

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25 June 2025

Communities Directorate Customer Feedback Annual Report

1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Recommendation

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the contents of this Report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is the annual customer feedback report for services within the Communities Directorate covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Please note that feedback related to the Fire and Rescue Service is excluded from this report and will be addressed separately in the annual report to the Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 The report summarises compliments, complaints, and comments received by services within the directorate including learning and service improvement. Data, trends, and themes have been compared over the last two years.
- 1.3 In January 2024, a new customer feedback system was implemented to log all feedback received by Warwickshire County Council. This system is now fully embedded. As a result, raising and tracking complaints is simpler for customers, and complaint handling is streamlined. Managers now have richer data and enhanced reporting to identify patterns and causes, enabling efficient issue resolution. Additionally, a central logging process for compliments was introduced in 2024/25 and is managed by the Customer Relations team.
- 1.4 At an organisational level:
 - Overall feedback received is continuing to reduce and in 2024/25 it was at its lowest over the last five years at 2147 cases.
 - Complaints decreased by 43% from 1520 in 2023/24 to 869 in 2024/25.
 - Compliments increased by 43% from 454 in 2023/24 to 650 in 2024/25.
 - Comments increased by 89%, from 218 in 2023/24 to 628 in 2024/25. These are requests for a service or information from customers that require a response from the relevant service. They only become a complaint if they are not handled appropriately and within the agreed timescale.

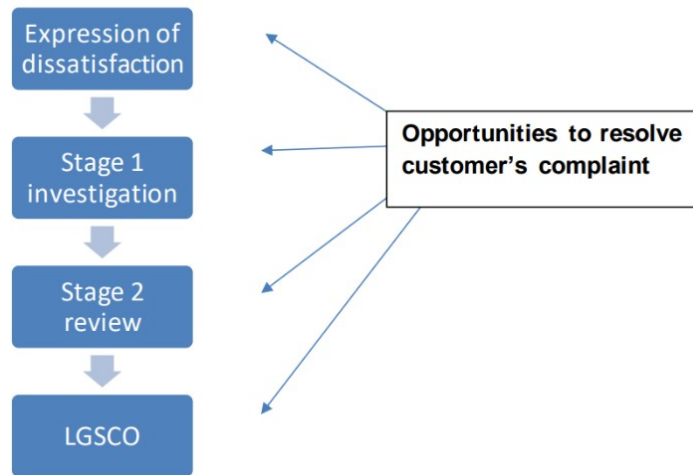
- 1.5 In the Communities Directorate:
- Complaints have decreased from 565 in 2023/24 to 257 in 2024/25. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
 - Compliments have increased from 45 in 2023/24 to 179 in 2024/25.
 - Comments have increased from 64 in 2023/24 to 259 in 2024/25.
- 1.6 Identifying, actioning, recording, and sharing lessons learnt is crucial for improving customer experience with council services. This process allows staff to reflect on how cases could have been better handled and apply these insights for future improvements. Examples of actions taken include a review of problems encountered at the start of the new school term in home to school transport, a review of the disability parking decision process and managing customers' expectations better at Stage 1 of the complaints process.

2. Corporate Complaints Process

- 2.1 The Council's values all feedback, especially complaints, ensuring they are handled fairly, consistently, and within the set timescales. Efficient handling of feedback with a focus on learning and improvements is emphasised. Detailed procedures are outlined in.

[Warwickshire County Council's Complaints Policy](#).

- 2.2 The policy, developed in line with best practices and legislation, defines a Complaint as: "... any expression of dissatisfaction with a service that the Council (or one of its partners or contractors) has provided, and that requires a response."
- 2.3 If a complainant remains dissatisfied after exhausting all stages of the complaints process, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). While the LGSCO can be accessed at any point, they typically allow the Council to process the complaint through all stages first. Complaints referred back to the Council by the LGSCO are considered 'premature' complaints. Notably, this Council has a very low upheld complaint rate on the Oflog metric compared to other councils.



3. Analysis of customer feedback received during 2024/25.

- 3.1 Feedback can be shared by customers through an online portal, by telephone, by post or via email and it is categorised into complaints, compliments, and comments. Questions from the public are not recorded on the system but are dealt with directly by the appropriate service.
- 3.2 The following analysis covers data, trends and themes compared over the last two years.

Feedback cases –All Council Services

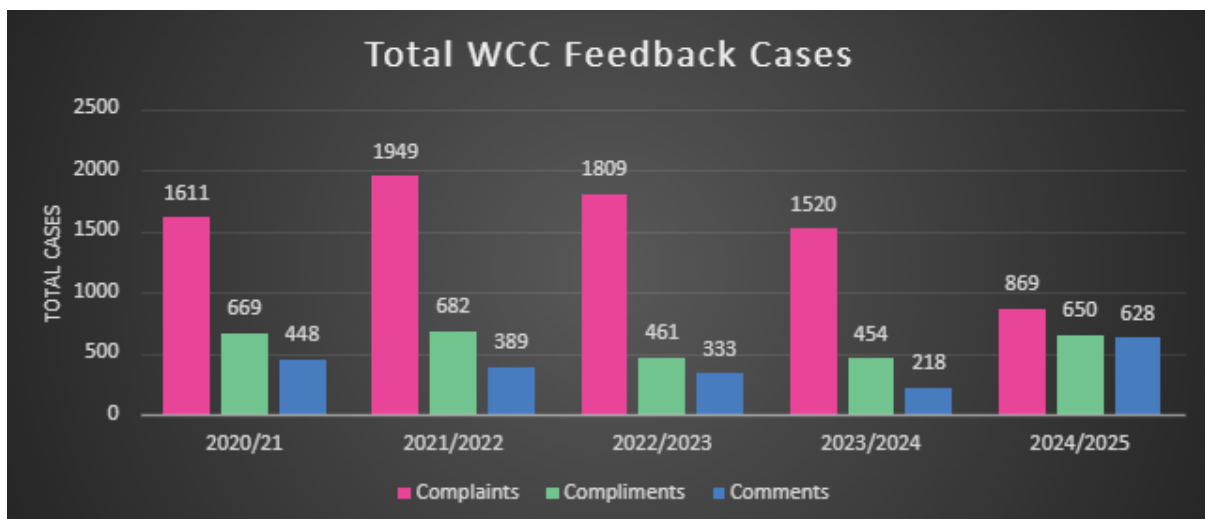


Figure 1: Number of complaints, compliments and comments received from 2020/21 to 2024/25 across all WCC services.

Overall cases

- 3.3 The total number of feedback cases raised has decreased by 45 cases, from 2192 in 2023/24 to 2147 in 2024/25, representing a 2% reduction. This decrease aligns with the trend of reducing cases over the last 3 years. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)

Complaints

- 3.4 The number of complaints decreased by 651 cases, from 1520 in 2023/24 to 869 in 2024/25, a decrease of 43%. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
- 3.5 The significant reduction in complaints this financial year is likely due to targeted training in complaints handling and improvements in our processes, including a clearer understanding of what constitutes a "complaint." This is proven by the increase in comments numbers, which is how service requests are logged on the customer feedback system.

As per policy a service request is:

Requests for service or information – initial requests alert us to something we need to respond to and only become a complaint if we do not deal with them appropriately and within the agreed timescale.

This aligns with the definition of a complaint as set out in the new Complaint Handling Code which was published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in February 2024 and which local authorities are expected to have regard to.

Comments

- 3.6 The total number of comments over the last two years increased by 188% from 218 in 2023/24 to 628 in 2024/25. This is due to improvements in the identification of service requests, and these being classified as comments. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
- 3.7 Compared to the previous system, the new customer feedback system, introduced in January 2024, allows for reassignment of cases to the correct feedback category, providing a more accurate reflection of customer feedback. Previously, cases had to remain in the initial category entered by the customer, resulting in service requests being recorded as complaints instead of comments.

Compliments

- 3.8 The number of compliments has significantly increased from 454 in 2023/24 to 650 in 2024/25 an increase of 43%. This is attributed to a new central logging system and the introduction of a compliments email address for WCC. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)

Complaints per population analysis

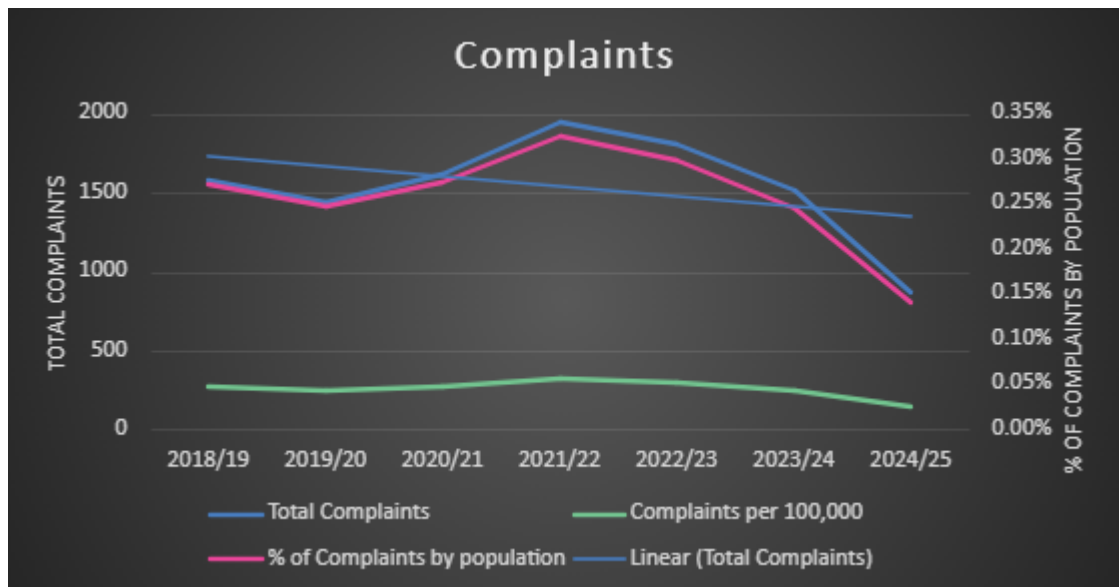


Figure 2: Trends in Complaints from 2018/19 to 2024/25, using 2023 ONS population data.

- 3.9 When the total number of complaints are analysed per 100,000 population, the complaint rate for 2024/25 is 0.14%. Figure 2 illustrates a steady decline over the last three years from 0.30% in 2022/23. This analysis is based on 2023 data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), as 2024 data is not yet available.

Feedback cases over time - Communities Directorate

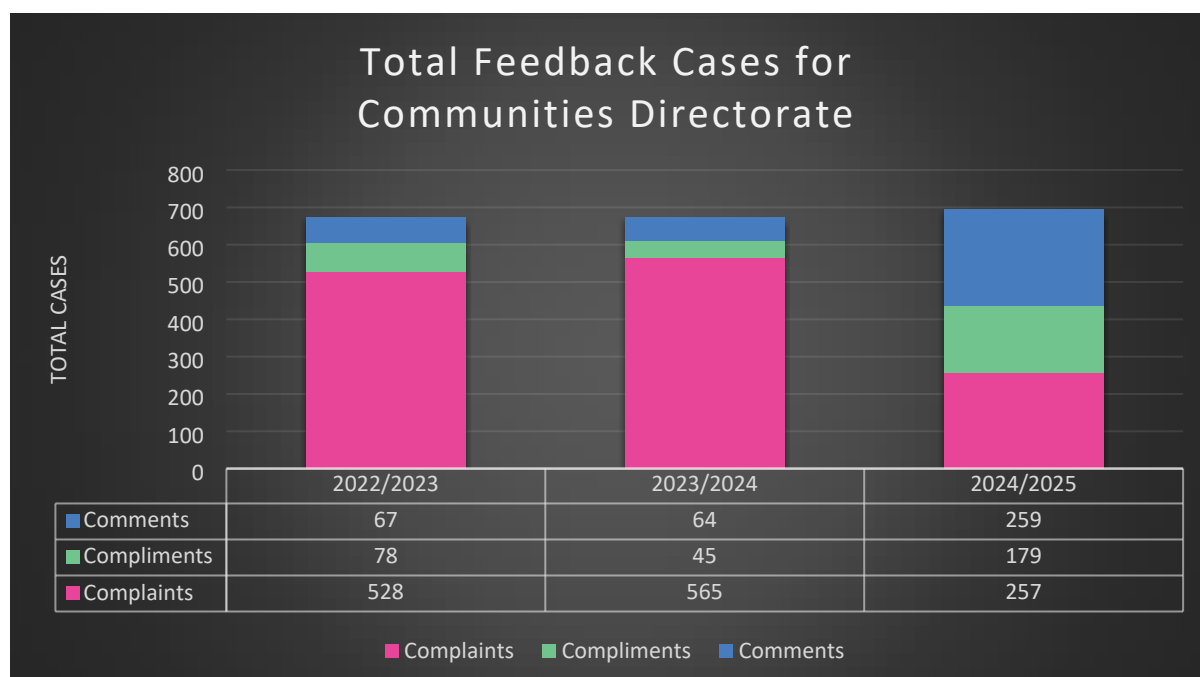


Figure 3: Number of cases assigned to Communities Directorate by type from 2022/23 to 2024/25.

Complaints

3.10 In the Communities Directorate, the overall number of complaints has decreased 565 in 2023/24 to 257 in 2024/25. This is in line with the organisational trend of decreasing complaint cases over the last 3 years. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)

Compliments

3.11 Compliments have increased from 45 in 2023/24 to 179 in 2024/25. This is attributed to a new central logging system within the Customer Relations team and the introduction of a compliments email address for the Council. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)

Comments

3.12 The number of comments has seen a significant increase from 64 in 2023/24 to 259 in 2024/25. This is due to improvements in the identification of service requests, and these being classified as comments for example, if a person raises a concern about a pothole and this is the first time we have been notified this is raised as a service request. If the same customer raises the concern again this will be raised as a complaint (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)

Complaints data trends by month

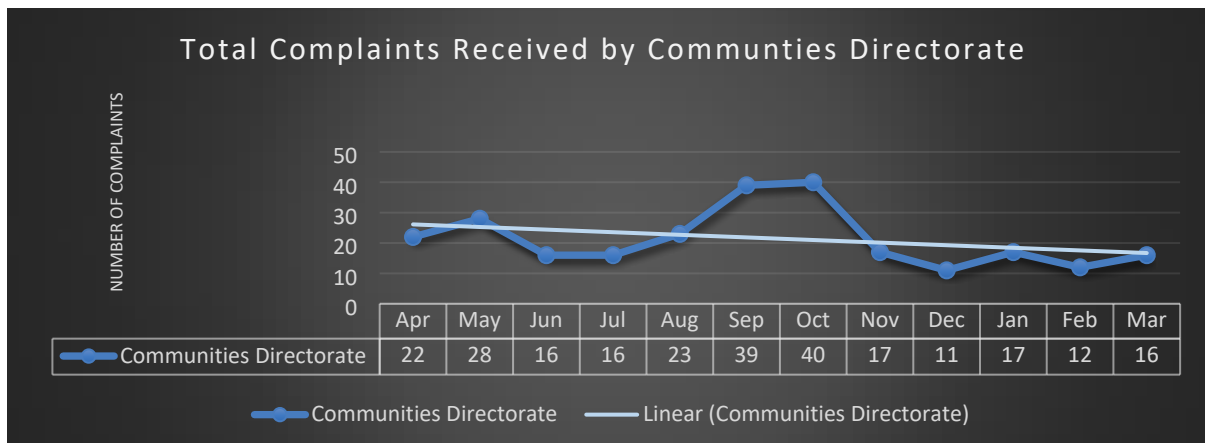


Figure 4: Number of complaints for Communities Directorate by month.

- 3.13 Figure 4 highlights the monthly trend in complaints for 2024/25. The highest number of complaints were received in September and October 2024, with 79 cases raised, representing 31% of new complaint cases reported.
- 3.14 The trend in complaints can be influenced by various factors such as changes in policy, service delivery, or public awareness of how to log complaints. Seasonal trends and specific events can also have an impact. The peak in October correlates with road closures across the county, such as Oakley Wood, resulting in a number of complaints raised against the County Highways team. The influx in September is attributed to the Home to School Transport team (Transport Delivery), as children return to school. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
- 3.15 Complaint numbers decreased in December and February with 11 and 12 cases, respectively.

Initial feedback contact method

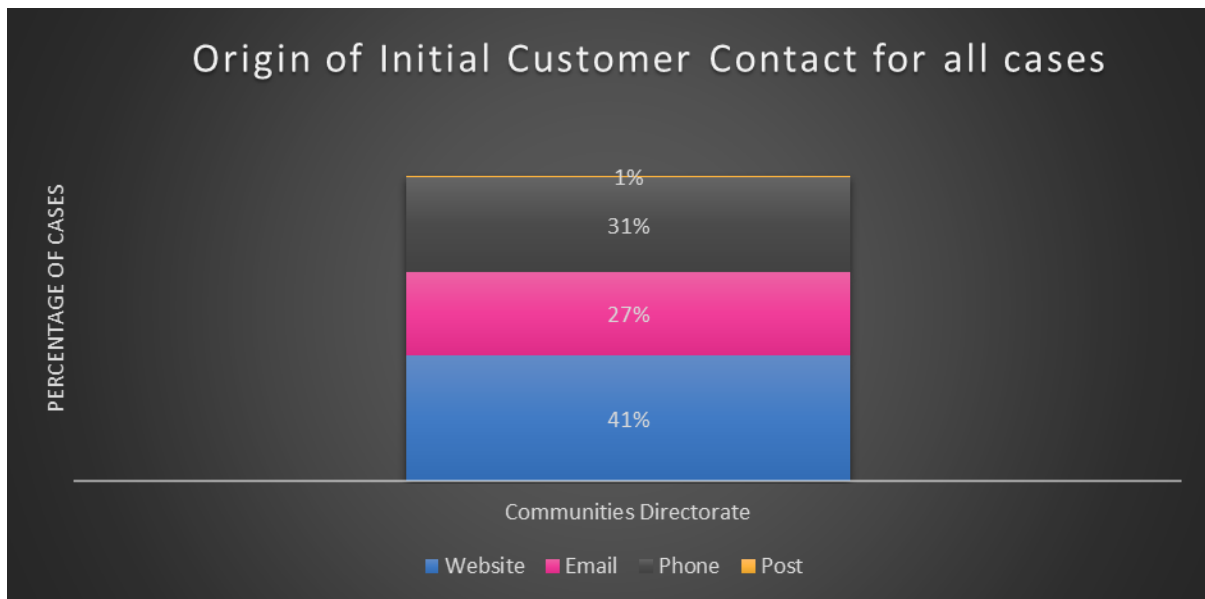


Figure 5: Percentage breakdown of original contact method in the Communities Directorate for complaints, comments, and compliments for 2024/25.

- 3.16 The 'type of initial feedback contact method' data has only been collected since the implementation of the new customer feedback system in January 2024. There is, therefore, no comparative data before this date.
- 3.17 A key observation from the data in Figure 5 is that the majority of Communities complaints (41%) are being raised via the customer feedback system portal on the Council's website. This trend is consistent with last year. Complaints made by phone account for 31%, making it the second highest method of initial contact, followed by email at 27%.
- 3.18 During 2024/25, the Customer Relations team continued to invest time speaking directly to prospective complainants, regardless of how the initial contact was made or the service that their feedback related to. This proactive approach provides an important opportunity to build a trusting relationship with the customer, which is particularly critical when managing more complex complaints. This allows for a more thorough understanding of the concerns raised and desired outcomes, and in turn supports investigating managers to provide more precise and detailed responses.
- 3.19 Talking directly to customers also ensures that where it is appropriate and possible, concerns are resolved without the need to progress to the formal complaints process. This can prove to be a quicker and more beneficial means of resolution for all concerned.

Complaints data for Corporate Stage 2 reviews for all Council services by Directorate

General complaints Stage 2	Cases 2024/25
Children and Families	11
Education	27
Communities	4
Resources	1

Figure 6: Breakdown of general Stage 2 complaints by Directorate across all WCC services for 2024/25.

- 3.20 All initial complaints once triaged (and confirmed as being the correct feedback type and complying with the complaints policy's definitions) are then allocated to the appropriate service area at Stage 1 for local resolution.
- 3.21 As per policy, if a customer remains dissatisfied, they can then request a Stage 2 investigation of the complaint, which is undertaken by the Customer Relations team. This year data has been collected by Directorate and complaints process followed, as shown above in figure 6.
- 3.22 There has been a steady rise in Stage 2 complaints across the Directorates and processes followed, rising from 48 closed cases in 2023/24 to 65 in 2024/25, which equates to a 35% increase. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
- 3.23 The reasons for this increase include the high number of Stage 2 complaints that carried over from 2023/24, which were subsequently closed in 2024/25. Additionally, complaint responses now use a letter/email template that informs residents they can escalate to a Stage 2 review or investigation. This information had not been consistently included in responses previously.
- 3.24 The Customer Relations has worked to reduce the number of Stage 2 reviews, by consulting with services to seek de-escalations, where it is felt that the issue could be resolved informally with complainants before a complaint is accepted at Stage 2. The Customer Relations team refused 7 general reviews in 2024/25 due to the request for a review not meeting WCC complaints policy Stage 2 criteria.
- 3.25 To further reduce the number of complaint cases escalated to Stage 2, it is recommended that services send a more robust response to complainants at Stage 1, which is in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) best practice.
- 3.26 Customers can at any time in the process, approach the LGSCO for them to consider their complaint. The proportion of customers that complain to the LGSCO compared to the total number of customer contacts is small. The annual review and summary of upheld complaints issued by the LGSCO in the financial year 2023/24 was taken to Cabinet on 5 September 2024. The report can be found here:

[Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review and Summary of Upheld Complaints](#)

Complaint categories by subject

3.27 The data in the table below indicates differing trends for service areas in terms of categories of concern, and facilitates more targeted, specific training in each of the services areas.

	2022/23	%	2023/24	%	2024/25	%
Protection of user	8	2%	1	0%	1	0%
Communication	119	23%	127	23%	62	24%
Staff conduct	24	5%	23	4%	18	7%
WCC Service standards	52	10%	37	7%	68	26%
Financial Issues	56	11%	22	4%	7	3%
Physical environment issues	224	42%	99	18%	39	15%
Discrimination	4	1%	4	0%	2	1%
Policy	16	3%	7	1%	7	3%
Commissioned Service Provision	8	2%	7	1%	44	17%
Outside Complaints process	17	3%	238	42%	9	4%
Total	528	100%	565	100%	257	100%

Figure 7: Breakdown of subject categories per service for 2024/25.

3.28 The top categories within the Communities Directorate are:

- Council service standards (26%). This is chosen when the customer believes the Council has not provided a service that they feel they are entitled to.
- Communication (24%). This category is used when customers feel they have not had the expected level of contact with a member of staff. Whilst the percentage has been consistent over the last three years, the number of complaints in this category has decreased significantly from 119 in 2022/23 to 62 in 2024/25.
- Commissioned service provision (15%). This has been used for any complaints that relate to works that are contracted/commissioned to an external provider e.g. Road works or other environmental works.

County Highways, complaints per team

2024/25		% of Communities Total Complaints
County Highways	58	23%
Transport Delivery – Home to School, Social Care Transport	57	22%
County Highways – Network Management	44	17%

Figure 8: Top 3 teams receiving complaints from Communities Directorate for 2024/25.

3.29 Figure 8 above shows that the County Highways team received the highest number of complaints in 2024/25, accounting for 23% of the Communities Directorate’s complaints. The Home to School, Social Care Transport team followed closely with 22%. The team with the third highest number of complaints was County Highways – Network Management with 44 cases, 17% of overall complaints raised. These teams are expected to have the highest number of complaints due to the nature of their work.

3.30 With the introduction of the new customer feedback system in 2024, the opportunity was taken to refine and update teams. This has meant that this analysis is not a direct comparison with previous years e.g. County Highways has been split into eight teams to allow more in-depth analysis.

Remedies

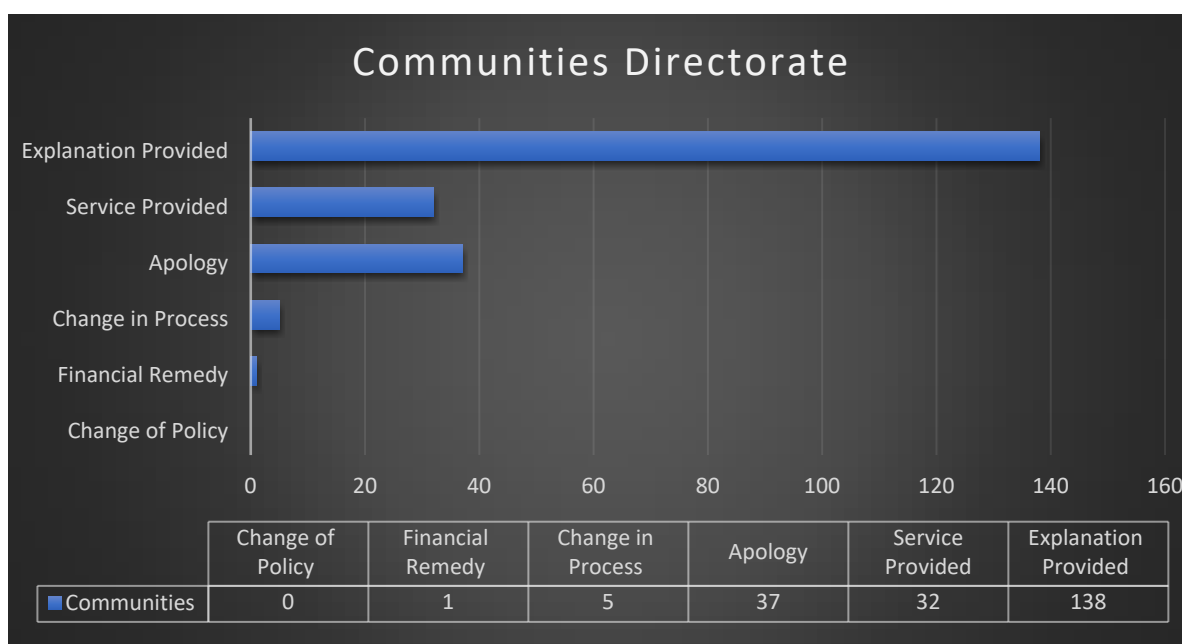


Figure 9: Closed complaint remedies for Community Services in 2024/25. Please note more than one remedy can be selected for an individual case.

- 3.31 When things have gone wrong, the Council has the power to offer remedies to put things right. The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)'s Complaint Handling Code, which the Council has to have regard to, says that organisations should have systems in place to ensure that a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process and should ensure that appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation to stage 2 or the LGSCO. The Code states that any remedies offered should reflect the impact on the individual as a result of any fault identified and organisations should take account of the good practice guides issued by the LGSCO when deciding on appropriate remedies. The LGSCO also has the power to make recommendations to the Council in cases where the LGSCO has investigated and found fault causing injustice. Whilst the LGSCO cannot force the Council to carry out its recommendations, they publish public reports that draw public attention to non-compliance and use reports to draw attention to particularly significant issues of concern. Where such formal reports are issued by the LGSCO, formal action has to be taken by the council in question, including discussing the report at a meeting of members. It is therefore extremely rare for a council not to comply with the LGSCO's recommendations. The LGSCO's recommendations will usually aim to put the complainant back in the position they would have been in, but for the faults they have identified. The LGSCO's guidance on remedies can be found here: [LGSCO Guidance on remedies](#)
- 3.32 Remedies can take many forms, including apologising, taking corrective action to put things right, such as the service provided, a change in process or policy, or a quantifiable financial remedy.
- 3.33 In the Communities Directorate the most frequent remedy provided by the Council was an "explanation provided". This would usually take the form of a fuller, more person-centred explanation, which may include clarifying of the process or language being used. This has remained the top remedy for all previous years. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
- 3.34 "Service provided" ranked second as the most selected remedy by services and is again consistent with previous years. This would be entered when the original service requested via the complaint, has been delivered or granted following the complaint e.g. the service that was late has now been provided. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
- 3.35 An apology ranked third as the most used remedy. Recently, the Customer Relations team provided training to services emphasising that apologies should be a "matter of course" for all upheld complaints. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
- 3.36 To note, the new customer feedback system allows multiple remedies for different stages of the complaint, so there may have different remedies applied at different points e.g. Stage 1 ends with an apology, Stage 2 may end up with financial remedy.

Outcomes

- 3.37 Categories of outcomes have changed in the new feedback system to improve data accuracy. For example, previously a case may have initially been recorded as a complaint but later closed as a “question answered” once clarification was received from the member of public. However, it would have remained recorded as a complaint as this is what it was initially categorised as. The new feedback system allows for a reallocation if the wrong feedback type was initially selected, and outcomes are only recorded against complaints.
- 3.38 The categories have been analysed in respect of the three standard reportable categories “upheld, not upheld and partially upheld” and excludes complaints in the old system that were closed as “questions answered” and any withdrawn complaints, which is why the percentages calculate to less than 100%. This data has been analysed from both systems.

Top 3 Outcomes	2024/25	%
Not Upheld	99	43%
Upheld	47	20%
Partially Upheld	45	19%

Figure 10: Complaints closed by outcome in the Communities Directorate (excluding withdrawn complaints).

- 3.39 During 2024/25, the most common category was “not upheld”, indicating that 43% of complaints (99 cases) had no failings identified following an investigation. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)
- 3.40 The second highest outcome was “upheld”, accounting for 20% of complaints (47 cases), which indicates after investigation some failings have been identified and a recommendation in the form of remedy and/or service improvement is likely to have been implemented. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)

Timescale compliance

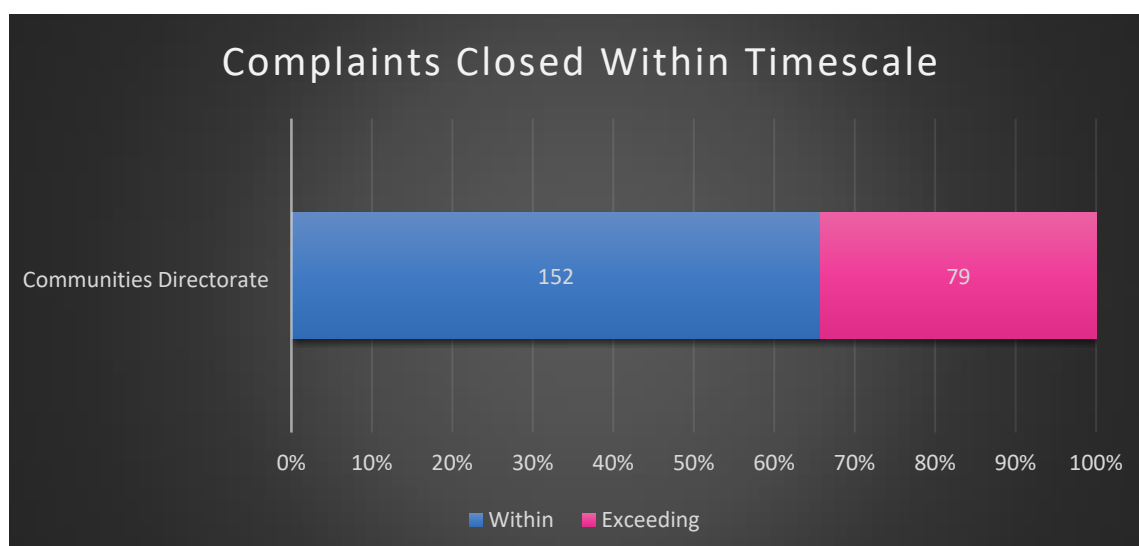


Figure 11: timescales for closed complaints for Communities Directorate for 2024/25.

- 3.41 Timescales are different and dependent on the type of complaint type and process followed. The relevant timescales for each type of complaint are covered in the Council's Complaints Policy and associated Procedures.
- 3.42 There has been a decrease in the number of complaints resolved within specified timescales, dropping from 86% in 2023/24 (472 cases) to 66% in 2024/25 (152 cases). Further targeted work is required with services to emphasise the importance of timely complaint resolution. (See Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.)

Lessons learnt and actions taken to improve services.

- 3.43 Identifying, actioning, recording, and sharing of 'lessons learnt' is critical in improving customer experience with Council services. It is an opportunity for staff to reflect on how that case could have been prevented/gone better and how, the Council, can improve in future cases. These lessons are used for learning and training purposes for not only the team who have managed the case, but also for the wider council.
- 3.44 Examples of lessons learnt, and actions taken from past cases within the Communities Directorate include:
- Disability parking decisions process review.
 - Managing expectations at Stage 1.
 - A review of problems encountered at the start of the new school term in Home to School Transport has been undertaken and lessons learnt that

are being applied this year which should minimise the problems of late and missing applications that we struggled within in 2024/25.

3.45 The Customer Relations team have also implemented several actions organisationally and specifically for the Communities Directorate following feedback from customers and operational services. These include:

- **Directly Addressing Customer Complaints:** Letter templates have been updated to encourage addressing complaints point by point and now include an investigation outline.
- **Policy and Template Accessibility:** All relevant policies and letter templates are now uploaded onto the system for each case, providing services with a clearer understanding of the relevant policy and how to write a good response letter.
- **Complaint Type Determination:** The Customer Relations team now decide the complaint type, allowing local services to be guided by the Customer Relations Officer's expertise on not only the Council's policy but also Central government and where relevant, LGSCO guidance.
- **Service Request Understanding:** The Customer Relations team have been trained to understand what constitutes a service request and have implemented this learning effectively, as shown in the number of comments and fewer complaints.
- **Training in Policy Exclusions:** The Customer Relations team have been retrained on WCC policy exclusions, such as complaints about councillors which are dealt with the Monitoring Officers and complaints about data protection or information governance matters as these are dealt with by the Data Protection Officers. This practice has proven effective in managing customer expectations at the point of contact.
- **Internal Reviews:** General reviews are now primarily undertaken by the Customer Relations team rather than commissioned to external persons, reducing service costs, and ensuring better team relationships.
- **System Training:** All system users have been offered a service-wide training session on how to use the system, with an additional session following recent system changes.
- **Real-time data:** Directors now have access to the internal BI dashboard, allowing real-time analysis of complaints and adherence to timescales.
- **Quality Assurance Process:** Customer services have piloted a quality assurance process for Stage 1 complaints with the SEND service, resulting in fewer Stage 2 escalations and the upskilling of a new staff member responsible for complaints.

- **Improved Accessibility:** The Customer Contact team recently launched SignLive, a 24/7 British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting service, to ensure deaf and hard-of-hearing people can contact the Customer Service Centre by phone.

Improvements planned for 2025/26.

3.46 The following improvements are planned for 2025/26:

- **Complaints Policy Review:** Ensure the existing policy is compliant with the new LGSCO Complaint Handling Code.
- **One-to-One Complaints Sessions:** Provide ad-hoc case guidance through one-to-one sessions between the Customer Relations team and internal services.
- **Letter Writing Training:** Offer training for internal services on Stage 1 letter writing, including LGSCO best practice guidance.

4.0 Benchmarking

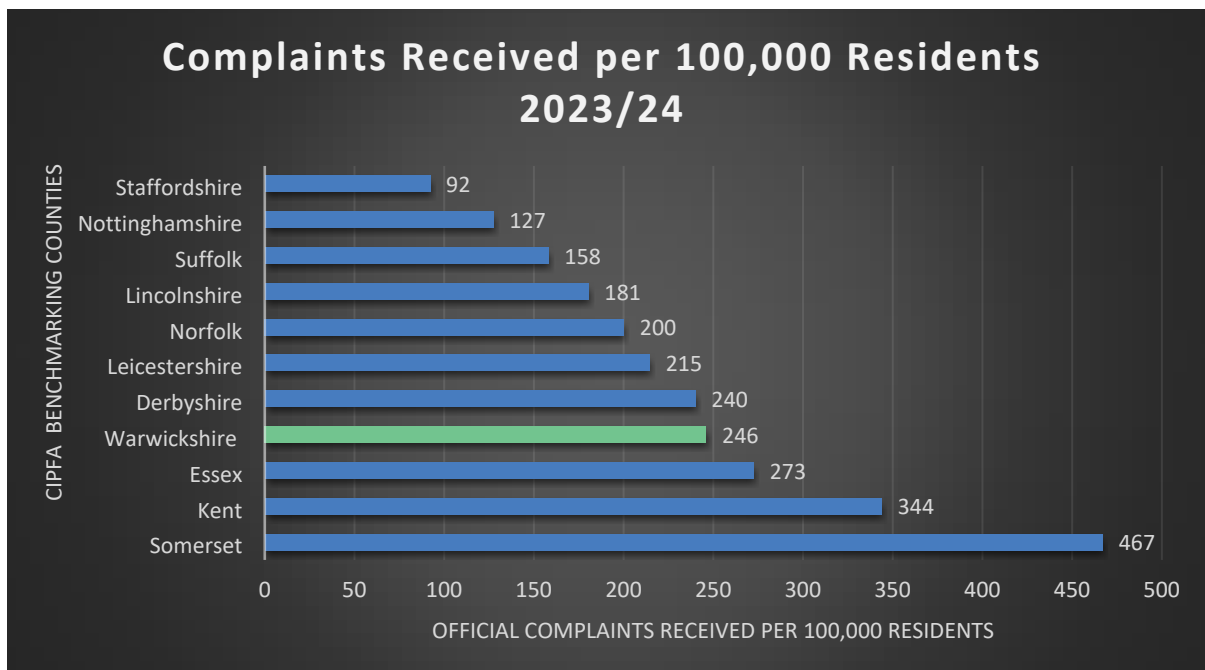


Figure 127: Complaints received per 100,000 residents (2023 ONS Data) from CIPFA benchmarking counties 2023/24.

4.1 This year’s feedback report includes benchmarking data regarding the number of complaints for all Council services per 100,000 residents. This enables comparative analysis across Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) benchmarking counties, although the data in Figure 11 relates to the previous reporting period 2023/24, as current data is not yet available.

4.2 The 2023/24 data indicated that at 246 complaints per 100,000 residents the council needed to make improvements in overall complaint numbers compared to similar local authorities.

4.3 In 2024/25, as outlined in this report, there has been a significant reduction in complaints, resulting in an improved statistic of 141 complaints per 100,000 residents in Warwickshire. How this figure compares to other counties can only be determined once their 2024/25 complaints data is published, so conclusions regarding the Council’s relative improvement cannot yet be drawn.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report

6. Environmental Implications

6.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 Communities OSC Feedback Data.

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Ruth Rollings Service Manager – Customer Relations (Complaints Manager)	ruthrollings@warwickshire.gov.uk
	Corrin Harding Quality Standards & Business Improvement Officer	corrinharding@warwickshire.gov.uk
	Lewis Adamo Data Analyst – HR & Customer	lewisadamo@warwickshire.gov.uk
Director	Craig Cusack Director for Enabling Services	craigcusack@warwick.gov.uk
Executive Director	Rob Powell Executive Director for Resources	robpowell@warwick.gov.uk

Portfolio Holder	Councillor Michael Bannister	michaelbannister@warwickshire.gov.uk
------------------	------------------------------	--

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

Local Member(s):

Other members: