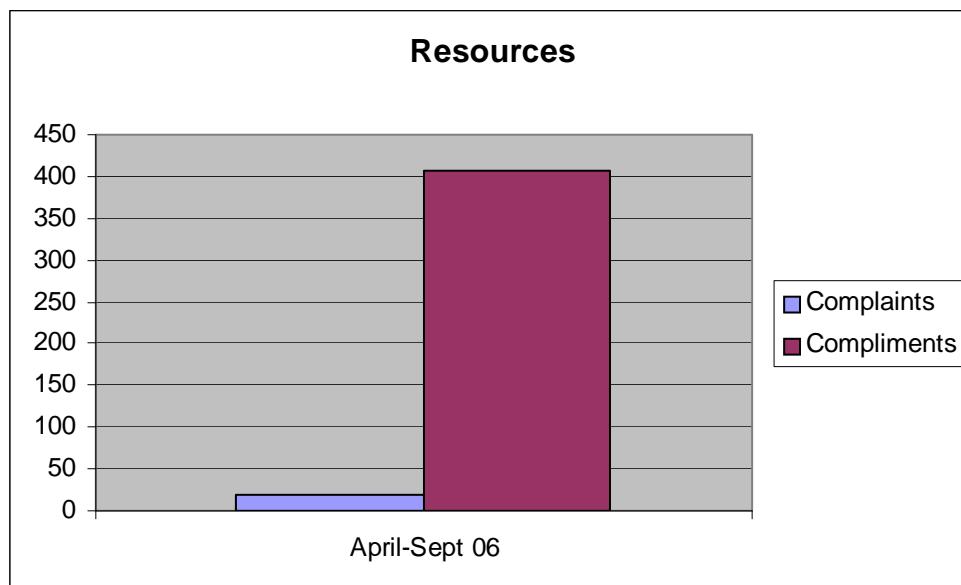
5. Detailed Consideration By Directorate

5.1 The graph below illustrates the spread of complaints activity by Directorate. As would be expected, the majority of complaints relate to Council service areas with high levels of interaction with external customers, and where there is a high volume of daily transactions.



5.2 Resources Directorate

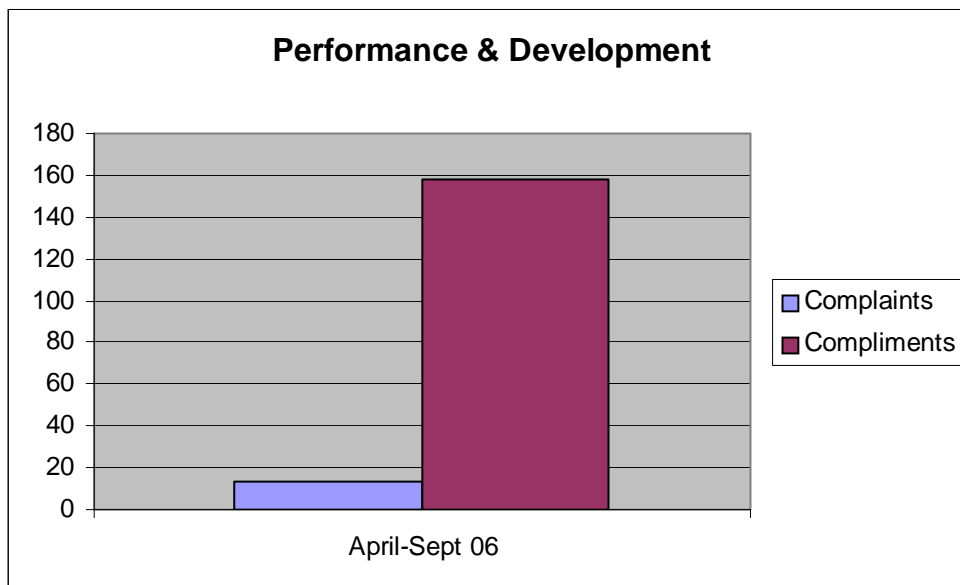
This brings together the separate complaints systems from the old Property Services, CAMS and Treasurers Departments. Please see the attached report for additional detail. Key points to note are slightly increased levels of complaint reporting, and significantly increased levels of compliment recording.



The key areas for complaints are concerned with the traded services with schools. Improvement actions are listed in the full report.

5.3 Performance and Development Directorate

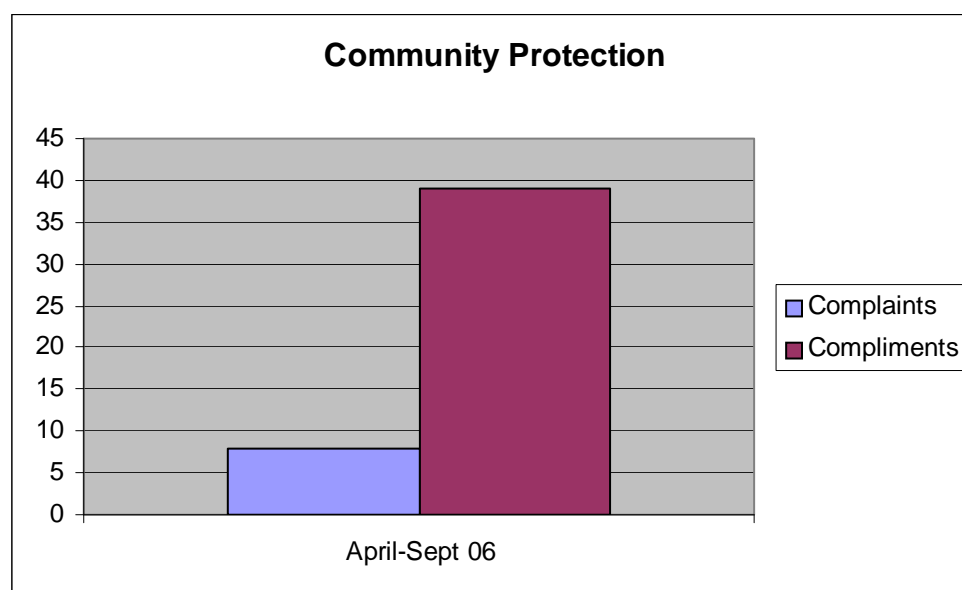
This Directorate incorporates the old Chief Executives Department, and new service delivery areas the Customer Service Centre and One Stop Shops.



Most complaints relate to the Registration Service, which is a primary public facing division within the Directorate. Improvement action is shown in the attached report.

5.4 Community Protection Directorate

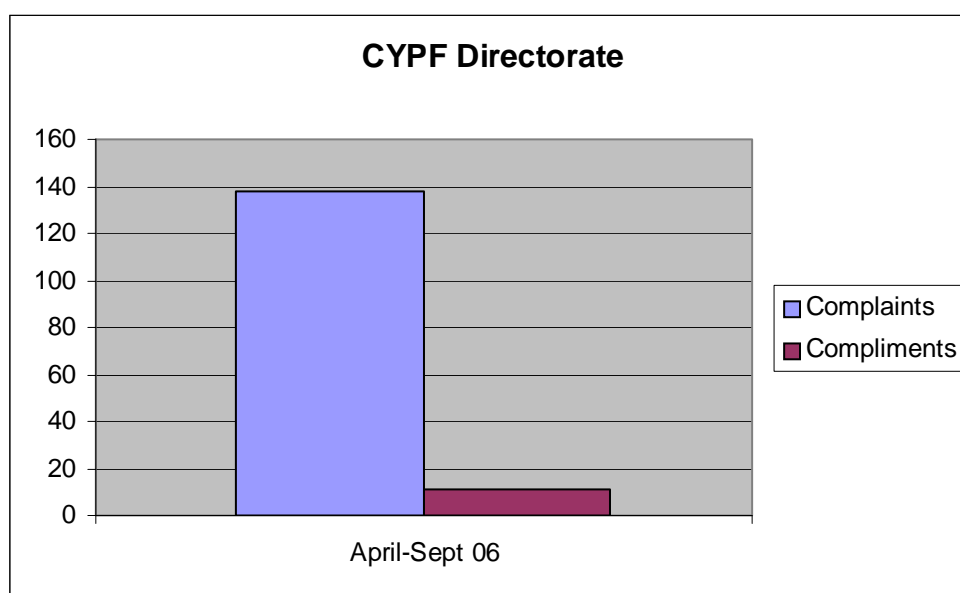
This Directorate incorporates Fire Services, Domestic Violence, Drug Action and Emergency Planning services. Please see attached report for additional detail.



The small number of complaints relate to Fire and Rescue services, as do the compliments.

5.5 Children, Young People and Families Directorate

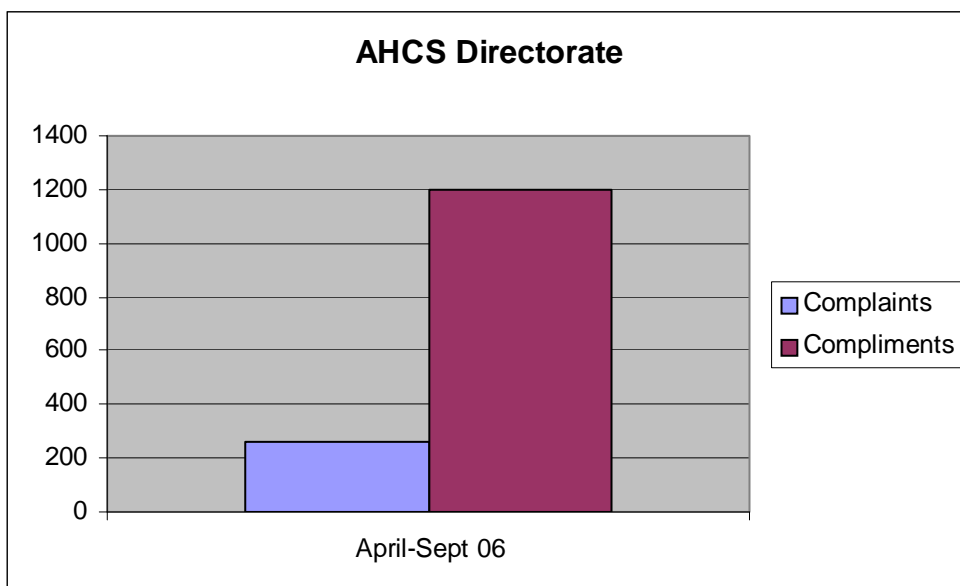
This directorate covers both Education and Childrens social care services. Existing social services complaints handling systems have been split to enable separate childrens social care complaint and representation reporting. Most complaints relating to social care services relate to child protection activity. Most Education complaints relate to schools. For further details and improvement actions see attached reports.



A large number of complaints are taken directly to the school or are diverted back to the school and the Departmental Complaints Officer is often unaware of the outcome. It is also extremely difficult to track the length of time it takes to resolve complaints. Complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible when they reach the Departmental Complaints Officer but schools are regularly closed for holidays and as a result, the timescales in the education complaints procedure is based around school days, rather than working days. It should also be noted that Education services do not collect information about compliments.

5.6 Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate

This Directorate now incorporates adult social care services, libraries learning and heritage, and Trading Standards. It therefore has an extremely high level of interaction with the public on a daily basis, with thousands of daily transactions.

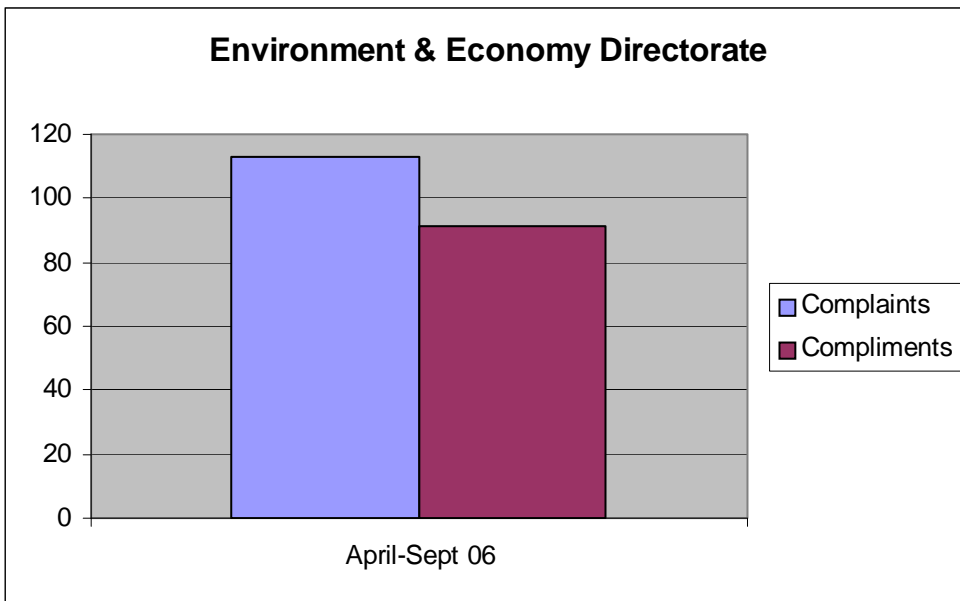


This Directorate now provides performance reporting at every Scrutiny Committee, which includes data about compliments and complaints. Additionally, more detailed analysis of Adult Social Care and Libraries, Learning and Culture compliments and complaints data is considered half-yearly by their Scrutiny Committee. See the attached reports for more detail and actions undertaken to improve services.

Trading Standards Service has recently re-vamped their monitoring systems to ensure a more systematic recording process, and have started recording compliments as well as complaints. Further development work is underway to improve analysis activity for the future.

5.7 Environment and Economy Directorate

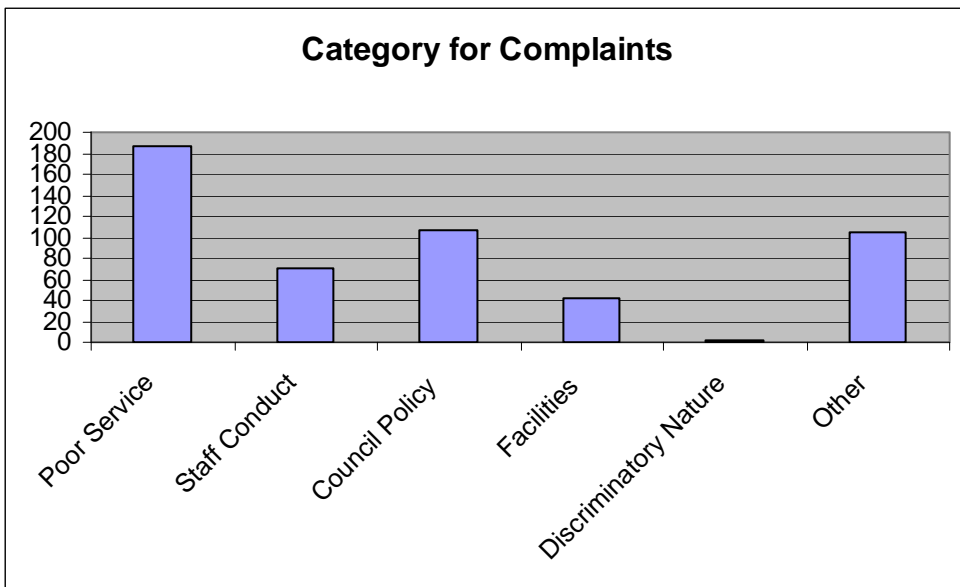
This Directorate has 3 major service areas: transport and highways, waste and environment, and skills, tourism and economy.



Additional detail is available in the attached report.

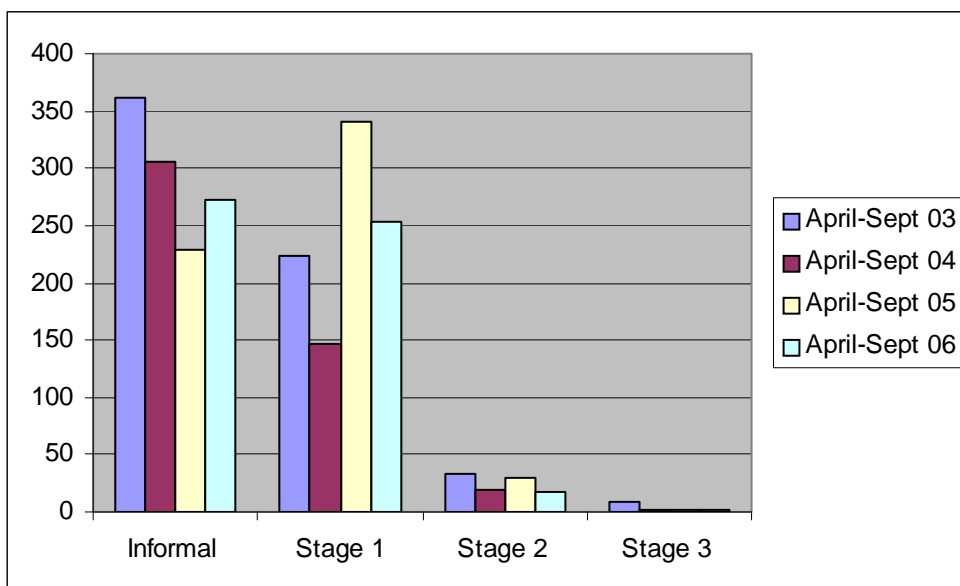
6. Category for Complaints

The graph below shows the reasons why people are complaining to the council. This graph shows the number of complaints in each category out of the 552 complaints received this half year. (For the detail under each category see appendix Fig. 2 and 3.)



7. Time taken to deal with Complaints

7.1 The graph below shows that the majority of complaints received by the County Council are resolved informally at the early problem-solving stage. Of those that move into the formal complaints procedures, the vast majority are resolved at stage 1 of the complaints procedure.



7.2 The numbers and percentage of complaints dealt with within the set timescales as laid down in the Corporate Complaints Procedure are shown in appendix Fig 4. The timescales for the three stages of the Corporate Complaints Procedure are as follows:

- Stage 1 – 15 working days
- Stage 2 – 21 working days
- Stage 3 – 30 working days

For social care services, the timescales are different, because it relates to a separate statutory process:

- Stage 1 – 10 working days
- Stage 2 – 25 working days
- Stage 3 – 30 working days

8. Member Notification

The only Directorate reporting referrals by and to Members is Adult Health and Community Services Directorate (see Figure 6).

9 Ombudsman Complaints

9.1 The Corporate Complaints Officer deals with complaints that reach stage 3 of the corporate complaints procedure. In the social care procedures, Stage 3 is an Independent Review Panel. If the complainant is dissatisfied at this stage they are advised that they can take their complaint forward to the Local Government Ombudsman.

9.2 A total of 25 complaints have been escalated to the Ombudsman so far this year compared to 14 in the same period last year:

- Children, Young People and Families – 5
- Resources – 0
- Performance & Development – 15

- Environment & Economy – 4
- Adult Health and Community Services – 1
- Community Protection - 0

9.3 The 15 complaints for Performance and Development all relate to 2 sets of School Appeal Panels. Following discussion with the Local government Ombudsman about possible errors in the decision-making process, there were 8 Local Settlements reached by the Council in this case. There has now been revision to the guidance to panel members and clerks, and new forms to ensure decision-making is clear.

9.4 There was also a Local Settlement in relation to one complaint about Environment and Economy, where the Council agreed to replace and re-inforce the agreed planting at the bottom of the citizen's garden to bring it up to the standard promised when planning permission was granted for an extension at a neighbouring school.

9.5 Of the remaining cases, 2 were dismissed, 1 was decided to be outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, and 6 were determined as showing no or insufficient evidence of maladministration.

10. Improving how we use information about compliments and complaints in the future.

10.1 Putting together the data for this report has enabled us to review and reflect on how well this information supports Members. This is an opportunity to reflect on the purpose and meaning of the information that is currently collated for Members, and to consider possible alternative options. Members are asked to reflect and make suggestions for improvements.

David Carter
Strategic Director
Performance and Development Directorate

APPENDIX 1

Fig 1	Number of complaints				
	April-Sept 03	April-Sept 04	April-Sept 05		April-Sept 06
CAMS	33	15	9	Resources	19
Chief Execs	4	0	10	P&D	13
Social Services	150	119	177	Comm Prot	8
Fire & Rescue	11	7	4	CYPF	138
Education	95	12	171	AHCS	261
Treasurers	0	6	2	Env & Econ	113
LHTS	142	162	87		
Property Services	3	7	5		
PTES	223	131	140		
WCC Total	661	459	605		552

Fig 2	Reason for Complaint						
	April-Sept 06	Poor Service	Staff Conduct	Council Policy	Facilities	Discriminatory Nature	Other
Resources	19	18	0	0	0	0	1
P&D	13	3	2	0	3	0	2
Comm Prot	8	42	39	1	1	2	55
CYPF	138	1	3	0	1	0	3
AHCS	261	81	19	75	33	0	43
Env & Econ	113	42	7	31	4	0	0
WCC Total	552	187	70	107	42	2	104

Fig 3	Stage complaint went to						Ombudsman
	April-Sept 06	Informal	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	No. & % of complaints dealt with within the set timescales	
Resources	19	18	1	0	0	19 (100%)	0
P&D	13	12	1	0	0	12 (92%)	14
Comm Prot	8	7	1	0	0	8 (100%)	0
CYPF	138	0	126	11	1	100 (72%)	5
AHCS	261	133	121	4	0	219(84%)	1
Env & Econ	113	103	4	3	0	*	4
WCC Total	552	273	254	18	1		14

There will be some complaints that will go straight to the school and dealt with at the informal stage, that the Education Dept are unaware of.

* Not reported on in Env & Econ

Fig 4	No. of complaints justified	
	April-Sept 06	Justified
Resources	19	17
P&D	13	3
Comm Prot	8	5
CYPF	138	17
AHCS	261	94
Env & Econ	113	76
WCC Total	552	212

Fig 5	Member Involvement		
	April-Sept 06	No. of complaints referred on by Members	No. of complainants who asked for Member to be notified
Resources	19	0	0
P&D	13	0	0
Comm Prot	8	0	0
CYPF	138	0	0
AHCS	261	1	3
Env & Econ	113	0	0
WCC Total	552	1	3

Fig 6	Compliments					Comments				
	April - Sept 2003	April - Sept 2004	April - Sept 2005	Apr-Sept 2006		April - Sept 2003	April - Sept 2004	April - Sept 2005	April - Sept 2006	
CAMS	194	251	88	408	Resources	35	45	70	348	Resources
Chief Exec's	96	50	24	158	P&D	14	0	0	115	P&D
Social Services	9	136	121	39	Comm Prot	76	0	0	0	Comm Prot
Fire & Rescue	0	77	68	11	CYPF	0		0	0	CYPF
Education	0	1	0	1202	AHCS	3		0	283	AHCS
Treasurers	6	-	0	91	Env & Econ	0	-	0	0	Env & Econ
LHTS	1018	1224	916			471	451	279		
Property Services	23	18	33			0	-			
PTES	76	81	127			0				
WCC Total	1422	1718	1377	1909		599	496	349	746	

APPENDIX 2

COMPLAINTS REPORTING (previously chapter 3 of the performance report to OSC.)

1. Introduction

Give a brief introduction to the directorate's complaints system. How you make sure consideration of complaints leads to changes where needed.

2. Complaints Analysis

This Chapter of the report will give actual full-year figures, or actual 6 month figures (full year or half year reports)

Complaints figures should provide trend over time (at least 3 years) and show previous full-year figures (or half-year figures for half year reports).

Analysis should show all categories of complaints required for corporate reporting (as a minimum).

Analysis should identify numbers of complaints justified.

Compliments figures should be provided with trend over time.

Give more detailed explanation where the analysis identifies areas of concern, or where there have been fewer complaints.

3. Improvements Made

Give examples of changes and improvements made as a result of 1 or more complaints, or in an area of complaints. I

November 2006