# Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### 13 June 2023

## Customer Feedback Annual Report 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

#### Recommendation

That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the contents of the report.

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is the Annual Customer Feedback Report for the Children's and Families and Education Services covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2 The report summarises the compliments, complaints and comments received by the two services including the lessons learned. The data, trends and themes have been collated over the last 3 years.
- 1.3 An accessible version of this report is available if required

## 2. Complaints Process

- 2.1 Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is required to provide an Annual Report, outlining the workings of both their Adults and Children's complaints and representations procedures.
- 2.2 The procedure for dealing with children's statutory complaints (those raised by or on behalf of children relating to our Social Work Services) and representations is determined by the following legislation:
  - The Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
  - The Children & Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the accompanying guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints' (DfES July 2006)
- 2.3 The requirement contained in the Children Act 1989; Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, is that every Local Authority with a responsibility for Children's Social Care Services is obliged to have in post a Complaints Manager, part of whose role is to provide an Annual Report into the workings of the complaints and representations procedures.

- 2.4 Complaints relating to Children's Services, which do not fall within the boundaries of the Statutory Social Care Complaints Process, are processed via the Council's Corporate Complaints Process.
- 2.5 The Statutory Complaints and Representations procedure serves four main purposes:
  - i.) To provide a way for a child/young person, or a person acting on their behalf, to give their views of the service they have received.
  - ii.) To enable Council services to learn from complaints and compliments and to change, review or maintain its services accordingly.
  - iii.) To ensure that complaints are properly recorded and acted upon and that where necessary, things that have gone wrong are put right promptly.
  - iv.) To ensure that staff and service users understand their rights and responsibilities within the complaints process.
- 2.6 The Statutory Complaints Procedure, used for complaints raised by, or on behalf children receiving a service from Children's Social Work Services, has three stages:
  - Stage One Local resolution.
  - Stage Two An independent complaint investigation.
  - Stage Three An independently chaired Review Panel.
- 2.7 Full details of the Statutory Complaints Procedure is set out in Appendix 1.

# 3. Analysis of the Customer Feedback Received During 2022 and 2023

- 3.1 Feedback from members of the public is recorded on a customer relations software referred to as 'Contact Us'. Feedback can be shared through either an online portal, telephone or via email and is divided into Complaints, Compliments, Comments or Questions. Depending on the type of contact, feedback will be processed through different internal procedures.
- 3.2 The County Council takes every submitted case seriously, especially complaints, as it wants to make sure its complainants are dealt with fairly, consistently and within timelines. It is essential that Warwickshire County Council (WCC) deals with all feedback efficiently to provide good service, learning and improvements.
- 3.3 Procedures relating to how WCC deals with and responds to complaints is detailed in WCC's complaints policy- Warwickshire County Council's Complaint's Policy.
- 3.4 This policy has been developed in line with best practice recommendations and legislation that covers complaints about local authorities' services. This

policy is also being reviewed and updated to ensure it covers all up to date legislations. In the policy, a complaint is defined as:

"... any expression of dissatisfaction with a service that the Council (or one of its partners or contractors) has provided, and that requires a response."

#### 3.5 Methods of how the report has been collated:

- i.) Data was extracted for the past three years, i.e., 2020/2021; 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. Where appropriate, data was summed over different time intervals, and averages and percentage changes over time were calculated. In all sections, data is presented as percentage, with the number of cases this refers to in parentheses (n= number of cases).
- ii.) The lessons learned presented at the end of this report were organised into categories based on their themes. This allowed related lessons learned to be grouped together, making it easier to determine the frequency of specific recommendations.

#### 3.6 Trends in received cases over time:

- i.) During the year 2022/2023, there were a total of 4,335 cases raised on Contact Us across all Directorates of the Council. This shows a decrease in the total number of cases of 13.6% compared to the previous year 2021/2022, where there was a total of 5,017 cases. The number of cases received in the 2021/2022 year is greater than the number of cases received during 2020/2021, with 4,737 total cases.
- ii.) Comparing the type of cases received highlights that despite an overall decrease in cases from 2021/2022 to 2022/2023, particularly the volumes of questions and compliments decreased. While the number of questions and compliments remained similar during 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, during 2022/2023 these figures have decreased by 13.3% and 32.4% compared to the previous year (Figure 1).

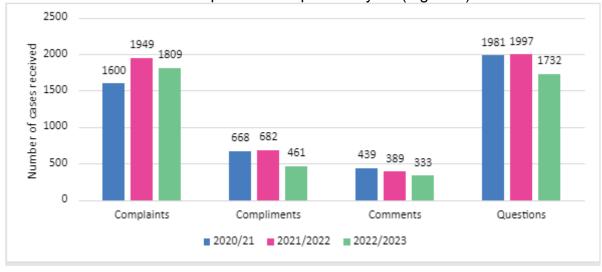


Figure 1: Number of cases received during the years 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 across all Directorates within the Council by type of case.

- 3.7 Once a case is received, it is reviewed by WCC's Customer Relations Team (CRT). Depending on each case, CRT can assign a case to the team it concerns or complete a case themselves. This occurs when:
  - cases are referencing a service that is not provided by WCC (For example, a complaint about a teacher- this would need to be sent to the school directly for them to follow their complaints procedure);
  - cases do not fall in the specific subject area of any other WCC team;
  - cases are submitted anonymously and cannot be followed up; and
  - CRT staff can answer and close cases without sending them to the services directly, due to broad knowledge of many areas.
- 3.8 During 2022/2023, 44.2% (n= 1,915) of cases were assigned to the CRT, which is an increase of 9.1% compared to the previous year. Compared to the year 2020/2021, cases assigned to the CRT have nearly doubled. Of the remaining 2420 cases received during 2022/2023, 245 were assigned to Children & Families, and 197 to Education Services (Table 1).

Service	Children & Families			Education Services		
Year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Complaints	172	246	212	101	103	133
Compliments	84	40	18	2	3	2
Comments	2	3	6	12	3	3
Questions	20	14	9	143	58	59
Total	278	303	245	258	167	197

Table 1: Number of cases assigned to Children & Families and Education Services by type over the previous three years.

- 3.9 Looking at cases assigned to Children & Families and comparing trends over time, the number of cases received in 2022/2023 has decreased by 19.1% compared to 2021/2022 and decreased by 11.9% compared to 2020/2021. In 2022/2023, the type of cases included 86.5% complaints, 7.3% compliments, 3.7% questions, and 2.4% comments. Since 2020/2021, the number of complaints has increased from 61.9%, while compliments decreased from 30.2%.
- 3.10 For Education Services, the number of cases received during 2022/2023 was 23.6% lower than volumes of cases observed for the year 2020/2021, while an increase of 18.0% of cases was recorded from 2021/2022. During 2022/2023, the type of cases Education Services received included 67.5%complaints, 29.9% questions, 1.5% comments and 1.0% compliments. While the number of types of cases were similar over the previous two years, during 2020/2021, the number of complaints remained the same at 39.1%, whilst 55.4% of all cases related to questions asked by members of the public.

#### Complaints Data

- 3.11 Data on Complaints received via Contact Us:
  - i.) When comparing the number of complaints received by Children & Families per month over the past three years, similarities between the years 2020/2021 and 2022/2023 are apparent. During 2022/2023 the highest number of complaints was received during June 2022 and January 2023 with 26 and 27 cases (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Number of complaints assigned to Children & Families over time.

- ii.) The This trend could be down to a significant rise in the number of children that Children and Families were engaged with at that time due to Covid, which led to more volume of complaints, as the service were involved with more families than the service would usually.
- iii.) Volumes of complaints received by Education services per month over the previous three years were similar. In all three years, the highest number of complaints was received in September, peaking at 28 complaints received during 2022/2023 (Figure 5).
- iv.) The highest number of complaints received in September are likely to be due to school places and admissions issues.

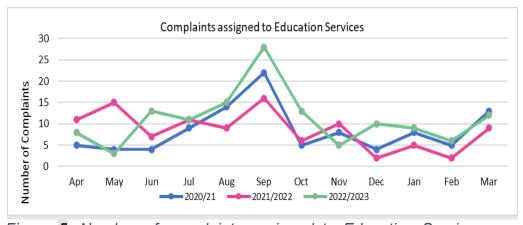


Figure 5: Number of complaints assigned to Education Services over time.

#### Case Volumes

- 3.12 Children & Families' complaint case volumes were influenced by several teams, of which Children's Initial Response has made up the highest number since 2020/2021, with 26.4% (n=56) of complaints assigned to this team during 2022/2023. This was followed by the Bedworth and North Warwickshire Children's Team with 10.9% (n=23) of cases.
- 3.13 In the year 2020/2021, nearly all complaints received by Education Services were assigned to the team 'Education Services', with 94.1% (n=95) complaints assigned to this team. This decreased to 74.8% (n=77) of total complaints in 2021/2022 and decreased to 1.5% (n=2) of total complaints in 2022/2023. For the year 2022/2023, the team with the highest number of complaints were School Admissions, accounting for 51.1% (n=68) of total complaints received in Education Services. Second to this was SENDAR (Special Education Needs Assessment and Review), which received 41.4% (n=47) of the total complaints received in 2022/2023, which is an increase from 11% (n=12) in 2021/2022.

#### Stages of Complaints

- 3.14 In 2022/2023, the majority of complaints received by both Children & Families and Education Services were at the initial investigation stage (Stage 1).. In the year 2022/2023, stage 1 complaints made up 97.6% (n=207) for Children & Families and 94.0% (n=125) for Education Services.
- 3.15 Stage 2 and 3 cases are usually assigned to the CRT. In 2022/2023, 97.8% (n=45) of stage 2 cases were received by the CRT. The remaining 2.2% (n=1) were received by School Admissions. This had decreased from 2021/2022 as 99.0% (n=96) were received by the CRT and 1.0% (n=1) were received by Bedworth and North Warwickshire Children's team. In 2020/2021, 97.6% (n=40) of complaints were received by the Customer Relations Team. The remaining 2.4% (n=1) were received by the team relating to enquiries about Eleven Plus.
- 3.16 The 2.2% and 2.4% of stage 2 complaints which were received by the School Admissions Team and Eleven Plus team, were categorised incorrectly due to an administrative error. In total this was only two complaints which were affected by this error in April 2020 and April 2022.
- 3.17 The one stage 3 case received in 2020/2021 was assigned to the Customer Relations Team. Similarly, all stage 3 cases received in 2021/2022 (n=6) and 2022/2023 (n=10) were received by the Customer Relations Team. This is because CRT organise, prepare and attend the Stage 3 panel meetings along with the service.

#### Subject Categories

3.18 In 2022/2023, subject categories of complaints assigned to Children & Families most often related to issues in 'Communication' and 'Protection of user', whereas most complaints assigned to Education Services addressed issues in communication and WCC Service standards (Table 2).

Cubicot	Children 8	k Families	Education Services		
Subject Categories	Number of cases	%	Number of cases	%	
Protection of user	83	39.2%	22	16.5%	
Communication	70	33.0%	68	51.1%	
Staff conduct	28	13.2%	4	3.0%	
WCC Service standards	17	8.0%	26	19.5%	
Financial Issues	10	4.7%	2	1.5%	
Physical environment issues	3	1.4%	2	1.5%	
Discrimination	1	0.5%	3	2.3%	
Policy	0	0.0%	3	2.3%	
Commissioned Service Provision	0	0.0%	2	1.5%	
Outside contact us process	0	0.0%	1	0.8%	

Table 2: Subject Categories of complaints assigned to Children & Families and Education Services during 2022/2023.

- 3.19 In 2020/2021 the number of complaints assigned to Children & Families that addressed issues in communication was 65.1% (n=112), this decreased to 54.1% (n=133) in 2021/2022 and further decreased to 33.0% (n=70) for the 2022/2023 year. Complaints relating to the protection of users increased steadily from 14.5% (n=25) in 2020/2021 to 39.2% (n=68) in 2022/2023. In both the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 years, the third most common subject category for complaints was staff conduct, whereas in 2020/2021 this was WCC Service standards.
- 3.20 Complaints assigned to Education Services were mostly related to communication, accounting for 81.2% (n=82) of complaints in 2020/2021, 60.2% (n=62) in 2021/2022, and 51.1% (n=68) in 2022/2023. Similarly, compared to 2020/2021, the number of complaints relating to WCC service standards and Protection of user has decreased from 8.9% (n=9) in 2020/2021 to 4.0% (n=26) in 2022/2023.

#### Complaints Closed

- 3.21 The number of complaints closed by Children & Families has fluctuated throughout the last three years. In 2020/2021, a total of 97.1% (n=167) complaints received were closed, which increased to 98.8% (n=243) complaints in the following year, 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, the number of complaints closed was 100.0% (n=212).
- 3.22 Over the past three years, Education Services have experienced a steady increase in the number of complaints closed. In the year 2020/2021, 95.0% (n=96) complaints were closed, which increased to 97.1% (n=100) complaints in the following year, 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, complaints closed has increased to 98.5% (n= 131) (Figure 6).

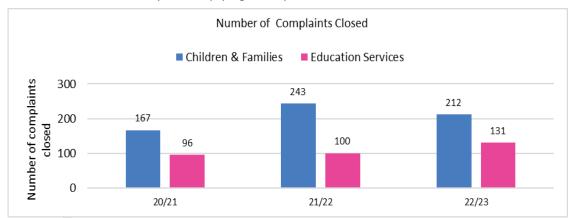


Figure 6: Total Complaints Closed for Children & Families and Education Services over time.

- 3.23 Of the total number of complaints closed in in 2022/2023 for Children & Families, 56.6% (=120) were within the Service Level Agreement (SLA). This was a decrease from 2021/2022 as 63.0% (n=155) complaints were closed within SLA. However, in 2020/2021, 62.8% (n=108) of complaints were closed within SLA.
- 3.24 In contrast, Children & Families' number of closed complaints that exceed the SLA has gradually increased over the last three years. In 2020/2021, 34.3% (n=59) complaints exceeded SLA, increasing to 35.8% (n=88) complaints the next year, 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, 43.4% (n=92) of closed complaints exceeded SLA.

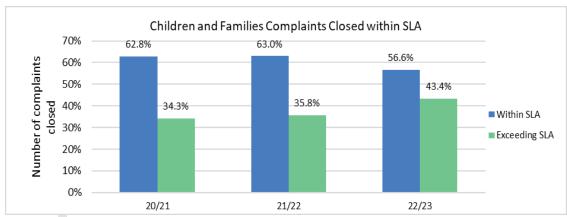


Figure 7: Total Complaints Closed for Children & Families within SLA over time.

- 3.25 Of the total number of complaints closed in 2022/2023 for Education Services, 63.2% (n=84) were within SLA. This was a decrease from 2021/2022 as 82.5% (n=85) complaints were closed within SLA. In 2020/2021, 87.1% (n=88) of complaints were closed within SLA.
- 3.26 For Education Services, the percentage of closed complaints that exceed the SLA has gradually increased over the last three years. In 2020/2021, 7.9% (n=8) complaints exceeded SLA, increasing to 14.6% (n=15) complaints the next year, 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, 35.3% (n=47) of closed complaints exceeded SLA.

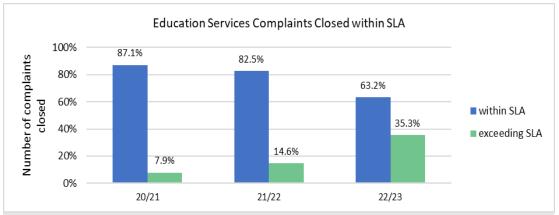


Figure 8: Total Complaints Closed for Education Services within SLA over time.

- 3.27 When a member of staff closes a complaint, they complete additional data fields including information on how a case was resolved. This is referred as remedy. More than one remedy can be selected for each case.
- 3.28 For Children & Families in 2020/2021, cases were most resolved by was providing an explanation, which accounted for 79.9% (n=131) of all closed complaints. Apologies and providing a service, accounted for 18.3% (n=30) and 10.4% (n=17) of remedies, with the remaining 2.4% (n=4) referring to changing a process and 1.2% (n=2) relating to financial remedies.

- 3.29 In the following year, 2021/2022, the number of explanations increased to 83.1% (n=196) of all complaints resolved. Apologies also increased to 29.7% (n=70), while other remedies remained stable. This refers to providing a service (12.3%; n=29), changing a process (3%; n=7), and changing a policy (0.4%; n=1).
- 3.30 In 2022/2023, explanations remained the most common remedy at 80% (n=140). Apologies increased to 41.1% (n=72) and service provided increased to 12.6% (n=22). The remaining complaints were remedied by changing a process (2.9%; n=5) and financial remedies (1.1%; n=2) (Table 3).

Complaint	Children 8	k Families	Education Services		
Remedies	Number of cases	%	Number of cases	%	
Explanation Provided	140	80.0%	56	45.9%	
Service Provided	72	12.6%	13	10.7%	
Apology	22	41.1%	93	76.2%	
Change in Process	6	2.9%	1	0.8%	
Financial Remedy	5	1.1%	1	0.8%	
Change of Policy	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	

Table 3: Closed Complaint Remedies for Children & Families and Education Services in 2022/2023.

- 3.31 In the year 2020/2021, the most common complaint remedies for Education Services were providing a service and explanations, accounting for 51% (n=49) and 39.6% (n=38), respectively. Apologies accounted for 39.6% (n=38) of complaint remedies, while changes in a process were only recorded for 1.0% of complaints (n=1).
- 3.32 In the following year, 2021/2022, providing explanations and/or a service remained stable, accounting for 50.5% (n=49) and 42.3% (n=41), respectively. Apologies decreased slightly to 34.0% (n=33), while changes in processes remained at 1.0% (n=1).
- 3.33 In 2022/2023, apologies were the most common remedy, accounting for 76.2% (n=93) of all complaints. Providing explanations and/or a service were used to a lesser extent, accounting for 45.9% (n=56) and 10.7% (n=13). Once remedy each referred to changing a process and a financial remedy (0.8%).
- 3.34 Along with stating how a complaint was resolved, the staff member closing a case also assigns an outcome to a case. This field provides information on whether a complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld. This will vary from case to case depending on if we are able to consider the complaint (e.g., the customer does not have parental responsibility for the person they are complaining on behalf of, therefore we would be unable to investigate the complaint; this would be classed ad 'complaint not upheld.' Should the complainant raise serval points within their complaint, and we were only able

- to investigate a particular number of points, this would be considered as partially upheld).
- 3.35 Within Children & Families, complaint cases were closed with several outcomes, of which Complaint: Not Upheld has made up the highest number since 2020/2021, with 26.9% (n=57) of complaints assigned to this outcome during 2022/2023. This was followed by Complaint: Partially Upheld outcome with 26.4% (n=56) in 2022/2023. 17.5% (n=37) complaint outcomes were blank and therefore unknown (Figure 9).

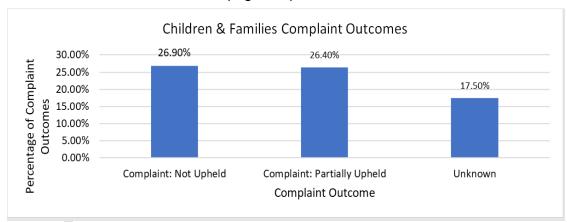


Figure 9: Complaint Outcomes for Children & Families in 2022/2023.

3.36 Within Education Services, complaint cases were closed with several outcomes, of which Complaint: Upheld has made up the highest number in both 2020/2021 and 2022/2023, with 51.9% (n=68) of complaints assigned to this outcome during 2022/2023. This was followed by Complaint: Not Upheld and Complaint: Partially Upheld outcomes both with 13.0% (n=17) in 2022/2023 (Figure 10).

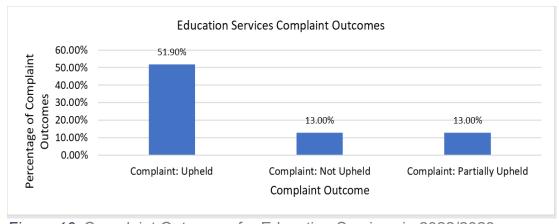


Figure 10: Complaint Outcomes for Education Services in 2022/2023.

#### Lessons Learned

3.37 When a complaint, question, comment, or compliment is completed and closed, colleagues have some mandatory fields to complete. One of these fields is 'Lesson's Learned.' This is an opportunity for staff to reflect on how that case could have been prevented/gone better and we, as a Council, can improve with future cases. This is then used for learning and training

- purposes for not only the team who have handled the case, but also for the wider Council.
- 3.38 The Customer Relations team encourage colleagues to complete this section as in depth as they can, so that we can be more specific when reviewing how we can do better.
- 3.39 In 2022/2023, lessons learned were recorded for 59.9% (n=127) of closed complaints within Children & Families. Of those 127 lessons learned, 11.3% (n=24) related to the theme of improving communication. 9.4% (n=20) were related to organisation processes and 5.2% (n=11) were learning from social worker issues. A further 3.8% (n=8) were associated to additional training being delivered.
- 3.40 For Education Services, lessons learned were recorded for 33.6% (n=4) of closed complaints in 2022/2023. 13.0% (n=17) related to process adjustments, 6.9% (n=9) addressed lessons regarding communication. 1.5% (n=2) of the lessons learned were related to application delays.
- 3.41 Examples of Lessons Learned from past cases within Children & Families and Education Services include:
  - School Admissions Communications including website updates;
  - SENDAR- School have remedied the situation with regards to the drain cover;
  - Advice given on Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)process;
  - Stratford Children's Team- Explanation of processes issued by letter on 20/12/2022:
  - Children's Fostering- Problem was no email address online to send enquiry to;
  - Email address of Fostering Enquiries provided NFA closed;
  - School Admissions- application process needs to be reviewed so it is clear for everyone; and
  - Children's Initial Response- Clearer communication regarding decision making.
- 3.42 The lessons which have been learnt and implemented throughout Children & Families and Education Services have been to update their webpages to make these more 'user-friendly' for the public to navigate around, clearer communication from WCC staff to families when they are completing processes (e.g. EHCP's, Children and Family Assessments) and looking at updating policies and procedures, such as the Complaints Policy.

### Compliments, Comments and Questions

3.43 For 2022/2023, compliments, comments and questions recorded via Contact Us made up 13.5% (n=33) of the total cases assigned to Children & Families, this is a 42.1% decrease from 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, 54.5% (n=18) of the total compliments, comments and question cases received were compliments. 27.3% (n=9) were Comments and 18.2% (n=6) related to Questions.

3.44 For Education Services, 32.5% (n=64) of total cases were compliments, comments and questions, which was the same as what was received in 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, 92.2% (n=59) of the total compliments, comments and question cases received were questions, 4.7% (n=3) were compliments and the remaining 3.1% (n=2) were comments (Figure 11).

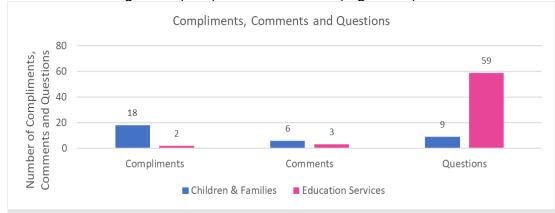


Figure 11: Number of Compliments, Comments and Questions for Children & Families and Education Services in 2022/2023.

- 3.45 In 2020/2021, Children & Families received a total of 106 comments, questions and compliments. Of that number, 90.6% (n=96) were closed within SLA, while 9.4% (n=10) exceeded SLA. In 2021/2022, the number of comments, questions and compliments decreased to 57 and 87.7% (n=50) were closed within SLA leaving 12.3% (n=7) exceeding. The following year, 2022/2023, only 33 comments, questions and compliments were received, with 57.6% (n=19) closed within SLA, 39.4% (n=13) exceeded and 3.0% (n=1) were not closed.
- 3.46 For Education Services in 2020/2021, 157 comments, questions and compliments were received. Of that number, 87.3% (n=137) were closed within SLA, while 12.7% (n=20) exceeded SLA. In 2021/2022, the number of comments, questions and compliments decreased to 64 and 60.9% (n=39) were closed within SLA leaving 39.1% (n=25) exceeding. The following year, 2022/2023, remained consistent with 64 comments, questions and compliments received. 45.3% (n=29) closed within SLA, 54.7% (n=35) exceeded.
- 3.47 Anecdotally we believe that services receive more compliments than complaints, but this cannot be verified as not all compliments are records on Contact Us This is an area we are working on with the teams as we would like to celebrate these compliments widely within the organisation and learn from the compliments.
- 3.48 A full range of compliment examples can be found in Appendix 2-Compliments.

#### Customer Platform

- 3.49 Cabinet in January this year agreed the Microsoft Technology Platform as the Council's customer platform and as a replacement for the existing customer relationship management system (Firmstep) solution.
- 3.50 A single customer platform for the Council, allows:
  - Direct 1-to-1 communication with citizens so they can view and easily understand where they are in any process with us;
  - A single view of the citizen;
  - Consistent and quality data collection and analytics accessible to our reporting tools; and
  - Simple and repeatable digitisation for those able to use it.
- 3.51 The first release currently planned for August includes Customer Feedback including complaints. There will be a single customer platform which would allow officers to view the full history of citizen interaction and actions taken previously. This would allow officers to access a fuller record of contact, to provide a more joined up response. Further releases are planned throughout the financial year.
- 3.52 It is important that the Council has an effective and efficient customer feedback system in place which ensures that:
  - We will actively listen and respond empathetically and professionally to concerns, complaints or queries from members of the public and we will work with colleagues to provide the best response within the timescales determined by the appropriate complaint's procedure, by working with the service area to achieve this;
  - Complaints and compliments are accurately recorded, which leads to accurate performance data being produced;
  - When things have gone wrong, they are put right as quickly as possible;
  - Both complainants and staff understand the relevant complaints procedure, how it relates to them and their rights and responsibilities within it;
  - Any learning from complaints is acknowledged and that the Customer Relations Team, work with the appropriate service area to ensure that the necessary changes are made to improve services provided; and
  - High quality and timely performance reporting is provided to management teams, to ensure that they are aware of issues arising and can work with the Customer Relations Team to resolve these and maintain a high-quality service.

## 4. Financial Implications

4.1 The Customer Platform funding was approved by Cabinet on 27th January 2023.

## 5. Environmental Implications

5.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report

# **Appendices**

Appendix 1- Complaints Procedure

Appendix 2- Compliments

## **Background Papers**

#### None

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	Transformation	

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Councillors Yousef Dahmash, Sue Markham and Kam Kaur