

Appendix 1 complaints analysis across service areas comparing Q2 and 3 for 2022/23 and 2023/24

	Stage 1 Q2 23/24	Esc to S2 Q2 23/24	Stage 1 Q3 23/24	Esc to S2 Q3 23/24	% total Q2-3 23/24	Response time %	Stage 1 Q2 22/23	Esc to S2 Q2 22/23	Stage 1 Q3 22/23	Esc to S2 Q3 22/23	% total Q2-3 22/23
<b>Shared Service</b>	12	1	16	2	54%	72%	29	1	25	2	69%
Council Tax	7	1	10	2	32%	72%	7	0	10	0	22%
Business rates	1	0	0	0	2%	0%	0	0	0	0	-
Housing Benefit	2	0	0	0	3%	100%	2	0	1	0	4%
Waste Services	2	0	5	0	13%	90%	20	1	13	2	42%
Leisure	0	0	1	0	2%	100%	0	0	1	0	1%
<b>Place</b>	9	3	12	3	40%	83%	4	0	14	5	23%
Planning	7	2	12	3	36%	51%	3	0	11	5	18%
Env Health	1	1	0	0	3%	100%	0	0	2	0	3%
Licensing	1	0	0	0	2%	100%	0	0	0	0	-
Other*	0	0	0	0	-	-	1	0	1	0	1%
<b>Communities</b>	1	0	2	0	6%	100%	3	1	3	1	8%
Housing	1	0	0	0	2%	100%	0	0	0	0	-
Parking	0	0	2	0	3%	100%	2	1	1	0	4%
Countryside	0	0	0	0	0%	-	0	0	1	0	1%
Com Safety	0	0	0	0	0%	-	1	0	1	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	22	4	30	5			36	2	42	8	

\*Other relates to two complaints investigated in 22/23 - Planning Policy Stage 1 in Aug 22 and Highways Stage 1 in Nov 22

Appendix 2 Stage 2 complaint outcomes from Q2 and 3 2023/24

<b>Date</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Outcome set out by investigating Director</b>
July 23	Planning	Misleading or inaccurate response	Not upheld
July 23	Env Health	Inadequate explanation	Not upheld
Aug 23	Planning	Failed to address some or all issues	Not upheld
Sept 23	Council Tax	Promised action wasn't taken	Not upheld
Nov 23	Council Tax	Failed to address some or all issues	Upheld, compensation request refused
Nov 23	Planning	Failed to address some or all issues	Not upheld
Nov 23	Planning	Inadequate explanation	Not upheld, acknowledged decision outside 12 weeks
Nov 23	Council Tax	Disagree with decision	Not upheld
Dec 23	Planning	Disagree with decision	Not upheld, acknowledged premature declaration of application

Appendix 3 learning from upheld complaints from Q2 and 3 2023/24

<b>Team</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary of issue</b>	<b>Learning points</b>
Waste	July	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Details of assisted collection not displaying to crew resulting in missed bin</li> <li>2. Incorrect application of the timescales for reporting missed assisted bin collection</li> <li>3. Serco didn't return bin to the correct location</li> <li>4. Customer service staff rude to complainant when on the call</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BDBC working with Serco to put into place alternative arrangements for resident</li> <li>2. Training to customer service agent who applied incorrect (shorter) timescales with resident</li> <li>3. BDBC working with Serco to put into place alternative arrangement and joint monitoring for one month</li> <li>4. Review of call recording with individual call handler and learning opportunities explored with team</li> </ol>
Licensing	July	Policy not adhered to when investigating the complaint	Training to Licensing Officer who didn't follow procedure
Council Tax	July	Inaccurate date recorded on landlord account resulting in incorrect balance being charged	Training to Officer who didn't follow procedure and reminder to wider team on importance of accuracy
Housing Benefit	July	Housing Benefit incorrectly suspended without warning resulting in shortfall to landlord	Training to Officer who didn't follow procedure and note to supervisor for wider checks
Council Tax	Aug	Incorrect status applied to single person discount for Council Tax	Officer spoken to by manager regarding type of evidence required in this type of case
Council Tax	Oct	Officer applied regulations incorrectly and was short with customer when on the phone	Call reviewed and officer spoken to by manager regarding process and tone of voice
Council Tax	Oct	Advisor was not helpful or informative and negative to resident throughout call	Call reviewed and officer spoken to. Guidance to be reviewed to ensure info is clear for staff
Council Tax	Oct	Delayed communications around refund and then received demand for monies not owed by resident	Training to Officer around change of address process and reminder to wider team
Waste	Oct	Shared bins being returned to the wrong location following collection	Raised with Serco and supervisor has spoken to the crew with monitoring for one month
Council Tax	Oct	Incorrect forwarding address manually applied on system resulting in additional costs	Costs refunded to applicant and system checked for accuracy
Council Tax	Oct	Customer misinformed of outstanding balance, resulting in debt not cleared within deadline set and summons issued	Summons and recovery costs removed. Officer spoken to by manager with reminder issued to wider team
Waste	Oct	Broken glass left in road after waste operatives had visited and collected the bins	Raised with Serco to remind crews of their duty to clean up spills

Appendix 3 learning from upheld complaints from Q2 and 3 2023/24

<b>Team</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary of issue</b>	<b>Learning points</b>
Waste	Nov	Waste bin not collected following report of missed bin within timescales	Raised with Serco and supervisor has spoken to the crew about the location of the bin with monitoring for one month
Waste	Nov	Garden waste not collected, and bin logged on system as "not presented for collection"	GPS checked and issue raised with Serco for operatives to walk to the property to collect bin, subscription extended
Parking	Nov	Parking machine faulty and didn't issue ticket within acceptable timescales	Apologised and confirmed that faulty machines are reported as soon as aware of issue with 48 hour repair

Appendix 4 Final response to LGSCO consultation

Ref	Question	Feedback
1	<p>The joint Code aims to provide a national standard for councils to work to, helping to clarify requirements, simplifying internal processes, and giving assurances to the public and local Members about how complaints must be handled. Does it achieve this?</p>	<p>We support the introduction of a gold standard to complaints handling. It will provide a transparent route for customers to navigate through the process and help the council continue to build on its culture of being helpful, approachable, responsive, and taking responsibility.</p> <p>Hart introduced its new complaints policy in 2022 and largely meets many of the new elements within the code. However, there are certain areas that will place additional burden on the authority.</p> <p>The application of a blanket, one size fits all, approach does cause concerns because there is little in the consultation that demonstrates that there is an overriding need supported by evidence to dispense with the many well run and locally relevant complaints procedures which are tailored to meet the needs of local communities.</p> <p>In our view there is perhaps a need for better guidance but the council, sees little evidence for the need to impose a more prescriptive Code which does not reflect the diversity of local authorities.</p> <p>Overall we believe that the new Code will impose an unnecessary bureaucratic burden on local authorities.</p>
2	<p>The joint Code sets out clear expectations for the level of staffing, oversight and governance for councils to have a good complaint handling service. Do you agree?</p>	<p>The application of the Code is highly bureaucratic and will impose a disproportionate burden on smaller local authorities. It is too prescriptive in this and there is no evidence in the consultation that the draft Code has sought to address the financial and resource impacts on local authorities.</p>
3	<p>The joint Code encourages councils to have a learning culture and improve their complaint handling service. Will it support your council to achieve this?</p>	<p>Not necessarily. The Council already has in place the process and procedures to review complaints. Complaints are already reviewed by both our strategic leadership team and our Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Furthermore the Council reviewed its complaints procedure in 2022.</p>

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		In our opinion the new Code adds little to generate improvement albeit we will need to rewrite our policy and ensure that any new Code is cascaded down the organisation. In our view however, that is unnecessarily as we already have clear policies in place.
4	We believe the joint Code provides a clear definition of what constitutes a complaint and what should be classed as an upheld complaint. Do you agree?	<p>No. We define a complaint as “any expression of dissatisfaction about the way in which we have provided a service”. We feel this use of clear and concise language helps complainants understand the definition. The code’s definition is not clear and concise. It will simply create uncertainty for both complainants and the Council.</p> <p>The removal of partially upheld does mean some complaints will fall between upheld/not upheld. For example, if one minor element of a complaint is agreed but two or more significant areas of the complaint aren’t, this doesn’t feel like the complaint should be upheld in full.</p>
5	The Code encourages organisations to resolve complaints satisfactorily at an early stage and before they come to an Ombudsman. Do you agree?	No. The council has a very practical informal complaints procedure which already resolves complaints without imposing a bureaucratic burden and procedure on complaints or officers. In many instances complainants simply want to understand the council’s actions. Adding a more bureaucratic and formal arrangement imposes an unnecessary burden and creates a greater barrier between the complainant and the council.
6	We will provide further guidance on how the Code should be used by councils. What guidance would you find useful when implementing the Code within your council?	<p>6.14. While “reasonable efforts” are expected to be made, if we are unable to ask the complaint to “explain their reasons” this will present an issue. Guidance around reasonable effort would be appreciated</p> <p>8.2 Guidance on what’s expected on the annual complaints’ performance and service improvement report</p>
7	Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the LGSCO’s intention to introduce this statutory Code, including the decision do this jointly with the Housing Ombudsman?	<p>The council believes that the imposition of a prescriptive Code would not be of any advantage to the customer and indeed creates a bureaucratic and unnecessary burden and barrier on users. If a prescriptive Code is to be imposed, it needs to be clear about what is a complaint and because it intends to be a statutory code there must be no room for ambiguity whatsoever.</p> <p>Before the proposed Code is imposed the Council wishes to see a proper resource impact assessment carried out with a proper impact assessment that balances a one</p>

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		<p>size for all Code relative to local authority size and resources. The Council is unclear about what evidence underpins the need to impose a one size fits all approach.</p> <p>We are disappointed that the new Code does not appreciate to recognise flexibility and local circumstances which are tried and tested in dealing with complaints. This is reflected in the Council's excellent record with the LGO where there is a very low referral record and nil complaints upheld or investigated.</p>
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