

# Customer feedback annual review 2022/2023



We receive a variety of customer feedback – from stage one and two complaints, through to MP enquiries, ombudsman enquiries, and compliments. We see all feedback, and in particular complaints and MP enquiries, as a way of driving change and improvements in the way we deliver services, and the way we communicate with our customers.



This report gives an overview of the feedback we received last year (April 2022 – March 2023). Thank you to all our customers who have taken time to give us feedback this year. If you have any questions, please email our customer services team at [enquiries@lichfielddc.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@lichfielddc.gov.uk)

## Why we've said sorry and what we've done as a result

We issued 16 apologies. This was an increase on 2021/2022 when we issued 14. Below is a summary of why we apologised, and the actions we've taken as a result to help improve our services.

| Why we've said sorry   | What action we've taken  |
|--|--|
| Poor communication by building control.  | We've delivered staff training.  |
| Apologies were issued about long call wait times.  | We're boosting staffing in the customer services team, and we've launched live chat.   |
| Email not logged on system correctly by planning.  | We've delivered staff training.  |
| Apologies were issued in relation to missed bins and poor communication around excess waste. | We've improved our website content.  |
| Slow response by council tax team.   | We're boosting staffing in the team through better use of external funding.  |
| Apologies were issued in relation to slow and poor communication by housing team.            | We've boosted staffing in the team through better use of external funding.   |
| Inaccurate planning condition.   | We delivered staff training on planning conditions.  |
| Waste bin stickers did not contain enough information.                                       | Our communications team will consider this in future communications/bin stickers.  |
| Length of S106 process.  | We're carrying out a review of our s106 processes.   |
| Planning notification letters were not issued.   | We've addressed the issue with printers and put in place new requirements in the council's new print contract.   |
| Handling of planning application at committee.   | A review of the process is underway as part of a wider planning review and further training has been delivered.  |
| Apologies were issued about the attitude of staff in housing.                                | Staff training and call recording is being rolled out, so customers and staff have access to recordings so we can continually review the standards of care we provide. |
| Slow communication by planning enforcement.  | Team has faced resource issues, due to the departure of officers. We've reviewed salaries and recruitment is underway.   |

# Key facts about complaints

'The best authorities use complaints as a barometer of external opinion and as an early warning of problems might otherwise stay unseen. They take that a step further and use critical feedback to drive a sophisticated culture of learning, reflection and improvement.' Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

We received 70 stage one complaints last year, of which 13 were not investigated because they were either withdrawn by the customer or were not about services provided by the council. **This was a significant drop on last year, when 69 complaints were investigated.**

**57**  
**complaints**  
**investigated**

**22 upheld**  
**or**  
**partially**  
**upheld**

Following investigation, **22 stage one complaints were either upheld or partially upheld. In the previous year 14 stage one complaints were upheld or partially upheld, so this is a significant increase on 2021/2022.** Twenty-six complaints were not upheld. This is because, while the customer was not happy with the service they received, or the decision the council made, teams had delivered the services or decisions in line with policy, and poor practice or injustice was not evident.

Four complaints progressed to stage two. **Of the four stage two complaints, one was upheld, one was partially upheld, and two were not upheld.** In the previous year, nine complaints progressed to stage two, and five were upheld or partially upheld, so this is a **significant improvement on the previous year.**

**4 stage two**  
**complaints**

**Most**  
**frequent**  
**complaint**  
**areas**

Waste and street scene (29%), revenues and benefits (14%), planning (14%) and building control (13%) received the most complaints. **Complaints about planning dropped significantly, compared to last year, when 36% of all complaints were planning related – the planning team processed 1,245 planning applications in the same period, so planning complaints represented 0.8% of the team's caseload.** **Operational services also received a spike in complaints linked to the roll out of the new blue bag scheme.**

**76% of stage one complaints were responded to within the target timescales.** Where responses were not issued within 20 working days, customers were kept informed of progress. Stage two complaints were either responded to within the target timescale, or customers were kept updated if the investigation was going to take longer.

**76% in time**

## Key facts about MP enquiries

We received 116 MP enquiries. MP enquiries are often like a complaint, but the customer has used the MP to act on their behalf instead of coming to the council directly. **94% were responded to within target timescales, which is an improvement on the previous year when 86% were processed in a timely manner.**

**116 enquiries investigated**

### 11 key areas of enquiry

MP enquiries covered a wide range of services with the most in housing (25%), planning (18%), environmental health (12%) and joint waste (10%). **Enquiries about pedestrianisation, the new leisure centre and the local plan were also responded to.**

## Key facts about ombudsman enquiries

The ombudsman investigated two complaints that had been through the council's complaints procedure. The complaints were about planning. **There were no complaints investigated and upheld during the previous year that had gone through the council's complaints procedure.**

**Two stage two complaints**

### Six enquiries

The ombudsman received six complaints, including the two stage two complaints detailed above. **Three were closed after initial enquiries, one was passed to the council for local resolution, and two were upheld in parts.** The council issued two apologies. These included for planning notices not reaching neighbouring properties and a review of its third-party mailing arrangements.

## Key facts about compliments

### 45 thank you's received

Our policy defines a compliment as an unsolicited expression of praise or admiration from a customer which is over and above common courtesy. **This year the most complimented service was planning, with 31 compliments.** The next were revenues and benefits, street scene, housing, and environmental health. Compliments ranged from 'excellent service' to one resident feeding back that an officer was 'genuinely the most helpful and understanding person'. **Well done to all the staff involved, and thank you to all our customers for taking time to let us know when we've done a good job. We appreciate it!**

The customer services and digital teams are working to improve the ways in which customers can give their feedback easily and quickly, introducing telephone and web surveys, so that customers have a convenient way to share their views and help improve our services.



## Key facts about freedom of information (FOI) requests

We received 248 freedom of information (FOI) requests. Freedom of information request can range from journalists gathering data for a story from councils nationwide, students carrying out research, or commercial companies finding out when the council may be looking for new suppliers, through to residents wanting more information about a local issue.

248 FOI requests

90% on time

90% of freedom of information requests were responded to on time. Moving forward, the compliance and data protection officer will be working to publish more data sets online through [www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/frequentfois](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/frequentfois), so people can access information themselves without submitting a request, with the overall aim of speeding up the process for customers and reducing the total number of requests handled.

### Looking forward

Over the past few years, complaints have been overseen by the governance team who transformed the way they were managed, monitored response times, and ensured responses were customer centric.

Moving forwards, complaints are now being overseen by customer services, which will help to ensure they are used to challenge service delivery and drive positive change across the organisation as part of our customer focused approach. The customer services team will also be working to help increase the number of complaints responded to on time by simplifying and streamlining processes.

MP enquiries and compliments will also move over to the customer services team during the year, and the team will start to collect outcomes and lessons learned from MP enquiries.

Freedom of information requests will be overseen by the compliance and data protection officer.

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