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| 6 September 2023 | | ITEM: 10 |
| Standards and Audit Committee | | |
| Annual Complaints & Enquiries Report – 2022/2023 | | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | Key Decision: Not Applicable | |
| Report of: Lee Henley - Strategic Lead Information Management | | |
| Accountable Assistant Director: Not Applicable | | |
| Accountable Director: Jackie Hinchliffe – Director of HR, OD & Transformation | | |
| This report is: Public | | |

Executive Summary

- Complaints performance provides clear indicators of quality-of-service delivery and customer responsiveness. In the context of intervention, improvement and recovery insight from the data gives both a baseline for measuring improvement and a foundation for target setting. Going forward consideration will be given to the governance arrangements for complaints annual reporting as part of the development of a corporate Performance Management and Assurance Framework, which will establish the appropriate mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability and insight.
- The number of complaints received for the reporting period is 1717. For the same period last year, the figure was 1562, therefore the reporting period represents an increase of 155 complaints received (10%)
- Details of the top 10 complaint areas are detailed within Appendix 1.
- A summary for Adult Social Care complaints is attached as Appendix 2.
- A summary for Children Social Care complaints is attached as Appendix 3.
- Ombudsman decisions are set out in Appendix 4
- During the reporting period, 47% of complaints were upheld. This is an increase compared to the same period last year, which identified 39% of complaints as upheld.

- For the reporting period, 83% of complaints were responded to within timeframe. This is below the 90% target and represents a dip in performance from last year, where 87% were responded to within timeframe.
- A total of 320 MP enquiries were received, of which 86% were responded to within timeframe. This represents improved performance compared to last year's figures of 82% within timeframe from 286 received.
- A total of 4142 member enquiries were received, with 94% responded to within timeframe. Last year the council received 4336 enquiries with 94% responded to within timeframe. The average time taken to respond to members enquiries across all Directorates was 5 days.
- The council received 1261 external compliments within the reporting period compared to 1565 during last year.

1. Recommendations

1.1 That Standards and Audit Committee consider and note the report

2. Introduction and Background

This report sets out the council's complaints statistics for 2022/23.

Adult Social Care (ASC) and Children's Social Care (CSC) have separate statutory complaints procedures.

The top 10 complaint themes have been produced and are attached as Appendix 1. The Complaints Team work with services to establish the root cause for complaints received, to identify reasons for complaint escalations and to establish the reasons why complaints are upheld.

2.1 Ombudsman Enquiries and/or compensation payments

There were 37 Ombudsman decisions within the reporting period with 13 findings of fault. Appendix 4 details a summary of enquiries where the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and/or the Housing Ombudsman have reached a final decision on cases within the reporting period.

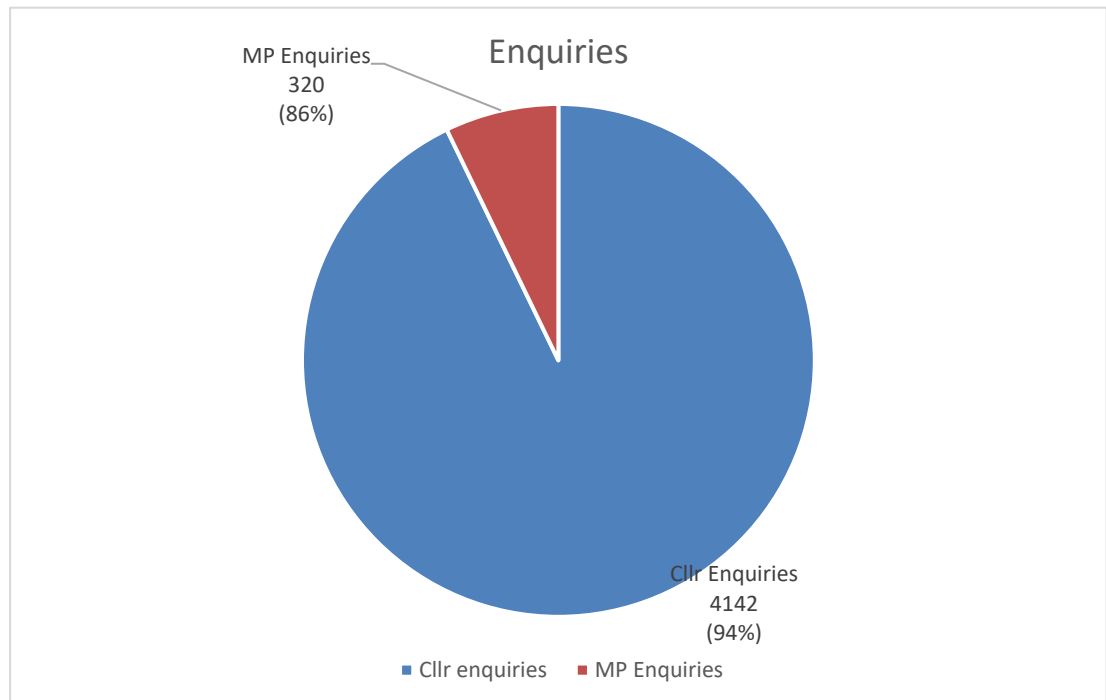
In addition to Ombudsman decisions, £1,337 was paid out or offered by the council (or its contractors) as a form of complaint resolution across 16 Stage 2 complaints.

2.2 MP and Members Enquiries

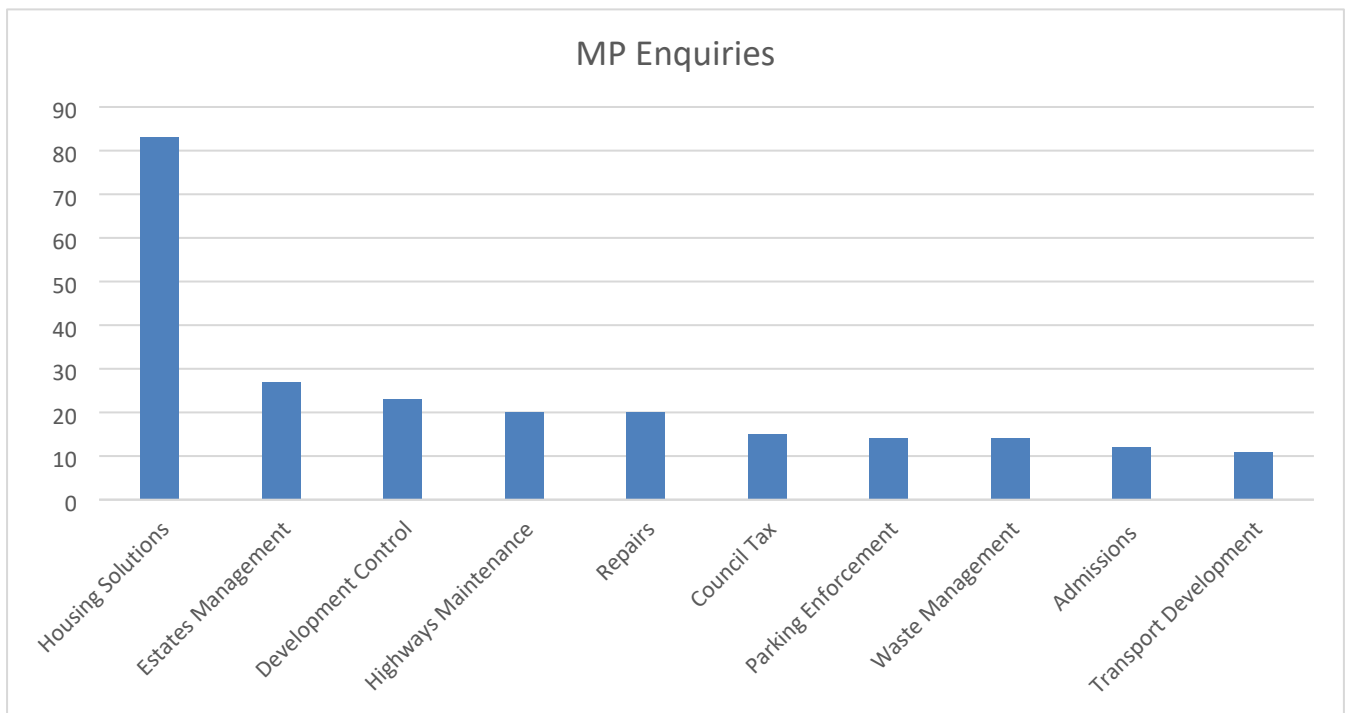
During the reporting period enquiries were received as follows:

- 4142 member enquiries were received, with 94% responded to within timeframe. The average time taken to respond to members enquiries across all Directorates was 5 days.

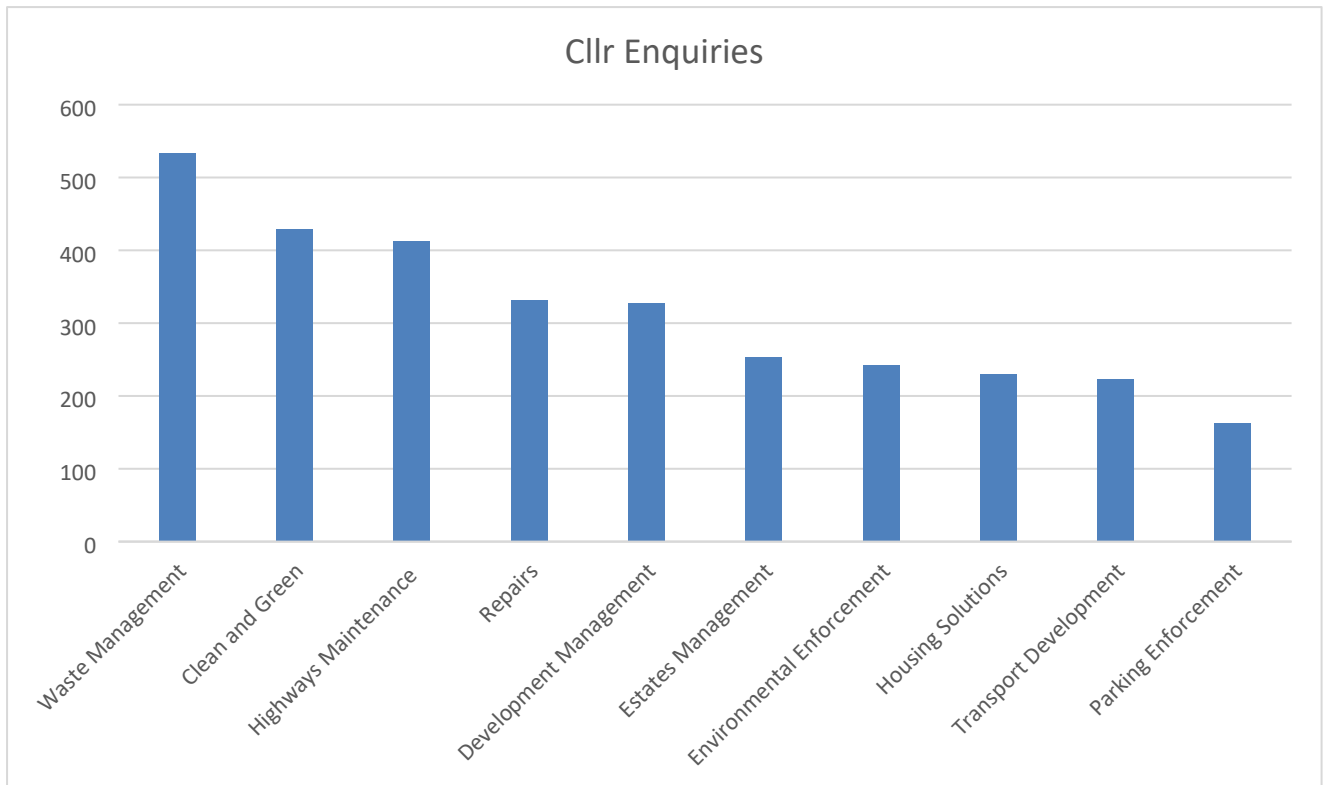
- A total of 320 MP enquiries were received, of which 86% were responded to within the timeframe.



MP enquiry trends and common themes are outlined below:



Councillor enquiry trends and common themes are outlined below:



2.3 Learning lessons from complaints

The most important aspect of any complaints management framework is the ability to demonstrate that the council can show evidence that it is learning from complaints received. Appendix 1 shows the top 10 complaint themes and a summary of high-level learning from upheld complaints which has been identified for each area.

2.4 Social Care Complaints & Representations

Appendix 2 provides a summary dashboard for Adult Social Care.

Appendix 3 provides a summary dashboard for Children's Social Care.

2.5 Complaint channels

There are various means for complainants to register expressions of dissatisfaction and the table below details how complaints were received:

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|--|-----|
| Digital channel (email, social media, website) | 93% |
| Telephone | 6% |
| Others – Letter or In-person | 1% |

2.6 Compliments

The council received 1261 external compliments within the reporting period compared to 1565 from last year. A breakdown is shown below:

Notes:

- The high volume shown for Strategy, Engagement & Growth are in the main due to compliments received via our contact centre call handling satisfaction surveys
- The table below is set out on the council structure that was in place for the first 6 months of 2022/23 and not on interim structures that have been subsequently put in place

| Area | Volume |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Strategy, Engagement & Growth | 818 |
| Adult Social Care | 208 |
| Libraries | 6 |
| Housing | 85 |
| Public Realm | 68 |
| Education | 46 |
| Childrens Social Care | 25 |
| HR, OD & Transformation | 3 |
| Resources & Place Deliver | 2 |
| Total | 1261 |

3 Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 There are no options associated with this paper.

4 Reasons for recommendations

4.1 This report is for noting purposes. There are no recommendations requiring approval.

5 Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 This report was sent to Senior Leadership Team.

6 Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 Complaints impact on the council's priority of delivering excellence and achieving value for money.

6.2 The complaints process seeks to create a culture of corporate learning from best practice from listening to our customers and by acting on complaints. All complaints received must have learning applied if the complaint outcome is upheld.

6.3 The complaints process aims to improve customers' and users' experience of accessing council services. This will support our customer services strategy.

- 6.4 Going forward consideration will be given to the governance arrangements for complaints annual reporting as part of the development of a corporate Performance Management and Assurance Framework which is an action within the council's Improvement and Recovery Plan. The framework will establish the appropriate mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability and insight.

7 Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director Finance

The financial implications are set out in the body of the report. Corporate Learning from complaints will reduce further exposure to financial consequences by improving core processes and services.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Governance Lawyer & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Given that this is an update report for noting there are no legal implications directly arising from it. The following points should be noted by way of background information:

- Both the Courts and the Local Government Ombudsman expect complainants to show that they have exhausted local complaints / appeal procedures before commencing external action.
- The implementation of our learning from complaints and listening to our residents should lead to a reduction of complaints received and a reduction in those going to the Ombudsman or the Courts.
- Social Care for Adult and Children are required to follow a separate procedure stipulated by the Department of Health (DOH) and Department for Education & Skills (DFES).
- Regular reports on the council's performance in responding to complaints, assists the council to ensure that it complies with its best value duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Strategic Lead Community Development and Equalities

There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report. Individual complaints that include an equality related expression of dissatisfaction are considered by the service alongside all complaints.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e., Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

None

8 Background papers used in preparing the report

Information has been obtained from the council's complaints system.

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Top 10 complaint themes
- Appendix 2 – Adult Social Care complaint dashboard
- Appendix 3 – Children Social Care complaint dashboard
- Appendix 4 – Ombudsman decisions

Report Author:

Lee Henley – Strategic Lead Information Management