



Cambridge City Council

Annual Complaints and Feedback Report 2014-2015

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CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

Every year we publish our Annual Complaints Report, which gives an overview of the complaints the Council has received and how we have dealt with them, though we do not publish names or other personal details of people who have complained.

Why we produce this report

- To learn from our mistakes so that we can improve our services
- To encourage people who have cause to complain to make comments and suggestions to help us make these improvements.
- To show how we've responded to complaints and what we've done to try and put things right.
- To publicise and explain our complaints process.

Our Complaints Procedure

What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as: ***'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Council, or its staff, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.'***

To set these complaints in context, it should be explained that where an issue is brought to the Council's attention for the first time (for example, a missed bin) that is dealt with as a request for action, and is not processed as a formal complaint. However, the Council's response, or lack of response, to that first time notification might lead to a complaint if the customer were still dissatisfied.

Customers complain to the Council if they:

- Are unhappy about something we have or haven't done.
- Are not satisfied with the way a member of staff has treated them.
- Are not happy with the way a councillor has treated them.
- Want to complain for any other reason.

Directorates and Services

Chief Executive	Corporate Strategy
Environment	Environmental Health
	Refuse
	Specialist Services
	Streets and Open Spaces
	Parking Services
	Planning
	Tourism and City Centre Management
	Garages
Customer and Community	Estates and facilities
	City Homes
	Strategic Housing
	Arts and Recreation
	Revenues and Benefits
	Community and Development
Business Transformation	Customer Services
	Property Services
	Accounting

[Independent Complaints Investigator](#)

[The Local Government Ombudsman](#)

[Complaints under the Councilors' Code of Conduct](#)

Executive Summary

General Summary

In 2014/15 Cambridge City Council received 484 complaints, an 11.5% increase from the previous year. The Council also received 263 compliments and 8,798 comments via GovMetric, a customer satisfaction rating system.

Independent Complaints Investigator (ICI)

Nineteen complaints were made to the Independent Complaints Investigator and 2 carried over from last year. Of these twenty-one complaints, four were upheld and one partially upheld.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

Sixteen LGO complaints were investigated, with four upheld.

Reporting and Recording

The City Council has worked hard to understand the reasons for the complaints, and has taken action to prevent the poor service that triggered those complaints from being repeated. We continue to work hard to deliver high quality services to all residents and customers, and welcome all feedback on our services and suggestions for improvement. This report allows us to reflect on our successes and areas of development. Following feedback and a review of our complaints process we have changed the way we record and monitor complaints, compliments and comments.

The Lead complaints Officers review all data and feedback on a quarterly basis to establish themes and trends within services. This is then discussed with Directors and Heads of service to gain an understanding of what the service is doing to improve, change or prevent a reoccurrence. This helps to create a rolling yearly report, ensuring accuracy and that changes and improvements made are captured and reviewed on a regular basis. Particular attention is focused on reducing complaints being escalated to the independent complaints investigator by making sure that complaints that involve more than one service at stage one are dealt with more efficiently.

Service Movement

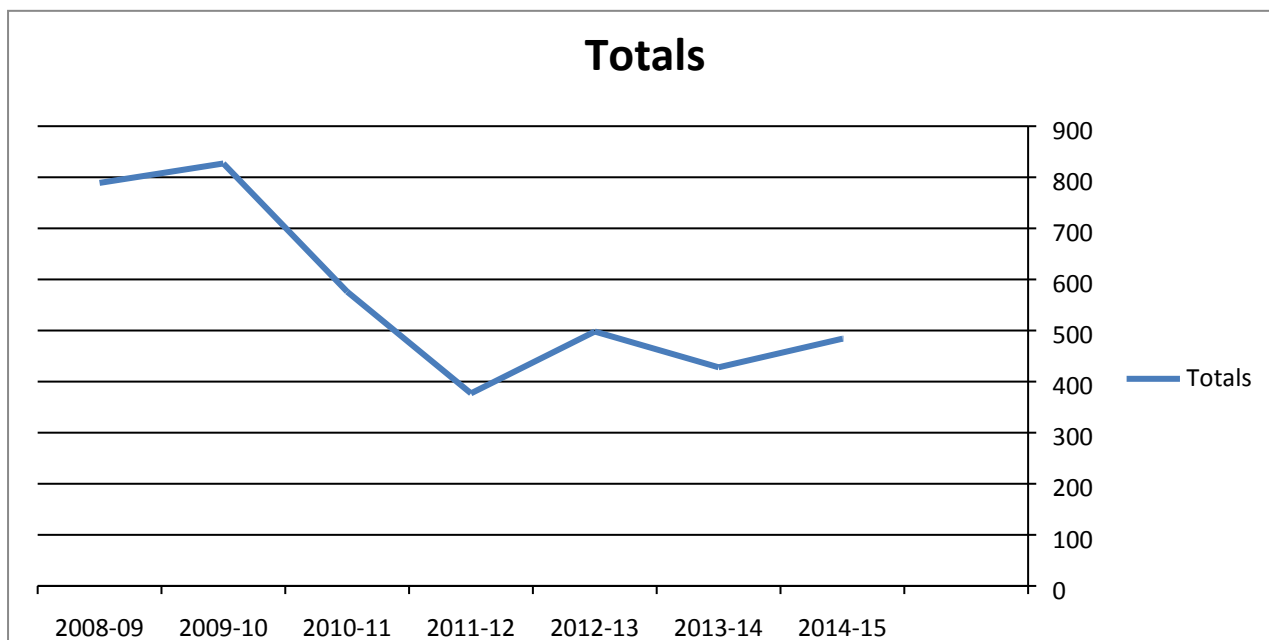
In early 2014 we saw a change in services and directorates. Estates and Facilities services moved from Business Transformation to Customer and Community Services directorate and Customer Services moved from Customer and Community Services to Business Transformation directorate. Due to the higher volume of complaints received in Estates and facilities compared to Customer Services this year we have recorded complaints by service rather than directorate.

Community Development and Arts and Recreations merged in autumn 2014. As this change happened during the financial year the services will continue to show separately until next year's report.

Complaints to the City Council in 2014-15

We received 484 complaints in 2014-15. This was an 11.5% increase on those received in the previous year as can be seen in table below.

Cambridge City Council complaint totals 2008 – 2015



Year	Chief Exec's	Environment	Business and Transformation	Customer & Community	Totals	Change %
2014-15	1	240	20	223	484	+11.5%

Year	Chief Exec's	Environment	Resources	Customer & Community	Totals	Change %
2013-14	0	210	93	125	428	-14
2012-13	2	72	83	341	498	+32
2011-12	0	65	40	272	377	-34.5
2010-11	8	81	56	431	576	-30
2009-10	21	168	61	577	827	+5
2008-09	8	169	36	576	789	

In early 2014 we saw a change in services and directorates. The tables above have been separated to show this clearly.

Analysis

In 2014-15 43% of complaints came from 3 services, Refuse, Streets and Open Spaces and Estates and Facilities.

Out of the 240 complaints received, 60 were waste related waste collections. There are approximately 49,000 households visited each week, this number of complaints is therefore a very small percentage. However every time a complaint is made about a missed collection or bins have not been put back, the enquiry is investigated and crews are reminded of their duties.

The second largest source of complaints related to Open Spaces with 62 complaints. The service is currently carrying out a complete review of the service to deliver increased management capacity to monitor/ manage customer service standard performance. A monthly customer complaint reporting system had been introduced to monitor management issues across the service and agree any required changes or improvements with service managers.

Estates and Facilities received 87 complaints. The complaints logged cover a wide range of issues associated with both the in-house delivery of response repairs and planned works delivered by partnered external contractors. The service delivers over 15000 responsive repairs a year in addition to planned works. The planned works contract arrangements have progressively improved with a replacement contractor. Over half of the complaints received fall into categories, such as mould or delays to planned works.

To put the number of complaints in broader context, last year over 190,000 telephone contacts and over 40,600 face to face and cashiers visits were recorded at the customer service centre. The number of complaints is relatively low in relation to the number of customer contacts received by Council services, but the Council recognises that it is important to respond to all complaints in a timely and appropriate manner, and to take any steps necessary to prevent repeat occurrences in future.

In 2014-15 the Council received 263 compliments, as well as 5191 positive comments through GovMetric, a customer satisfaction rating system. This channel of communication continues to be popular with our customers with nearly 9000 comments overall.

The number of complaints offered to the Council has fluctuated over the last six years, since 2008 complaints have reduced by 39%. A review of our reporting and recording procedure last year has enabled us to record data more accurately. Alongside these discussions with Directors and Head of Service has seen an increase in communications to customer to encourage feedback to help us to identify areas of development.

The Customer Service Centre

27 Council services use the Customer Service Centre for their initial enquiry. This allows the CSC to have an overview of how council services are performing.

In March 2014 an afternoon appointment only service for customers with Benefits and Council Tax enquiries was introduced. This initiative has been very successful with our customers now receiving a consistent and timely service when they visit us face to face. The impact on the team has also been very positive with regular references to the difference it has made from staff. We are now reviewing how this system can be rolled out to other service areas where there is a face to face demand.

In 2014-2015, the consistent theme regarding complaints for customer services related to our response times for answering telephone calls. The reasons for delays during the year were many and varied, however the key factors in our response times were:

- A higher than average amount of long term sickness absence within the team
- Staff attrition rates and the resultant vacancies within the team while recruitment and training took place
- Service re-structure and the resultant re-training of staff
- The percentage of customers contacting us with straightforward enquiries which could be reported/resolved via self service offerings

In response to these issues we are working closely with the team and human resources, taking proactive measures with the team to improve attendance. For example offering occupational health sessions, promoting the use of the corporate counselling service and offering free flu jabs to those who want them.

A review of our recruitment processes is also taking place. Customer services is a demanding place to work, and whilst our current practises allow us to identify if potential employees have the customer service skill we require, it does not demonstrate their robustness to pressure, or their ability to multi –task. We are introducing a test in our assessment centre to evaluate applicants in these areas, by employing staff who are resilient and dedicated, our attrition rates should reduce.

The major plans to improve the service offerings in 2015-2016 come in the form of new technology. A telephone information giving and gathering service is about to be introduced for customers contacting us by telephone with council tax and benefit enquiries and the corporate telephony upgrade is planned for an autumn implementation. Both initiatives will facilitate customers to serve themselves easily whilst freeing up advisors for those enquiries which are complicated or sensitive.

In addition, recruitment for an apprentice CSA and work experience applicants are being pursued for customer services, with the aim that we contribute to the employment of young people. It will provide experience and training for those out of work, whilst providing more self-service advice and guidance for customers who want to use our on-line offerings but do not have the confidence or understanding on how to use them.

Customer services are continuing to support the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), credit unions and community navigators with desk space and customer referrals. These organisations help customers with their enquiries and ensure they are aware what support is available to them.

How complaints were received

Year	Face to Face %	Letter %	Email %	Telephone %	Other (Comment Cards) %
2014-15	2	8	61	11	18
2013-14	2	13	78	7	2
2012-13	1	19	70	8	2
2011-12	2	26	48	6	18
2010-11	1	24	56	4	15
2009-10	4	34	47	11	4

The majority of complaints were received in writing, with the number of letters declining over the past five years and the number of emails increasing over the same period.

Compliments

Cambridge City Council Compliment totals 2014-15

Year	Chief Exec's	Environment	Business and Transformation	Customer & Community	Totals
2014-15	0	64	79	120	263

Year	Chief Exec's	Environment	Resources	Customer & Community	Totals
2013-14	0	19	15	148	182
2012-13	0	8	23	571	602
2011-12	0	7	3	531	541
2010-11	6	35	12	408	461

The way in which we receive feedback has changed last year with the introduction of GovMetric feedback system. We have seen a significance decrease in compliments received via e-mail and letter to the customer service centre as customers are choosing to use the GovMetric instead.

GovMetric customer feedback system

GovMetric was introduced by customer services to monitor feedback and measure improvement. The tool allows us to record how the feedback was received, ratings of good, average or poor can be selected by customers. They are also able to select service areas/departments and give more specific detail about their experiences.

We currently use GovMetric to monitor feedback from the website, face to face visits in Mandela House reception and via service e-mails and incoming calls at Mandela House.

Each council department reviews the complaints and compliments it receives on a quarterly basis. This enables services to identify if there are any trends in the types of complaint being made or the services that complaints are being made about. As a result, changes are made to services and how they are provided.

Total feedback via GovMetric 2014-15

Channel	Date	Total	Good %	Average %	Poor %
Web	01.04.2014-31.03.2015	4316	48%	14%	37%
Phone	02.12.2014-31.03.2015	317	85%	7%	8%
Email	02.12.2014-31.03.2015	610	74%	9%	17%
Face to Face	01.04.2014-31.03.2015	3555	67%	13%	21%

Face to Face Govmetric Feedback

Mandela House reception continues to offer Customers advice for Council Tax, Housing benefit, Housing and homelessness advice. Many of the complaints made to face to face are often with regards to the decision the service has made, rather than the service received by staff. Customers are made aware of escalation routes to support them in their enquiries and feedback is monitored on a regular basis and discussed in operational meetings between the services. Refer to Page 8 for more information on Customer Service Centre developments during 2014-15.

Website GovMetric feedback

48% of people (2089 customers) providing feedback on the website thought that it was good. The majority of the good and average reports are about ease of use of the website and clear information given, particularly for customers to get a contact number.

37% (1613 Customers) poor comments relate to a range of items, including difficulties customers face using the e-revenues system for reporting council tax issues/checking

personal accounts, as well as customers suggesting they need more detailed and clearer information, particularly around planning issues, mapping / directions and fees for services.

Other reports include services which are provided by the County and some instances where the customer was simply looking in the wrong place for information.

The majority of average comments 14% (614 Customers) are about ease of use of the website and clear information given, particularly for customers to get a contact number.

Action taken in response to feedback

Each report is reviewed on a regular basis. Where there is a suggestion for additional web content, an indication that something is out of date the web team pass these on to the respective service team. Often the service team will update their web pages in response, and or reply to the customer directly (if they gave their details) to provide further information or a response to any query raised.

The Web Team also use the reports to monitor and review the general functionality of the website.

Further actions

The website was user-tested in the summer of 2014, and the results indicated that although customers are largely happy with the functionality, they found the content too long and wordy / peppered with jargon, difficult to find and the site too cluttered, particularly the home page.

Since then the Web Team have been building a new-look website to address the issues around the cluttered layout and have undertaken a major review of the most used content, working with service teams to rewrite many sections to be more customer focussed, easier to understand, find, and to provide quick navigation to the 'task' elements, which is usually what customers want to do on the site.

The new-look website will launch in September 2015 and the Web Team will continue to monitor, review the site functionality and its content on an ongoing basis.

Service Complaint Trends and feedback

Below are the comments from Services on what they have done to prevent, improve or change as a result of the feedback received in 2014-15.

Directorate – Chief Executive

[Corporate Strategy](#)

Corporate Strategy	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	1	0	100%	0
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time out session expiring after 20 minutes on the Website 				
Changes and improvements made				
<p>The forms system is part of the Northgate CRM system and our ability to develop them is very limited. The forms are 'session based' and it's the 'session' that times out after 20 minutes, and we cannot change this. After feedback from other customers a red 'time-out' notice has been added. Forms are kept as short as possible and only collecting necessary information to ensure user shouldn't need more than 20 minutes to complete. This may not be possible for every form and we will review them as part of the new website developments.</p> <p>A 'save' option is not currently available within the system.</p>				

Directorate – Environment

[Environmental Health](#)

Environmental Health	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	9	1	100%	3
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 busker complaints mainly about policy 1 inspecting HMOs (stage 2) 				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive procedure has been put in place between City Centre Management, Environmental health, the city Rangers and the Customer service centre. The buskers code of conduct leaflet has been given to local businesses to be support/enable them to communicate at first point of contact. More Environmental Health staff are in post to support the service. City Centre Management are working to have more frontline staff and a more thorough structure to support and respond and enquiries. HMO inspection policy has been reviewed and we are continuing in the way we inspect as per the legal framework and our policy. 				

Refuse

Refuse	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	60	1	80%	9
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed bin collections • Charge for second green bin 				
Changes and improvements made				
<p>A collection catch up following national industrial action accounted for an increase in the numbers of missed bins in Quarter 2. In the second half of the year the rate of missed bin collection fell towards the target of no more than 30 bin collections missed per 100,000. Regular meetings with the Crews and Leading Hands to review performance have been key together with better communication with residents through the Customer Service Centre. This has been helped by in-cab technology which helps provide more accurate information about cases where bins cannot be emptied due to over filling or contamination.</p> <p>The Introduction of a charge for a second green bin generated complaints however the numbers and rate of these complaints has reduced significantly as residents have become accustomed to the policy through our communications.</p>				

Streets and Open Spaces

Streets and Open Spaces	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	62	5	79%	14
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silver Street toilet condition • Cycle removal due to Tour de France • Delayed response to complaints (across service) • All Stage 2 complaints arose as a result of initial complaint not being dealt with within 14 day standard, i.e. delayed response 				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silver Street toilet condition - We will continue to respond to complaints by investigation and take remedial action if needed. We have a rapid response team to deal with emergencies where there is a danger posed to the public. It is recognised that toilets are not up to modern standards and there is a project on capital plan to refurbish/ resite them. Currently exploring possible options with Planning/ Conservation colleagues and anticipate 18 month delivery plan. Meanwhile working with Churchill (new cleaning contractor) to try and improve standard and recently undertook deep clean. Unfortunately, the day (17/7/15) following the deep clean, the toilets were inundated by flash flood requiring need to be deep cleaned again. Once deep clean, Churchill will have a good base standard to maintain them to. • Cycle removal for Tour de France - No recommended changes/ improvements. Public notices warning cyclists of the need to remove bikes were displayed weeks before this major event to remind cyclists to remove their bikes by the specified date or have them forcibly removed. • Delayed response to complaints (across service) - New service structure (arising from Service Review implemented from April 2015) delivers increased management capacity to monitor/ manage customer service standard performance. Head of Service has introduced new monthly customer complaint reporting system, which they will use to monitor management issues across the service and agree any required changes/ improvements with service managers. 				

[Specialist Services](#)

Specialist Services*	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	13	0	85%	18
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Errors in customer service • Lack of responses to customer enquiries • Low standard of service 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bereavement Services - 11 • CCTV - 1 • Out of Hours call handling - 1 		
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes of mentoring and training have been introduced • Reorganisation of service management to improve supervision levels • Recruitment of new staff has helped to reduce delays in response times and improve service. 				

The report separates out Parking Services as a discrete category.

[Parking Services](#)

Parking Services	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	45	1	91%	4
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price of Parking • Operational - Blue Badge validation • Customer Service 				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The price of parking is a council set policy, we continue to educate visitors via our website and communication boards around throughout the car park. • Blue Badge (BB) - We have Implemented changes to the operation of the three hours free parking concession for disabled drivers. The new system has reduced the volume of queues at the exit of the Grand Arcade car park with no more requirements for the BB user to recite their BB badge details to the parking attendants. A recently conducted customer services survey at the Grand Arcade incorporated questions about BB parking bay locations and the new BB operating system. Overall, comments were positive and in favour of the new BB validation procedure. • Customer services investigations are conducted by managers when complaints are raised about staff. If it is identified that there has been poor service given then either additional customer service training will be carried out or if warranted, disciplinary action taken against the staff member. Customer service standards are a key part of the PR process and are also discussed during staff meetings. As part of the mystery shopping exercise early this year staff were assessed on their overall customer services skills as well as knowledge of service. Comments from the company who conducted this said that overall, the car parks service in Cambridge is very good, with well-informed and helpful staff, and an excellent Shop mobility service. We would also mention that the Council's web-site in respect of car park information is informative and one of the best we have seen overall. 				

Planning

Planning	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	44	1	73%	4
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service provided by officers • Decisions made • Planning procedures and policies 				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Complaints are discussed at team meetings. Officers are reminded to check neighbour notification and to communicate regularly with customers. • Officers have been reminded that customers should be given the chance to submit a revised plan if an extension of time is agreed. • The Constraints Maps have been updated to include Buildings of Local Interest (BLI) • Regular one to ones are carried out to review staff workload. • The Planning website pages have been reviewed and updated to provide customers with ready access to information about the planning process. • IT issues have been resolved so the IDOX system is more robust and we can be more confident that information is available online. • We plan to introduce an appointment based service to help manage volumes and customer expectations in relation to access to the Duty Planner (September 2015) at Mandela House 				

Garages

Garage	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	5	0	100%	1
Theme Identified None				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a complaint requires a change in procedures it is discussed at team meetings or a tool box talk held by the Workshop Supervisor to avoid reoccurrence. • Complaints relating to customer services are investigated; the staff member made aware and offered additional customer service training if necessary. • Discussions with the suppliers have taken place where errors have been made. 				

Directorate – Customer and Community

[Estates and facilities](#)

Estates and Facilities	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	87	4	71%	37
Theme Identified				
<p>The complaints logged cover a wide range of issues associated with both the in-house delivery of response repairs and planned works delivered by partnered external contractors. This has to be viewed in the context of 15000 individual response repairs/annum and a planned works expenditure of £12m and particularly as the vast majority of work involves some level of access to customer's homes.</p> <p>In Q1 and Q2 of the 2014/15 reporting period (until October 2014) a significant proportion of the Planned Works delivery was reliant upon a single partnered contract arrangement which was terminated prematurely this resulted in formal adjudication procedures to resolve disputes about incomplete delivery of works ordered. The planned works contract arrangements post October 2014 have progressively improved with the appointment of a replacement contract partner.</p> <p>There are no significant themes but of the 87 complaints recorded, some limited trends can be identified by volume of complaints as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 concerned mould growth/condensation issues (Quarters 3 & 4 winter months) • 10 concerned delays to works • 6 concerned scaffolding issues • 11 concerned staff conduct, response or service. 				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mould Growth - Mould growth, (reported as damp) is a recurring issue during winter months in older, poorly insulated properties. The solution long term is better insulation and education of residents about the need for ventilation to increase air flows and reduce conditions for condensation to occur. In the cases reported the surveyors visited properties and provided damp meters to allow residents to continuously monitor heat/humidity conditions with advice on how to respond when conditions deteriorate. Funding for external wall insulation is very limited so where there is little prospect of early completion of insulation work then additional measures to provide enhanced mechanical ventilation systems are implemented. • Delays to Works - The majority of complaints have arisen from customer expectation of delivery of planned work (kitchen, bathroom, fencing etc.) allocated to a specific financial year. Works are identified for a full year ahead but all programmes are profiled with contractors for delivery within a 12 month period and complaints can therefore arise when works are due toward a year end. Additionally, in periods Q1 and Q2, significant issues arose with the outgoing Planned works contractor who failed to properly liaise with customers about planned work timescales. Improvements have been made to the management and programming arrangements now operated by the two principal planned work contractors such that all works are carried out within contracted time periods. Additionally, in January 2015, Estates & Facilities (E&F) published a complete programme of Planned Work for 2014/15 in the Spring Open Door tenant newsletter with instructions for tenants to check individual property work via data made available to the CSC. Some complaints about delayed work also arose from delivery of the Response Repairs Service, data suggests no consistent trend and any significant delays associated with larger repairs requiring more complicated remedial works which have to be pre-planned and require particular permissions (egg scaffold permits, party wall agreements) or the procurement of specialist parts. • Scaffolding issues - Complaints again relate to a small number of occasions where there was either insufficient notification to customers of scaffolding or to delayed removals. Scaffold work is always sub-contracted and the process of management of an extended supply chain and communication to customers can occasionally fail. Planned work contractors are aware of the issue and ensure that wherever practical that customers are properly advised and consulted. Removal of scaffolding is also given high priority when works are completed. • Staff conduct, response or service - Customer service requirements, customer satisfaction and complaints data are all regularly reported in presentations to all E&F staff at monthly staff briefings. All complaints data is closely managed by E&F management team and complaints about staff conduct are investigated with customers and staff involved. Where appropriate action, in the form of additional guidance or instruction in processes, is given to employees to avoid recurrence. 				

City Homes

City Homes	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	40	1	89%	26
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed response from Housing Officers • Building cleaning 				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35% of the complaints related to Officers not responding within the timescales. Several of these occurred when Officers have had unplanned absence from work. Measures put in place by Area Managers: • Greater promotion of generic Housing Officer Email address to reduce the numbers of complaints relating to no or delayed response to customers. • Complaints to continue to be sent to appropriate Housing Officers and copied to Area Managers for monitoring purposes. Response and timescales are monitored by the Area Managers. • 23% of complaints related to the condition of the neighbourhood, in particular about dumped rubbish, grounds maintenance and general appearance of the estate. An outcome of the Caretakers service review saw the Estate Champion posts extended to cover the Housing Estates City wide to help reduce complaints. • 18% of the complaints related to standards of cleaning within the communal areas of flats. Procurement of Building Cleaning took place last year and a new external contractor commenced in June 2015. As part of this new contract measures have been put in place and service standards are monitored and any complaints addressed. • New initiatives around Resident Inspector role mean that a wider range of services (including building cleaning) will be scrutinised by involved residents. A new incentive scheme (Time Credits) has been introduced to increase the overall number of Resident Inspectors and a new smartphone app has been developed to make inspections even easier for residents to carry out which will provide an earlier solution to the issues before becoming a complaint. • The remaining 24% covered areas around Anti-Social Behaviour, redevelopment sites, repair issues and three miscellaneous complaints. 				

Arts and Recreation

Arts and Recreation	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	20	0	90%	3
Theme Identified				
<p>The majority of complaints relate to issues at the swimming pools, categorised into two core themes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold pool water temperatures – particularly for the disabled swimming sessions on a Thursday afternoon at Parkside Pool • Programming issues from non-consistent opening times at the outdoor pool to cancellation of an over 50's Forever Active class 				
Changes and improvements made				
<p>Our swimming pools are managed by Greenwich Leisure limited contractor (GLL).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GLL have changed the diving pool water heat exchanger plate and upgraded the size of the pool pipe work to allow the heat to get into the pool quicker. This resolved the complaints and better control of heat into the pool. • Six complaints were received from the six members that regularly attended the over 50's water aerobics class at Abbey Pool. The class was re-established in a new partnership arrangement between GLL and Forever Active. • More information has been put onto the website including pricing schedules and timetables for the public to access. • Corn Exchange - complaint about another spectator taking excessive number of photographs and spoiling their experience - remind stewards to look out for behaviour that may be affecting the enjoyment of other patrons. • Folk Festival - complaint about noise level of a particular band - review information to festival goers about the use and availability of ear-plugs. 				

Strategic Housing

Strategic Housing	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	36	1	92%	0
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53% of Strategic Housing complaints related to Home-Link application processing. A further 8% were objections to policies affecting Home-Link registration. 19% of complaints related to homelessness assessments. A further 5.5% related to emergency and temporary accommodation placements. The remaining 5.5% were complaints about how our services are set up, including a limited mutual exchange service, and an inability to carry out home visits in all cases where banding reviews are requested. • 4 cases highlighted a lack of clarity in procedures • 2 complaints were about the time taken to process applications. • 4 complaints were about system issues with bidding. • Of the 7 complaints about homelessness assessment, 4 focussed on the time taken to reach a homelessness determination. In a further 2 cases, the customer was dissatisfied with the officer's manner, when delivering a decision. • Complaints about emergency and temporary accommodation highlighted a lack of cleanliness, and also the fact that house rules about visitors were not adequately explained to a B&B guest in advance of their stay. 				
Changes and improvements made				
<p>In many cases, complaints are made to the service because the applicant has not achieved the outcome they had hoped for (either a level of priority on the register or an acceptance of a full housing duty under homelessness legislation). In some instances, the level of service provided could have been better, but in over half of cases, policy had been correctly applied, and service standards fully met. The inference is that customers use the complaints system to attempt to change or improve their personal circumstances, rather than to highlight service shortfalls. Nevertheless, it is clear that improved information for customers (about policy, procedures and practices) could avert some of these unnecessary contacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the year, there has been a considerable increase in housing advice cases handled by the service, and the increased pressure on resources has had an inevitable effect on processing times. However, we have invested time in developing a detailed online procedure manual, to help improve the efficiency and accuracy of the service. Each time that a complaint has highlighted a lack of procedural clarity, additional information has been incorporated into this manual. New guidance is launched to the team via an email alert, and a review session in team meetings. • We have considerably improved our individual and team performance monitoring. Monthly reports show how officers' performance relates to team averages. Housing advice and homelessness assessment cases are randomly selected for review. Spot checks are carried out on advice provided by Assessment and Support Officers to customers via email. • In order to improve the time taken to reach homelessness decisions, change to the delivery of the face-to-face advice service are in train, including a reduction in the hours that the face-to-face service is available, and an assessment of the merits of introducing of a telephone-based 'triage' service. • Some complaints have highlighted misunderstandings on the part of the complainant, about policies and processes. Improvements have therefore been made to customer leaflets. As part of a larger website improvement project, the housing advice webpages have been reviewed and improved. Work is currently being carried out on a 'Frequently Asked Questions' resource for customers (in conjunction with Customer Services). • Our transactional system has been re-tendered, and the issues identified through complaints have been accounted for in the specification of the new system. 				

Community and Development

Community and Development	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	9	0	100%	50
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no themes 				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trumpington Pavilion - complaint about inadequate IT/WiFi - course moved to a more suitable venue. In future courses will be checked for their ICT needs. • Buchan Street - noisy gate - remedial works instructed • Buchan Street - bright lights - replaced with lower wattage lightbulbs. • Buchan Street - equipment used by other group - manager has addressed issue with users. • Play Boat - complaint about unsafe activity - full investigation and some safety procedures were reiterated to staff. • Meadows - noise levels from public affecting yoga class - apologised and staff will consider bookings and potential clashes of use in the future. • Ross St - complaint about unsupervised children - added additional notes to T&C of hire regarding supervision of children. • Referral from City MP to query Council grant to COPE - full explanation of process and decision given. 				

Revenues and Benefits

Revenues and Benefits	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	29	1	86%	4
Theme Identified				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed response to the complaint • Staff/letter error • Letter content and wording • Aggrieved at Recovery/Court Action 				
Changes and improvements made				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes have been made with working practices, streamlining processes so dealt with by one officer instead of two to speed up refunds which should reduce delays and waiting times. • On our website we have replaced downloadable forms with web-based forms that automatically email responses to capture information and increase processing time. • Use of standard letter templates has been expanded in an effort to reduce editing errors and increase officer processing time. • Unfortunately, despite issuing a bill, and at least one reminder, occasional complaints are received upon receipt of a summons. These cases are resolved quickly if fresh information is made available. Cross-system checks are made prior to recovery documents being issued to prevent complaints. • A recently completed service review between Council Tax and Customer Service Centre to assist with processing times and make delays to responses less likely in the future. • A central complaints monitoring officer is also responsible for ensuring complaints are dealt with on time, which should reduce the likelihood of out of time complaint responses. • Where there are officer errors made, this is referred back to the officer concerned to ensure best possible accuracy is maintained. 				

Directorate – Business Transformation

[Accounting](#)

Accounting	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	1	0	100%	1
Theme Identified				
• Delayed response to enquiry				
Changes and improvements made				
This complaint was dealt with on an individual basis and the customer contacted by telephone.				

[Customer Services](#)

Customer Services	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	16	0	100%	79
Theme Identified				
Waiting times for calls to be answered				
Changes and improvements made				
<p>Waiting times in the contact centre have increased due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently high contact levels • Increasingly complex enquiries • High levels of staff turn over • High levels of long term staff absence <p>To reduce the impact of these constraints and therefore improve the service and speed with which calls can be answered customer services have reviewed our recruitment processes and made changes to these, specifically testing for resilience and ability to multi-task. We have also re-visited our health and well-being practices offering appointments to staff with our occupational health team. We have reviewed how we use our telephony messaging to proactively encourage customers to use the website to report their change in circumstances. The biggest issue we are faced with relates to contact levels and increased channels available for customers to contact us by. To reduce the number of calls we have offered to advisors we are implementing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An automated switchboard – estimated implementation Winter 2015-2016 • A 24/7 call answering service for revenues and benefits services – estimated implementation date September 2015 • A social media management tool - estimated implementation Winter 2015-2016 • Re-designing our contact us page to encourage customers to find the answers to their query while they are already using the website services – estimated implementation date September 2015 <p>We are also trying to recruit an apprentice and a staff member on work experience to support customers to use the self service options face to face. The idea being that if face to face demand is reduced then staff can be moved to the contact centre.</p>				

[Property Services](#)

Property Services	No. of Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Number of compliments
	2	0	50%	0
Theme Identified				
Complaint about property not being let to customer when first vacant				
Changes and improvements made				
<p>This was not originally a complaint but an FOI request that after discussion between the Head of Service and complainant on 7th August 2014 was then treated as a complaint as the most appropriate way to provide the complainant with the information required.</p> <p>The prospective tenant was unhappy that they were not successful in acquiring a particular property. The reasons for the decision to let to another party were clearly set out in the response to the complaint letter.</p>				

Independent Complaints Investigator (ICI)

From the period April 2013 until March 2014, two investigations were carried over. From 1st April 2014 until 18th March 2015, nineteen complaints have been submitted to the Independent Complaints Investigator.

Of these twenty-one complaints which have been submitted, twelve submissions were investigated, currently, one investigation is on-going and awaiting report regarding Planning Services.

Upheld and partially upheld complaints to the ICI 2014-15

Directorate	Service	Date	Decision
CCS	Estates & Facilities	17th April 2014	UPHELD
ENV	Streets & Open Spaces	5 th August	PARTIALLY UPHELD with recommendations
CCS	Planning, Property Services & City Homes North	30 th September	UPHELD
CCS	Estates & Facilities	7 th November	UPHELD
CCS	Estates & Facilities	5 th January 21015	UPHELD
CCS	Planning Services	20 th February	Ongoing

ICI Complaints received between 2012 – 2015

Year	Complaints received	Partially upheld	Upheld	Services where complaint upheld.
2014-15	20 + 2*	1	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estates and Facilities • Environmental Services, Planning Services, Property Services
2013-14	28	5	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Services, Housing Needs, Anti-Social Behaviour and Environmental Services • Accountancy and Support Services and Estates and Facilities.
2012-13	21 + 3*	1	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Estates and Facilities • Streets and Open Spaces

*Complaints carried over from the previous financial year.

ICI Multi Service Complaint 2014-15

Directorate	Service	Decision
Environment and Business Transformation	Environmental Services, Planning Services, Property Services	Upheld
Complaint Overview		
<p>Following advice both from Planning Services and from Property Services, the customer made an application for a change of use to premises. Full planning permission was approved, subject to a noise condition. An acoustic report was received and the noise condition was discharged by Environmental Services. The premises opened for business. Following complaints by residents of noise nuisance caused by the shop, an Abatement Notice was served. The customer sought advice from all of the relevant departments involved - Planning Services, Property Services, and Environmental Services - and complied with all advice.</p>		
Changes and improvements made		
<p>This cross service complaint identified the need to work closely with colleagues in environmental health and property services where activities being permitted through planning may be generators of bespoke noise issues, needing a one-off approach to mitigate them.</p> <p>Noise from gyms has led to a coordinated approach between, Environmental Health and Property Services to come to a resolution. A gymnasium will not be allowed in premises with residential property nearby without noise testing taking place early in the process.</p> <p>The procedure between planning and Environmental Health has been updated to ensure such planning applications are identified at an early stage, and the necessary advice given.</p> <p>Changes in procedures regarding investigating noise complaints has also changed to ensure we carry out proactive monitoring for such cases.</p>		

Streets and Open Spaces - Independent Complaints Investigator (ICI)

Directorate	Service	Decision
Environment	Streets and Open Spaces	Partially Upheld
Complaint overview		
<p>Complaint regarding the refusal to grant two, separate, individual mooring licenses. The Customer also complained that contact with Council officers had not received a response, and that the management of mooring licences, generally, is unsatisfactory.</p>		
Changes and improvements made		
<p>The following are the Independent Complaint Investigator's recommendations and actions in relation to this complaint. All recommended actions have been completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended both the Mooring Licence and the Mooring Agreement • Improved complaints procedure to ensure all actions and conversations are recorded. Better time keeping on response times and manager kept update to with the progress. • The Tree Officer meet with the Customer in November 2014 • Complainant has now escalated complaint to Local Government Ombudsman. Currently preparing submission of evidence/ case. 		

Estates and Facilities - Independent Complaints Investigator (ICI) 1

Directorate	Service	Decision
Customer and Community Services	Estates and Facilities	Upheld
Complaint		
The customer complained that repairs notified to the Council had not been made as agreed, or within the Council's agreed timeframes; that email complaints had not been responded to with the promptness required by the Council's complaints procedure and the complaint has not been escalated properly.		
Comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complainant was visited by the E&F Operations Manager and all matters were discussed in detail prior to an apology being tendered and accepted • Ongoing review of all outstanding repairs orders (where works not addressed at first visit) is carried out by Repairs Team Leader on a daily basis • All complaints are centrally logged and complaints responses, tracked and collated by single point admin position • All staff regularly re-briefed on complaints logging and management procedures 		

Estates and Facilities - Independent Complaints Investigator (ICI) 2

Directorate	Service	Decision
Customer & Community Services	Estates and Facilities	Upheld
Complaint Overview		
The Customer reported on-going concerns regarding the management of asbestos in their domestic, residential property - including both the identification, and the removal of asbestos; failure to record the presence of asbestos on the MICAD register; failure to respond appropriately to the complainant; and failure to instruct properly the contractor who was commissioned to remove the asbestos.		
Changes and improvements made		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the HSE enquired, following direct contact by the customer no concerns were raised by the HSE who were satisfied with the CCC management of asbestos containing materials. • The in-house works team have now transferred to electronic works orders (Via PDA) which includes automatic reference to all relevant/current asbestos data prior to work. • Process established so that where no asbestos register information is provided when an operative receives a works order via PDA, then Operative instructed to seek advice from manager before proceeding. If relevant to work then asbestos survey is ordered by the manager but if not then work can proceed. • All Operatives receive annual re-training in recognition and management of asbestos containing materials. • Compensation was paid as recommended. • The removal of asbestos is not a statutory requirement. CCC as landlord has a duty to manage but not to remove asbestos unless justified. 		

Estates and Facilities - Independent Complaints Investigator (ICI) 3

Directorate	Service	Decision
Customer and Community Services	Estates and Facilities	Upheld
Complaint Overview		
The initial complaint was regarding the noise nuisance, and disturbance caused by the erection of scaffolding early on a week-end morning. The complainant proceeds that their complaint did not receive a response in its own right, and that the response which was received as a result of the prompting of the Independent Complaints Investigator was not accurate. Finally, the complainant did not receive an answer to a request for information regarding the reason for scaffolding being erected when apparently no work was taking place.		
Changes and improvements made		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complaint arose from works ordered via a sub-contract heating installation contractor for a new boiler at first floor level. The heating contractor arranged for a scaffold to be erected within normal working hours but unfortunately the scaffolding contractor did not adhere to these and arrived on site early on a Saturday morning. This contractor is no longer used. • An unreserved apology was confirmed to the complainant for any inconvenience caused. The delay in responding was caused due to the fact that the original complaint was miss-directed within E&F heating and an unnecessarily long time elapsed before the work was correctly identified and the relevant contractor who had commissioned the scaffold company was identified. This, together with annual leave of staff aware of the work made it difficult to establish full details and to respond in a timely manner. 		

The Local Government Ombudsman, (LGO).

If customers are not satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled they can contact the Local Government Ombudsman's office. The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and other bodies.

In 2014-15 the Local Government Ombudsman received 16 enquiries and complaints, of those 3 not upheld and 4 were upheld.

Department	No of Complaints	Decision
Benefits & Tax	2	Referred back for local resolution
Environmental Services	3	Closed after initial enquiries
Highways & Transport	1	Closed after initial enquiries
Housing	6	2 Upheld
Planning	4	2 Upheld
Total	16	-

Comments from Planning relating to upheld Complaints:

Two complaints were made to the LGO about a planning matter where the decision to grant planning permission by an area committee had been made without all material information being put before members. When the planning service became aware of this they apologised to all parties and took the planning application back to committee for further consideration. Processes and procedures were revised and changes introduced to avoid this happening in future. The LGO found maladministration but praised the council for being proactive in addressing the issues without being requested to do so by them.

Comments from Housing relating to upheld Complaints:

The first complaints was with regards to failing to take a homelessness application early enough. Staff received legal training around when we have a duty to take homelessness applications and tighter casework monitoring/reporting to ensure that there are clear actions and deadlines for homelessness cases that exceed 33 working days.

The second complaint was with regards to the length of taken to process the application once in had been taken. We have introduced a better system for monitoring households in bed and breakfast and one that reports on families that have been in bed and breakfast for 2 weeks and on a weekly basis thereafter to ensure that we identify alternative accommodation before the 6 week stage is reached. A procedure has been agreed on circumstances when the interim accommodation duty may be ended and a staff briefed on this procedure.

Both of the complaints have been reported to Housing Committee with a detailed report on actions taken by the service.

Yearly comparison 2009 – 2015

Year	Total Complaints Received	Change %
2014-15	16	0
2013-15	16	+56
2012-13	7	-65
2011-12	20	+5
2010-11	19	-40
2009-10	32	-

Complaints under the Councilors' Code of Conduct

Councillors must adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct whenever they are conducting Council business, representing the Council or conducting the business of the office to which they were elected. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure high standards of ethics and conduct are maintained and that Councilors treat everybody in an equal capacity and with respect, ensuring at all times that the integrity of the Council is not compromised in any way.

Complaints about councillors are considered initially by the Council's Monitoring Officer (who is also the Head of Legal Services). When he receives a complaint about breach of the Code of Conduct, he consults one of two "Independent Persons" appointed by the Council. The role of the "Independent Persons" is to introduce external scrutiny of the complaints process. The Monitoring Officer can respond to a complaint, can commission a formal investigation or can refer it for consideration by the Council's Standards Sub-Committee. The Council's Standards Sub-Committee is made up of three councillors.

During 2014-15, the Council received four complaints about the conduct of councillors. One of the complaints was rejected, one was not pursued by the complainant, one could not be considered as the subject of the complaint had ceased to be a councillor and one was resolved without the need for a finding, following the acceptance of an apology by the complainant.

The first complaint related to comments reported in the press and made via Twitter about safety in the City Centre. The complainant considered that the comments were disrespectful and prejudiced with regard to people who visited the City Centre in the evening. The Monitoring Officer concluded that the words complained of did not bear the meaning attributed to them and were robust comments of the kind that one might expect a councillor to make about a matter of public interest. The complaint was rejected.

The second complaint related to comments made to or about an individual via Twitter. Before it was possible to consider the complaint, the May 2014 elections led to the councillor concerned ceasing to hold office. The Council has no jurisdiction over former councillors in respect of breaches of the Code of Conduct. Had it been possible to consider the complaint, the main issue was likely to be whether the subject of the complaint had been acting as a councillor or acting in a personal capacity when sending the tweets. The Code of Conduct only applies to councillors when they are acting or purporting to act as councillors.

The third complaint was part of a more general complaint about the Council's conduct of a planning enforcement investigation. The complaint included allegations that a councillor had trespassed on private property and had given instructions without authority to a contractor. The Monitoring Officer wrote to the complainant and asked whether they wished to pursue a formal complaint against the councillor. No reply was received and the complaint against the councillor was closed.

The fourth complaint related to a comment about the complainant in an email sent by a councillor to a relative of the complainant. When the complaint was drawn to the attention of the councillor, the councillor offered an apology to the complainant, which was accepted. There was therefore no need to pursue the complaint further.

There were three complaints in 2011/12, two complaints in 2012/13 and three complaints in 2013/14.

To find out more about the Council's Code of Conduct and how to make a complaint about a councillor go to

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions>

or contact the Council's Monitoring Officer, Simon Pugh (simon.pugh@cambridge.gov.uk).