

**REPORT TO:** Corporate Services Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Resources

**SUBJECT:** Corporate Complaints (2016 – 17)

**WARDS:** All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To report on and provide an analysis of Corporate Complaints received during the 2016 – 17 financial year.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Context**

3.1 The Council presently administers a 2 stage procedure to deal with corporate complaints whereby the public can seek redress if they believe Council departments have failed to deliver a satisfactory level of service.

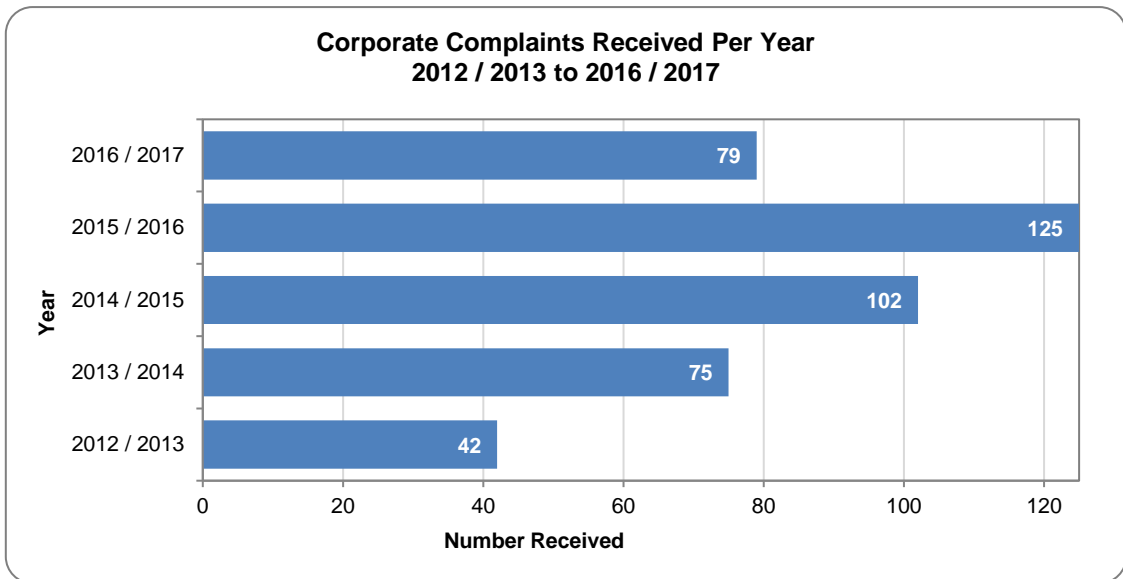
3.2 When complaints are received that have not been raised previously, they are normally directed to the relevant department for matters to be investigated and a response to be provided by a Senior Officer within the service.

3.4 Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the Council's initial response to their complaint they may request a review of the Council's actions in relation to their complaint. Such reviews are undertaken independently of the service by an Investigating Officer from the Corporate Performance and Improvement Team.

3.5 If the Council cannot resolve matters to the complainant's satisfaction they can request that matters be further considered by the Local Government Ombudsman or, in the context of complaints relating to Freedom of information requests, the Information Commissioner.

## **4.0 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS TREND ANALYSIS 2016-17**

4.1 The chart below provides a breakdown of the number of Corporate complaints received for each of the financial years from 2012 – 13 to 2016 – 17.

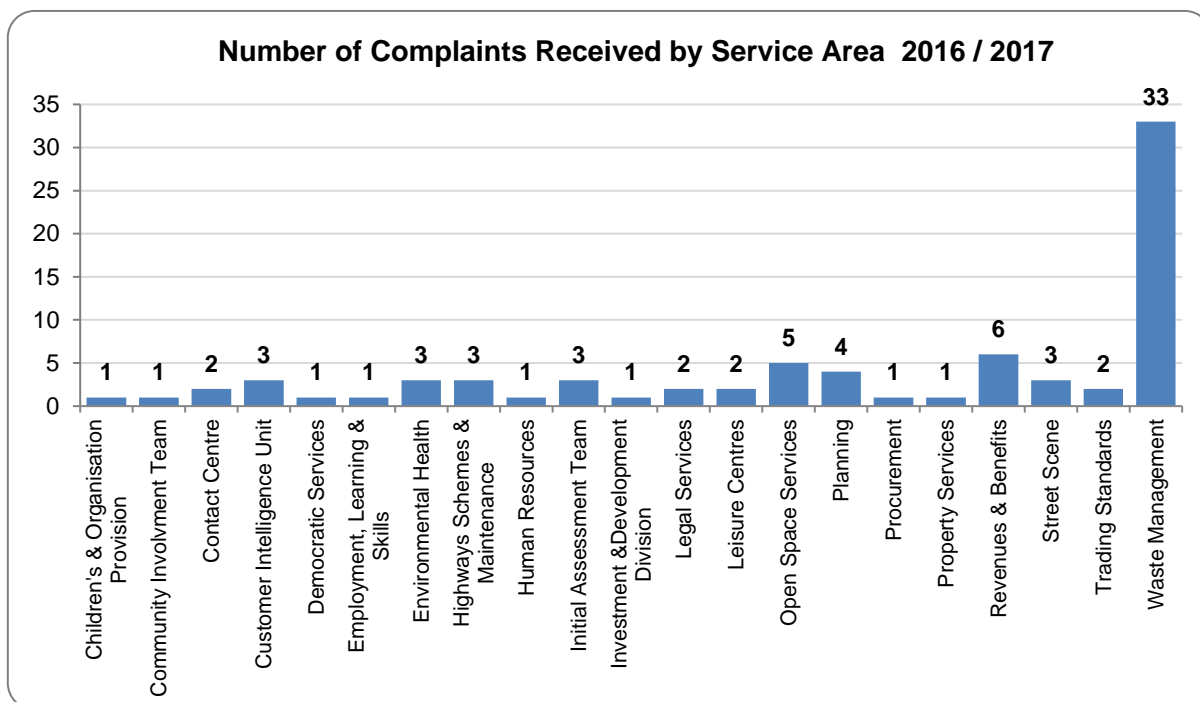


4.2 From the chart, it shown that the number of complaints peaked in 2015-16 but have now fallen back to the 2013-14 levels.

4.3 The table overleaf shows the number of complaints received and resolved during 2016 - 2017 by the Corporate Complaints Team, and the success rate for replying to complainants within the target time for stage one complaints.

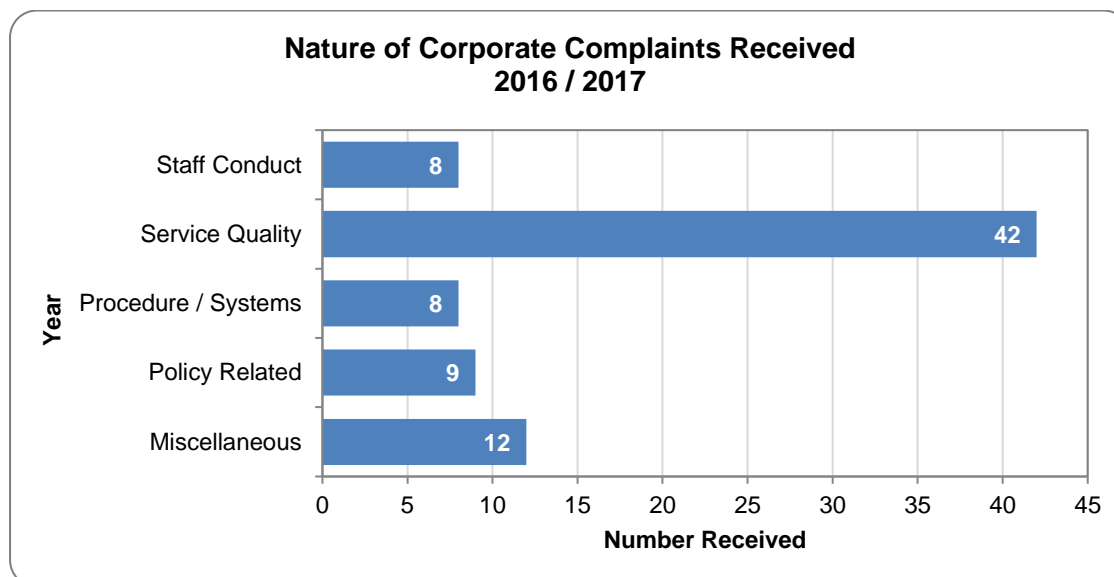
Complaint Stage	Corporate Complaints
Number of complaints resolved at Stage 1	<b>73</b> (92.41%)
Proportion replied to within target time	<b>69</b> (87.34%)
Complaints proceeding to Stage 2	<b>6</b> (7.59%)
Complaints proceeding to the Ombudsman	<b>0</b> (0%)

4.4 As would be expected the nature of those corporate complaints received covered a relatively wide range of Council services as illustrated within the chart below.



4.5 A significant number of complaints related to Waste Management, covering issues such as missed bin or are connected with the bin pull out service available to those qualifying.

4.6 The following chart provides a breakdown of complaints by type for 2016 – 17:



4.7 The majority of those identified as relating to Service Quality had come from complaints relating to missed bin collections. As this is a service that affects the borough's residents as a whole, it is not unexpected that this is an area

that can cause a significant number of complaints. In most cases though, the service was able to contact the individual and have the issue resolved within a day or two of the complaint being received.

- 4.8 There were a relatively small number of complaints concerning staff conduct and in all cases the situations which led to the complaint being made were subject to discussion with individuals concerned. However such complaints raised no specific concerns in relation to either service provision or identified training requirements.
- 4.9 Nine complaints related to the implementation of Council policy, e.g. the maintenance of open spaces or the issuing of event licences, and in such cases the complainant was given a clear explanation of the policy and the reasons as to why it had been introduced.

## 5.0 THE OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

- 5.1 The following tables provide a breakdown of the numbers of complaints that were upheld, partially upheld or not upheld during 2016 - 17.

Outcome	Number
Number of complaints Upheld	<b>23</b> (30.38%)
Number of complaints Partially Upheld	<b>32</b> (40.51%)
Number of complaints Not Upheld	<b>23</b> (29.11%)

- 5.2 In relation to Partially Upheld complaints, the majority of these complaints relate to missed bin collections as at the time of recording them it is unclear with it was an operational issue or not. Unfortunately at present the Council has no means to establish if bins were missed due to not being presented for collection by the occupier or as a result of the failure of the crew.
- 5.3 Analysis of the complaints and comments the Council receives provide essential information to help shape and develop services. They complement the wide range of consultation exercises that the organisation undertakes (including postal and telephone surveys, open forums, consultation days etc).
- 5.4 Collectively the Council uses this information, along with that resulting from routine interaction with residents, to help improve the services we provide or commission.

## 7.0 COMPLIMENTS

- 7.1 Following a request by Members this report now provides a short summary of those compliments that have been received concerning the provision of services across the Council during the 2016 – 17 financial year.

7.2 It should be noted that compliments are made and received through a range of communication channels. Whilst steps have been taken to capture such information more consistently the information contained in this report is representative and may not capture every complimentary exchange, for example in relation to human interaction, particularly in regards to inwardly focussed operational support services.

7.3 The following extracts are examples of compliments and positive feedback received during 2016 -17:

*“Hi went to park run this morning and the cafe opened at 8.35am. About 40 people used the toilets and quite a few went in after the park run for a well-earned coffee. Thank you so much for arranging this it did make a big, big, difference. Hope this carried on now every Saturday people were made up.”*

*“Further to my emails yesterday regarding the broken glass under the bridge, I must say thank you for getting the clean-up done so promptly. The person, who did the clean-up opposite the Devonshire Pub, has done an excellent job ”.*

## 8.0 LOCAL GOVERNEMENT OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS

8.1 The following tables provide a summary of the numbers of complaints that were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman during 2016 - 17.

Service Area	Number
Adult and Care Services	<b>8</b> (29.63%)
Education and Children Services	<b>8</b> (29.63%)
Planning and Development	<b>3</b> (11.11%)
Corporate and other	<b>2</b> (7.41%)
Highways and Transportation	<b>2</b> (7.41%)
Benefits and Tax	<b>2</b> (7.41%)
Housing	<b>1</b> (3.70%)
Environment Services	<b>1</b> (3.70%)

8.2 Of the complaints dealt with 24 were not upheld. 5 complaints were upheld and involved a local remedy with the LGO. The numbers slightly differ as 2 complaints that were opened in 2015/16 were closed in 2016/17 and therefore are included in the LGO’s figures for this year.

8.3 Of the 5 cases upheld three related to Education and Children Service and two to Adult Care. The remedies were a fresh School Transport Appeal, a reassessment of care, and in three cases financial redress. Of the three cases two also involved the Council agreeing to change procedures to minimise the risk of the similar complaints reoccurring.

8.4 The fact that over 93% of complaints are not upheld by the Ombudsman can provide some confidence that the Council's own complaints process is robust and aims to resolve fault where it occurs at a local level.

## **9.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Complaints provide essential information and inform the development of Halton Borough Council services and policies. The Corporate Complaints Procedure is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to conform to best practice and remains fit for purpose.

## **10.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Improvement and quality assessment agendas increasingly consider the robustness of complaints procedures and how they are demonstrably used to inform and drive change.

## **11.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

11.1 It is important for the Council to have robust complaint procedures in place to improve service delivery and ultimately help the achievement of all of its six strategic priority areas.

## **12.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

12.1 An inefficient or ineffective complaints system will fail individuals who want to use it and prevent the organisation from learning from complaints. Whilst complaints can result in positive changes for individuals they are also a key source of intelligence which can be used to influence the design and delivery of services that the organisation provides and commissions.

## **13.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

13.1 All complaint forms are issued with a separate form for monitoring diversity of complainants with regard to age, disability, ethnicity and gender. Unfortunately the majority of corporate complainants choose not to return the monitoring form with their complaint so information collected is extremely limited. However upon the basis of available evidence no specific social groups are overly represented by age, gender, disability etc.