



Corporate Representations Procedure

Annual Report 2022-2023

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 This is the Annual Report for Worcestershire County Council on the operation of the Corporate Complaints and Representations Procedure covering the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2 It provides information on the number and nature of all representations received and the outcomes. It also looks at some of the issues raised by them and what changes have resulted. Finally it gives a flavour of some of the compliments received during the last twelve months.

2 Principles of the Complaints Procedure

- 2.1 Meeting the following principles should assist the local authority in providing a successful complaints procedure across a range of corporate services. The complaints procedure should:
 - Provide an acknowledgement within 7 working days
 - Provide details of the person dealing with their representation
 - Make a full written response within (20/25) working days and if that target is not possible then they will be informed of progress
 - Treat all complainants fairly and courteously
 - Treat all complaints in confidence
 - Not discriminate against a complainant if they have complained before
 - always try to put things right
 - seek to improve services in the future
- 2.2 The Local Authority may decide not to investigate a complaint made one year or more after the complained about event taking place, unless it would be unreasonable to expect the complainant to have made the complaint earlier.

3 Outline of Complaints Procedure

- 3.1 The Representation Procedure encompasses comments, compliments and complaints.
- 3.2 A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, affecting any customer.
- 3.3 The procedure is important because:
 - It provides a way for members of the community to contact the Council and voice their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with staff or services.

- A well-publicised and efficient Representations Procedure improves communication between the Council and its customers
- It demonstrates to customers that the Council values their comments and are prepared to act on them.
- It enables customers to reward good service by providing a method of recording their compliments. These are used by management to demonstrate to staff that they are working to high standards and are valued by their customers and helps to provide a more balanced view of how successful the Council is at delivering high quality services to the public.
- It enables the Council to re-direct resources/attention thereby improving service.
- It enables the Council to assess customer satisfaction.
- Customers benefit two-fold: they benefit as individuals by having their problems sorted out; and they benefit collectively as a result of improved services.

3.4 There are three possible stages to the procedure. The first stage is divided into two parts, informal and formal.

- The first stage is known as Stage 1 informal. This is meant to address every day, minor problems. Directorate staff handle complaints at source and try to reach a mutually agreeable solution with the customer as quickly as possible. If the customer is dissatisfied with the response at this stage they can ask for it to proceed to the formal stage.
- The second stage is known as Stage 1 formal. At this stage a manager will investigate the issue and will produce a written response to the customer within 20 working days. If, after receiving this, the Customer remains dissatisfied, they can request that their complaint is investigated at Stage 2.
- At Stage 2 the Consumer Relations Officer or Independent Investigating Officer conducts a full investigation, usually interviewing both complainant and relevant staff. At the end of the investigation a written report or response is produced which is sent to the Complainant. This report or response should be completed within 25 working days.

3.5 If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation they may contact the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

4 Learning from Complaints

4.1 Learning from complaints is an important aspect of the complaints procedure.

4.2 Examples of learning from complaints during 2022-23 include:

- Worcestershire Children First SEND Service have reminded staff to:
 - Log into meetings 10 mins in advance in case of technical difficulties and check the format the day before (e.g. confirm if face-to-face or virtual).
 - Request additional information immediately if a mainstream parental preference states they cannot meet need and does not state what additional support would be required
 - Inform parents if their mainstream parental preference responds negatively, to outline the additional support needed by mainstream to meet need and consider holding an early Annual Review to assess if this support was successful if it is decided the child should attend there. If progress has not been made, specialist provision could then be revisited.

- Worcestershire Children First SEND Service have asked staff to ensure that letters being sent to service users are explanatory and contain all the information required for the service user to respond easily. There has been work undertaken previously relating to this and at the current time WCF are working with a number of parent/carers to ensure continued improvements are made.

- Worcestershire Children First SEND Service are in the process of transferring to a new case management system, with the go live date scheduled for January 2023. Work is being undertaken in this area to ensure that there is clear guidance and practice standards in place for all staff within the service.

- Worcestershire Children First SEND Service staff have been reminded to respond to enquiries within 5 working days and agree a date to respond fully.

- Worcestershire Children First SEND Service are making ongoing improvements in the Annual Review process and as part of this are developing a tracker to monitor Annual Reviews and ensure they take place on time.

5 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints

- 5.1 There were 28 Corporate complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in the year.
- 12 were for the Economy & Infrastructure Directorate
 - 13 were for Worcestershire Children First
 - 3 were for the Commercial & Commissioning Directorate
- 5.2 There were 26 determinations for Corporate complaints by the LGSCO in the year. Please note that some may have been received in the previous year and some investigations were on-going at the end of the year.
- 11 were closed after initial enquiries with no further action

- 3 were closed after initial enquiries as they were out of jurisdiction
- 3 were closed as premature (they had not gone through the complaint process yet)
- 8 were upheld due to maladministration and injustice
- 1 was upheld with no further action required

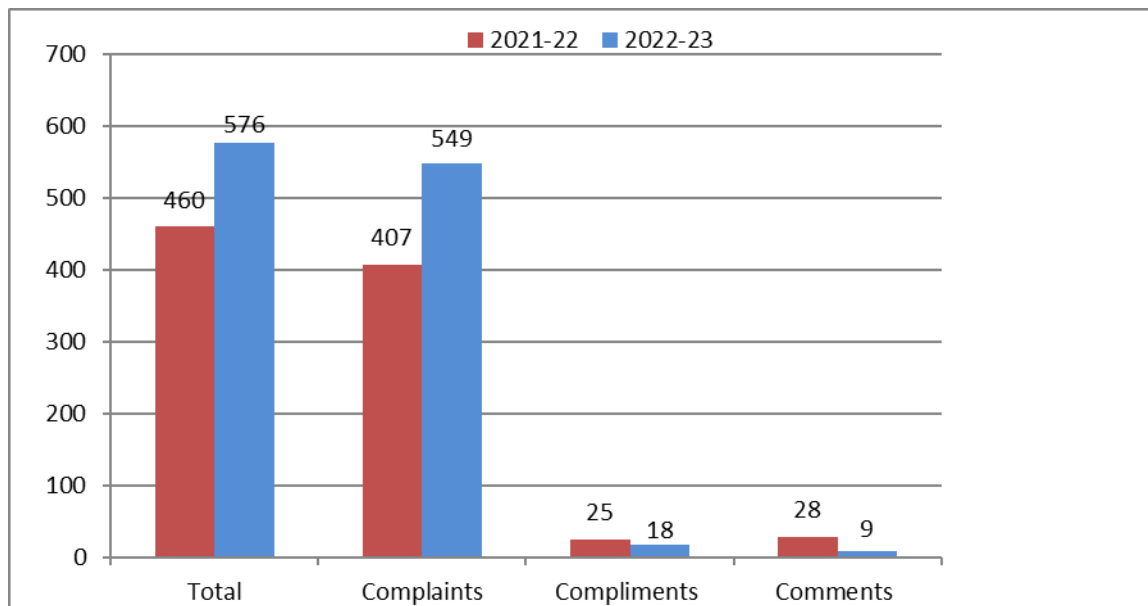
5.3 There were seven payments made in relation to Corporate complaints determined by the LGSCO and these payments related to complaints in respect of Worcestershire Children First. The total amount paid was £25,902.

6 Statistical Data

6.1 There will be some anomalies in the following statistical data. There are two reasons for this:

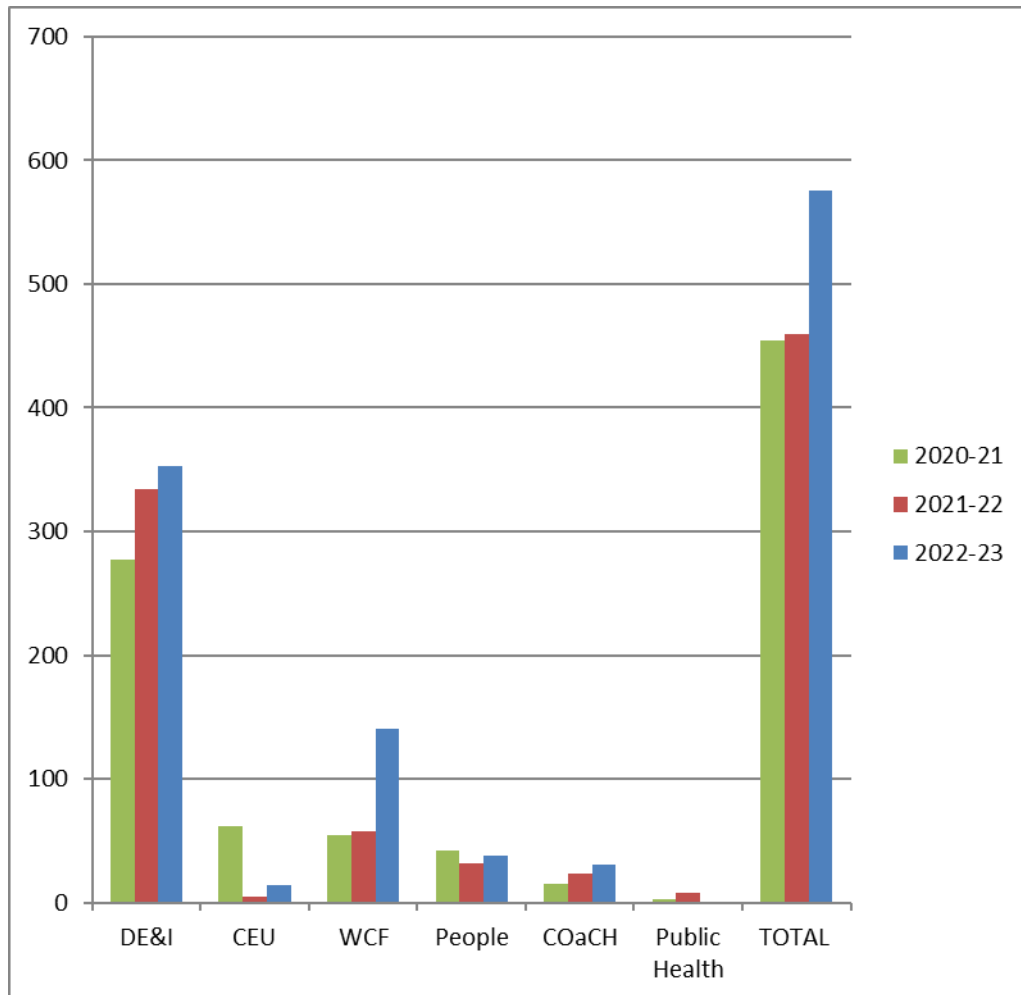
- A complaint that progresses through Stages 1 & 2 is counted at each stage but only included once in all other criteria.
- Some complaints may concern more than one service/issue

7 Total Number of Corporate Representations



7.1 The total number of representations received in 2022-23 shows a significant increase of 25% compared with the previous year. This is due to an increase in complaints with the most noticeable increase being in respect of Worcestershire Children First.

8 Representations received by Directorate



8.1 There are Statutory Complaints Procedures for both Adults and Children's Social Care, therefore their numbers are lower in terms of corporate representations.

8.2 The Directorate of Economy and Infrastructure (DE&I) traditionally has a larger volume of complaints, these typically concern highway matters.

8.3 During 2022-23 the number of representations received in DE&I saw a small increase on the 2021-22 total from 334 to 353.

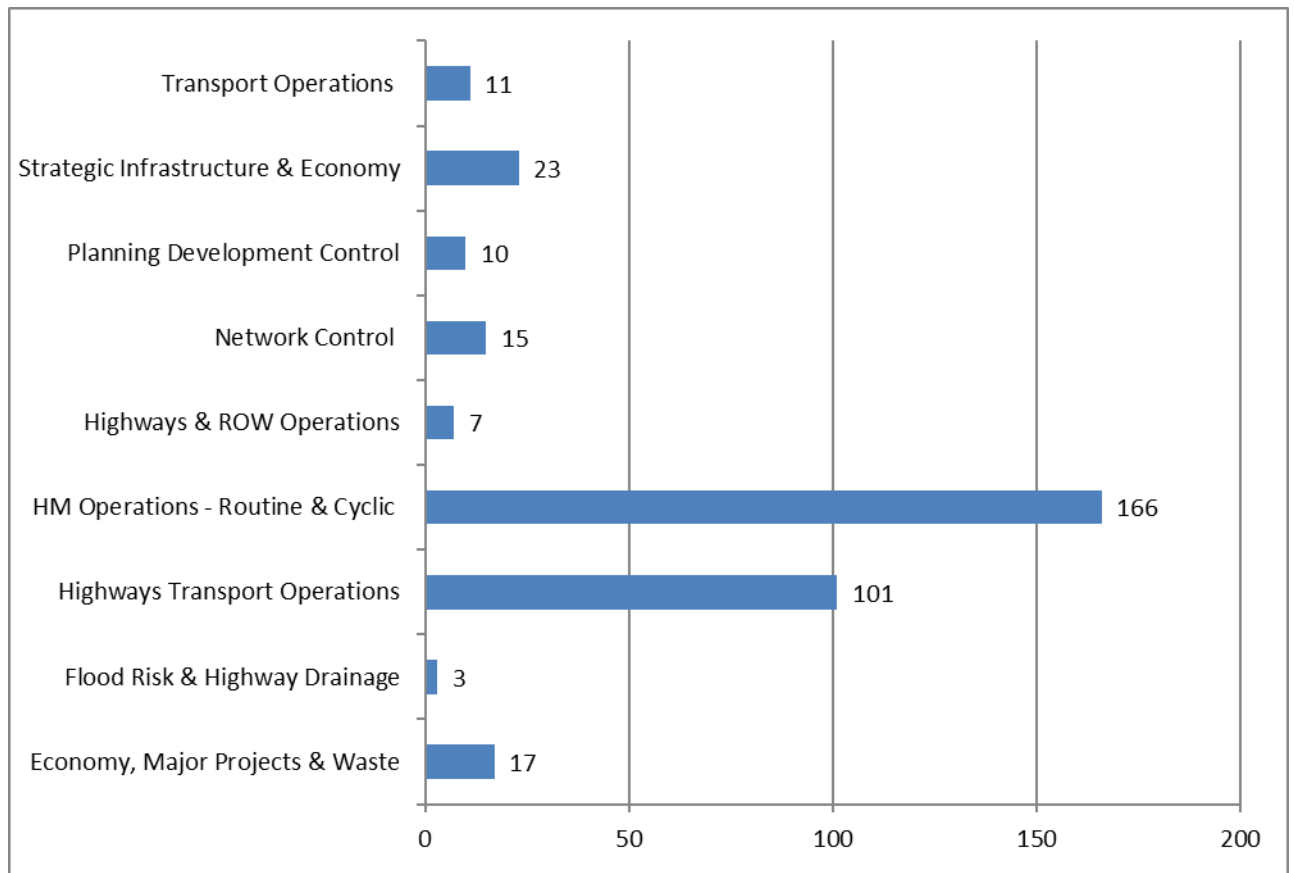
8.4 The number of representations received by Worcestershire Children First, mainly in regard of SEND & Vulnerable Learners, increased significantly from 58 in 2021-22 to 140 in 2022-23.

8.5 For other directorates, 2022-23 saw a small increase in complaints received, except for Public Health which did not receive any new complaints in the year.

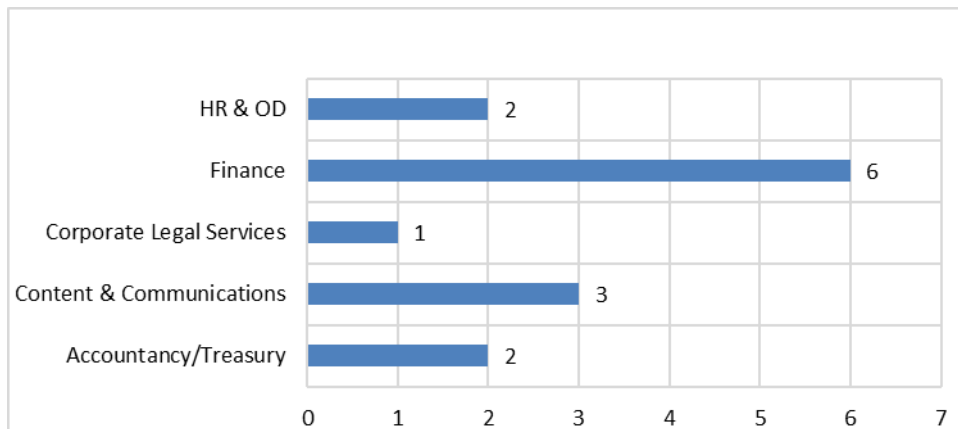
9 Representations by Service Area

9.1 There continues to be reorganisation within Directorates at many levels and therefore the graphs below reflect the Directorate services and names at the end of the 2022-23 year.

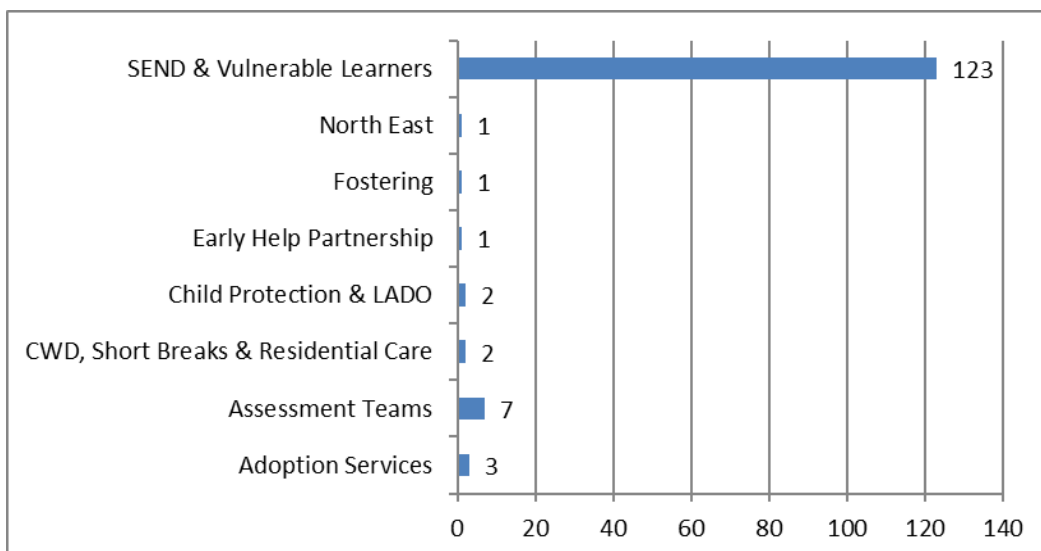
9.2 DE&I 2022-23



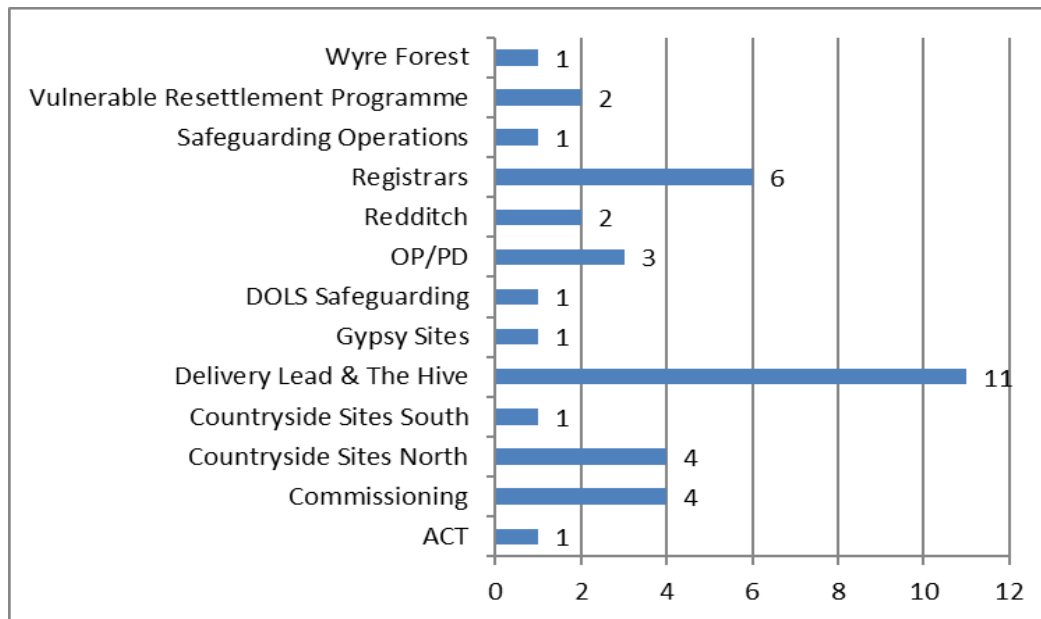
9.3 CEU 2022-23



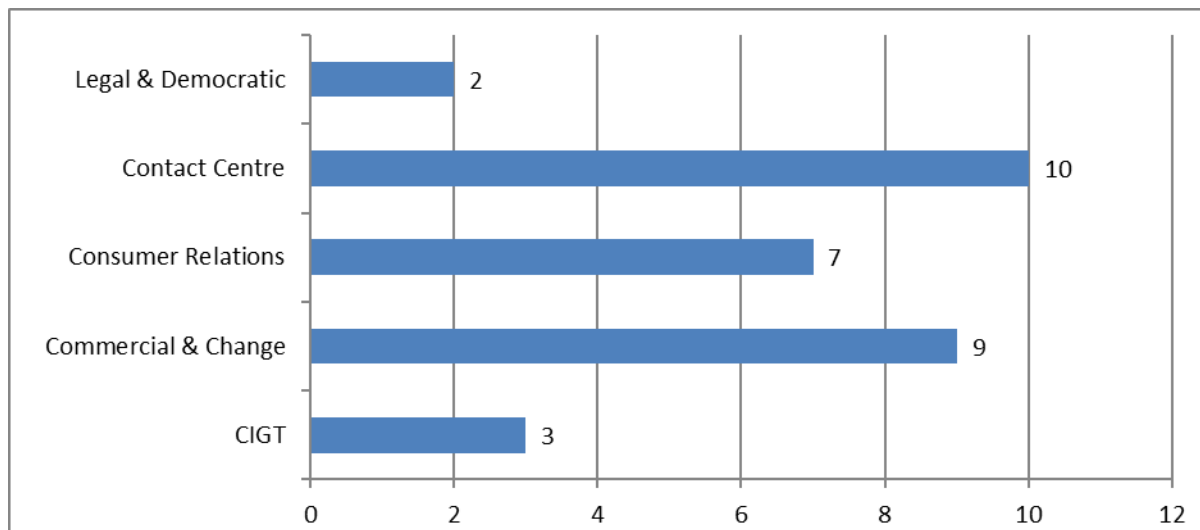
9.4 Worcestershire Children First 2022-23



9.5 People Directorate 2022-23



9.6 Commercial and Commissioning 2022-23

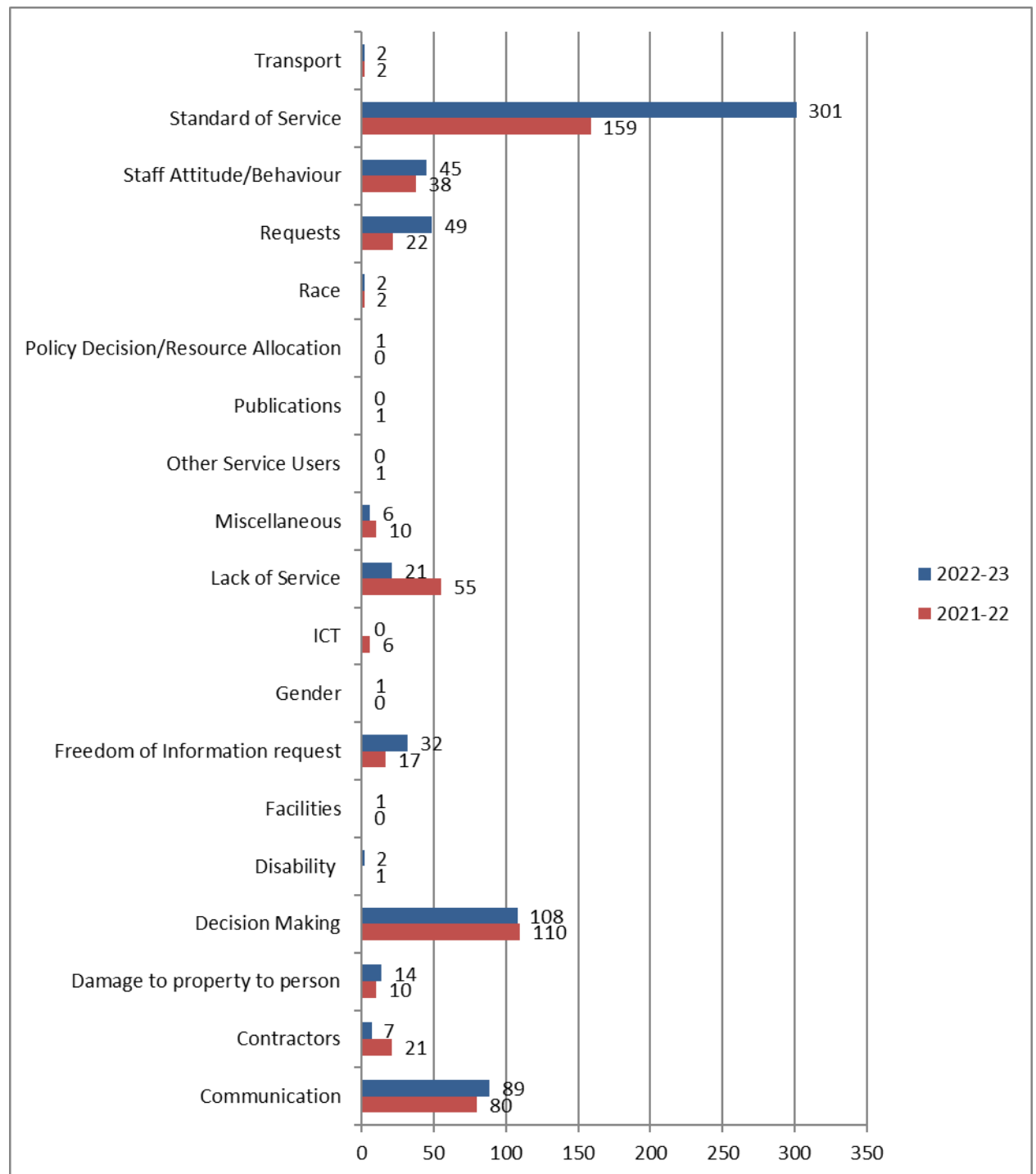


9.7 Public Health 2022-23

There were no new representations received in respect of the Public Health Directorate in 2022-23.

10 Nature of Complaints 2022-23

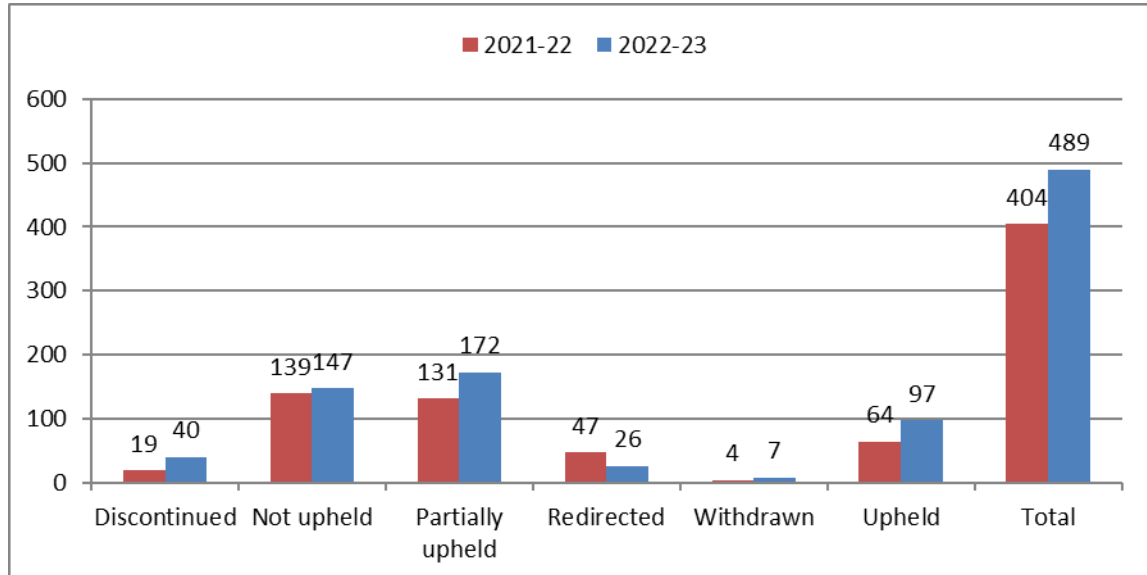
10.1 A single complaint can have more than one nature recorded against it.



10.2 As in previous years, many of the complaints fall under the more general headings of Communication, Decision making and Standard of Service. The most noticeable change is the increase in the number of complaints relating to standard of service.

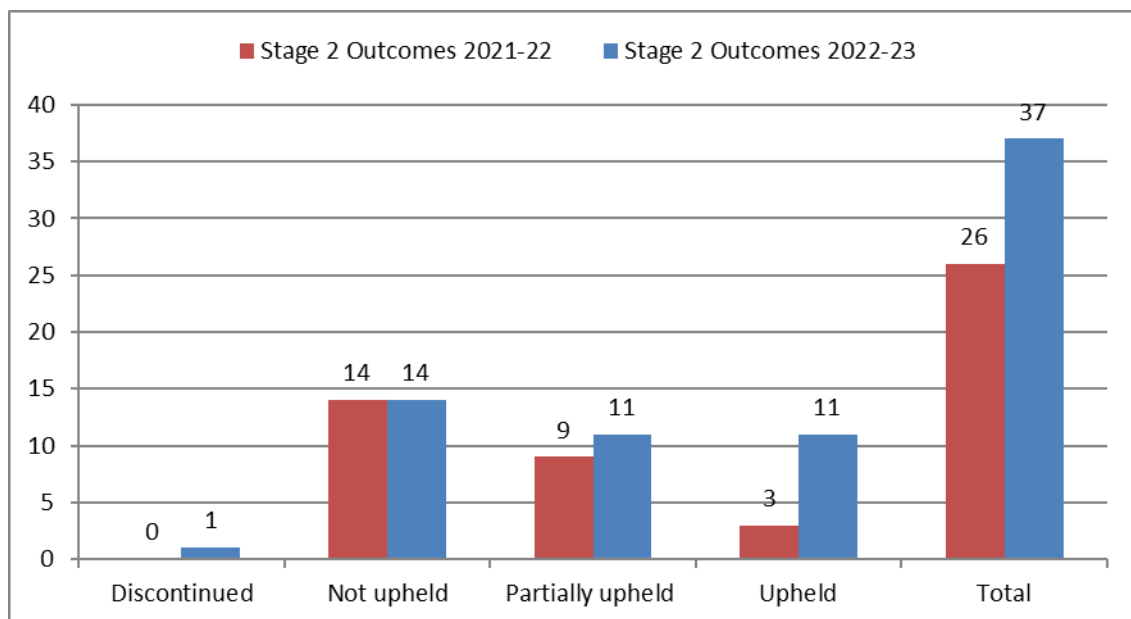
11 Stage 1 Outcomes

11.1 In the year 2022-23 there were a total of 489 Stage 1 complaints determined compared to 404 in 2021-22.



12 Stage 2 Outcomes

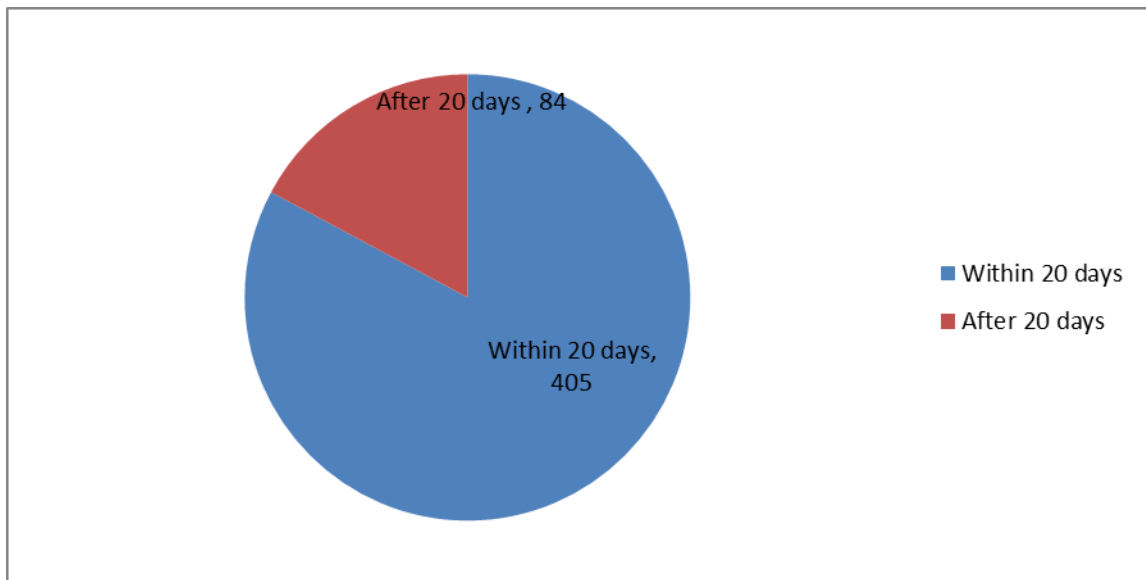
12.1 In the year 2022-23 there were a total of 37 Stage 2 complaints determined compared to 26 in 2021-22.



- 12.2 There has been an increase in the combined number of Stage 2 complaints which have been upheld or partially upheld. The majority (33) of the Stage 2 complaints in 2022-23 represent Internal Reviews of Freedom of Information requests as opposed to complaints that have progressed from Stage 1 of the process.
- 12.3 With both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints some of the complaints completed in the 2022-23 year may have been received in the previous year and a number of investigations were on-going at the end of the year.

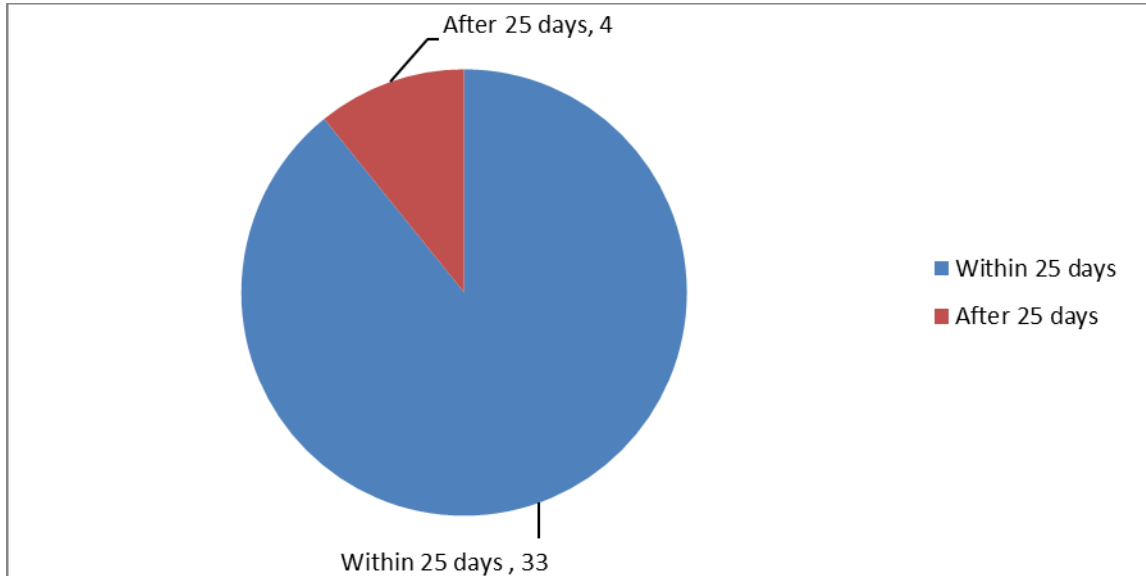
13 Timescales

- 13.1 Stage 1. The timescale for responding to a complaint at Stage 1 is 20 working days.



- 13.2 The majority, (82.80%) of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within the 20-day target. The average response time for all Stage 1 responses was 13.37 days. This is a slight improvement compared to the 2021-22 average which was 15 days.
- 13.3 17.20% of the complaints exceeded the 20 days target. Response times that exceeded the target varied from 21 days to 72 days. The complaints that take a much longer time to deal with can distort the average figure. The reasons for delay are varied but can include information required from other parties or lack of requested evidence by complainant.

13.4 Stage 2. The timescale for response at Stage 2 is 25 working days.



13.5 The majority, 89.80%, of Stage 2 complaints were responded to inside the 25 working day target. The average response time for all Stage 2 responses was 18.83 days.

13.6 The response times outside the target time varied from just over the 25 days to 98 days. The complaints that take a much longer time to deal with can distort the average figure.

13.7 A number of factors contributed to the exceeded time limits. Main reasons being the complexity and number of elements to some complaints and difficulties in arranging interviews with both complainants and WCC/WCF Officers.

13.8 Where complaints were known to exceed the standard timescales, dialogue was maintained with complainants to ensure they remained informed.

14 Comments

14.1 A number of comments are received. As with previous years these cover a wide range of topics and have included comments about major infrastructure projects, the County Council website, Public Rights of Way and household recycling centres.

14.2 Comments are passed to the relevant Directorates and are responded to by them as appropriate.

15 Compliments

- 15.1 Compliments entered in this category have come from members of the public and stakeholder partners pleased with the service they have received.
- 15.2 Compliments received in 2022-23 have been divided between praise for individuals and services as a whole. Compliments for Adult and Children's Social Care Services are also received via the Statutory Representations Procedures.
- 15.3 The following are a selection of the compliments received:
- *"I just wanted to pass on a huge thank you from our patient XXXXXXXXXX. His blue badge arrived on Saturday and he says that it has been brilliant. Life changing! He had a hospital appointment the other day and it was so less stressful". (COaCH/Contact Centre) 06/04/2022*
 - *Hi I would just like to say how good is your footpath defect report online, I reported a path at Hampton by the ferry up over Clarke hill and I walked there last week and what a brilliant job your team has made of clearing the path what a joy it was to walk it again many thanks keep up the great work. (E&I/PROW) 07/04/2022*
 - *A huge thank you for installing a good width pavement from the Bowling Alley Car Park to the Worcester Motorcycle Club, Perdiswell Park WR3 7SN. Thanks .
The walking from home XXXXX to school at XXXXXXXXX has been dangerous because of the absence of a decent footpath. Now it's better . (E&I/Highways) 04/05/2022*
 - *I'm writing to thank you for the professional way you managed today's planning meeting and your assistance in putting us at our ease and explaining the process of speaking to the committee. (COaCH/Legal & Democratic) 24/05/2022*
 - *I've been asked to pass on thanks to WCC's Highways Dept. PLUS to the contractors who did the following work: - arranging to have the eastern end of this footpath 'properly' re-surfaced, this section is between XXXXX. (E&I/Highways) 17/06/2022*
 - *I have been using Hallow Road 'tip' for more than 50 years, but I have never experienced anything like the service I received from XXXXX, on Saturday 9th July. He helped me unload some very heavy rubble sacks, directed me to the correct skip, and could not have been kinder. He deserves high praise for the service he gave and I sincerely wish the council recognise this and ensure he is commended for going above and*

beyond what he is expected of him. My own personal thanks do not go far enough. I will be forever grateful to him. (E&I/Waste Services) 12/07/2022

- *I am an OAP Worcester resident (23 years here). I've used the Recycling Centre many times and have always been struck by the helpfulness and politeness of the people who work there. (E&I/Waste Services) 10/08/2022*
- *Resurfacing in Back Lane South - I have spent the last day and a half being amazed and impressed by the work being done by Ringway. The big machines are tremendous, the planning was meticulous and the hard work, diligence and teamwork of the workforce on the ground were a delight to watch. Could my thanks be passed on to all involved. (E&I/Maintenance) 09/09/2022*
- *I would like to thank the Bus Pass staff I only applied at the end of last week and today have received my Bus Pass I am very happy at the efficiency of whoever was responsible It seems all we do nowadays is complain but I believe that credit where credit is due Thanks so much I can catch the bus and further support the bus companies Thanks so much this has not gone unnoticed I'm very grateful. (COaCH/Contact Centre) 26/09/2022*
- *I want to say a big thank you to whoever it was who processed my concessionary travel pass. I didn't realise it had expired until the bus driver pointed it out to me when I boarded his bus last Saturday. I filled in the online application for a new one on the same day, and I received my replacement today (Friday 21st). I think that is excellent service, and very welcome as I rely on my senior bus pass a lot. As we have also had a postal strike this week it's super-efficient. 10 out of 10 from me!. (COaCH/Contact Centre) 21/10/2022*
- *Really impressed with the team and look forward to being able to find a suitable guest soon. By the way I was very impressed with the professionalism and attitude of the Ukrainian lady XXXXXX who checked my documents. (People/Vulnerable Resettlement Programme) 04/11/2022*
- *A month or two ago I drew attention to potholes on the Cornmeadow Lane junction by Claines Church. I would like to belatedly commend the speed with which action was taken to make the road surface safe for cyclists and motorcyclists. (E&I/Maintenance) 04/01/2023*
- *When a new streetlight bulb was installed, I wrote in to complain that it was very bright and appeared to be tilted upwards which led to the light shining into my home all night and was extremely bright. Within a few hours my complaint was answered and within a week the council have agreed with me and the issue will be resolved within 3 weeks of the initial complaint. All with very little chasing or follow ups from myself, very*

*impressed with the service and everyone's help is appreciated.
(E&I/Strategic Infrastructure) 12/01/2023*

- *Streetlighting Report (Reference #14860) REPORTED 10PM 14/02/23
Fixed AM 15/02/23. I was amazed to see an engineer turn up this morning
and repair the streetlight considering it was only reported at about 10pm
last night 14/02/22! That is very good response and unexpectedly prompt.
Thanks very much! PLEASE PASS ON MY THANKS ETC FOR A
PROMPT REPAIR. (E&I/Strategic Infrastructure) 16/02/2023*

Comments on this report are welcomed and requests for further information should be directed to:-

The Consumer Relations Officer (Corporate)

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Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP
Telephone: 01905 643813

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