

## Complaint performance 2022-23 Quarter 3

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Complaint performance continues to remain low in terms of complaints responded to in agreed timescales. Complaints should be handled within 20 working days although this can be extended by a further 10 working days.

The performance figures are based on those complaints which were due in the period and received a response within 20 working days or 30 working days where an extension was permitted.

Indicator	Annual target	2021-22					2022-23		
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3
Number of complaints received	-	147	107	84	105	443	126	112 99*	66 56*
Number of corporate complaints – dealt with within timescales	90%	53%	68%	34%	30%	49%	29%	31% 36%*	34% 34%*

*\*These are the performance figures excluding Council Tax and Corporate Debt*

The complaint investigator posts within the Information Governance team are responsible for investigating the majority of complaints and where complaints are investigated by a department (i.e. planning / revs and bens / SWISCo), responses are reviewed by the IG team before they are sent to the customer. However, it is important to note that the complaint investigators must work with colleagues across departments and require information from them to carry out an investigation, therefore we are heavily reliant on colleagues across all departments in handling complaints in timescales.

### **Benchmarking:**

As previously advised although data from other authorities has been requested, benchmarking against complaints is not straightforward and the LGSCO advise caution when benchmarking complaints for the following reasons:

- Complaint procedures vary across Local Authorities i.e. one stage / two stages / whether representations / initial enquiries are included in figures)
- A low number of complaints does not necessarily mean customer satisfaction as it could be a low number of complaints is the result of an inaccessible complaints procedure.
- Timescales for responses may differ between LAs
- Different LAs provide different services i.e. district Councils don't have social care / highways.
- Rates and performance may not be calculated the same way.
- Time periods over which performance is reported can be different with some reporting monthly and others quarterly.

Based on the information provided by the small number of LAs who responded to our request, it is reasonable to set a target of 80 – 85% of complaints handled on time.

Below provides a breakdown of performance by service area for those complaints which were due in Q3, overall performance for the quarter was 34% (22 complaints out of 65 due), however removing Council Tax and Corporate Debt performance was 34% (18 complaints out of 53 due).

Service area	% on time	Number
<b>Children's Services</b> (not statutory complaints)	<b>53%</b>	<b>8 / 15</b>
<b>Corporate Services</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>5 / 7</b>
Benefits	100%	1 / 1
Community Safety	50%	1 / 2
Housing	50%	1 / 2
Housing Standards	-	-
Information Governance	100%	2 / 2
<b>Finance</b> (Corporate Debt)	<b>27%</b>	<b>3 / 11</b>
Corporate Debt	25%	1 / 4
Council Tax & Business Rates	29%	2 / 7
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1 / 1</b>
<b>Place</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>3 / 15</b>
Events	-	-
Parking	17%	1 / 6
Planning	22%	2 / 9
<b>SWISCo</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>2 / 16</b>
Highways	0%	0 / 2
Waste and Recycling	10%	1 / 10
Parks, Streetscene and Green Infrastructure	25%	1 / 4

In terms of delayed complaints, the table below shows how late responses were sent.

Service area	Within 3 days	Within 1 week	Within 2 weeks	Within 1 month	Longer than 1 month	Still outstanding
<b>Children's Services</b> (not statutory complaints)	-	1	3	-	-	3
<b>Corporate Services</b>	-	-	-	1	1	-
Benefits	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community Safety	-	-	-	1	-	-
Housing	-	-	-	-	1	-
<b>Finance</b>	-	1	-	3	1	3
Corporate Debt	-	1	-	-	-	2
Council Tax & Business Rates	-	-	-	3	1	1
<b>Place</b>	1	-	1	3	3	4
Parking	-	-	-	2	2	1
Planning	1	-	1	1	1	3
<b>SWISCo</b>	-	-	1	5	7	1
Highways	-	-	-	-	1	1
Waste and Recycling	-	-	1	5	3	-
Parks, Streetscene and Green Infrastructure	-	-	-	-	3	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>

The table below show the average number of days it has taken to close a complaint and it is positive to see that the number of days has decreased. This is based on closed cases for the quarter.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total average for year
<b>2021-22</b>	65.99	73.92	86.17	67.51	71.91
<b>2022-23</b>	35.72	38.1*	37.02		

\*These are the figures excluding Council Tax and Corporate Debt

### LGSCO complaints

Once a customer has been through the Corporate Complaints Procedure, if they remain unhappy with the response, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LSCO). The table below shows the number of decisions received from the LGSCO in the quarter, and the number upheld where the Council has been found to be at fault.

Year	Quarter	Decisions received	Upheld
2021/22	Q1	10	3 / 30%
	Q2	10	3 / 30%
	Q3	11	2 / 18%
	Q4	17	8 / 47%
2022/23	Q1	10	2 / 20%
	Q2	16	5 / 31%
	Q3	10	3 / 30%
	Q4		

### **Current issues:**

- Casework coming into the IG team continues to be high across the board (FOI / Member enquiries / service enquiries / SARs) and departments are required to respond within existing timeframes and resources.
- Demand pressures across services impact on departments ability to respond on time, for example the processing of the council tax rebate.
- The main reason for the delays is getting information back from departments, departments are chased on a regular basis and case audits show this, but we often do not receive information back in time. This is due to other demand pressures in service areas as outlined above.
- The ability of the IG team to deliver across all areas of work is becoming more stretched as we are providing greater support to some areas.
- A small number of the delays are genuine i.e. they are very complex cases requiring detailed investigation and regular contact with the service area.
- Case audits show that in some cases, despite numerous chasers the IG team receive no communication at all from the department for weeks sometimes months.
- Complaints which are complex can often take more time to process because there is often the need to go backwards and forwards to check information, ask further questions etc.
- Staff absence in this quarter has also had an impact on performance.

### **Action plan:**

The actions identified last quarter will remain in place as set out below:

- Monthly meetings with directors to go through outstanding and overdue cases.
- Reminders for colleagues sent at agreed intervals on all cases setting out the reminder number and agreed escalation to relevant director and Divisional Director of Corporate Services, with the exception of Finance.
- Where cases are complex meetings will be put in diaries with officers to get responses drafted.
- Within the IG team we will be conducting quality assurance on complaints to ensure that processes and customer service standards are being followed, particularly within our own service. Any issues identified will be addressed with the team.
- Regular meetings with SWISCo are in place to go over complaints, SWISCo have employed a customer services manager who will work closely with the IG team in relation to complaints. It is encouraging to note that with SWISCo complaints, contact is made with the customer upon receipt of a complaint to talk to the customer about the issue being raised and case records show they are being updated throughout the process.
- Overdue complaints will continue to be escalated through to SLT, via the Director for Corporate Services.
- Monthly overdue case reports to be sent to the Director of Corporate Services and Chief Executive.

### **Addressing Complaints – A Long Term Strategy**

The Council has a strategic direction for reducing complaints and improving timeliness for dealing with complaints, which is centred on implementing a new CRM system that will

enable customers to track their interactions with the Council and automate processes to allow officers more time to address complaints where they arise.

Introducing a CRM at Torbay is a significant undertaking and preparations for this have been ongoing for 2 years. The work started with bringing our IT infrastructure up to date and providing officers with new devices that enable them to work faster. This work was completed on time and to budget. The next step was replacing our operating system with one that could work with a new CRM; we brought in Office 365 to enable integration with a CRM and further improve the capability for officers to work collaboratively across the organisation. This project has also completed successfully. The final, complex, step is bringing in the CRM itself. This project has been delayed due to the impacts of the pandemic and some protracted contract negotiations to ensure the Council is getting value for money. Only when the new CRM has been implemented and customers are using the new portal will we be able to see the benefits of automation and refined customer interactions. It has been a long road to date and there is much work ahead, but the strategy is progressing to improve customer service. Updates on the project will be included in the quarterly performance reports and the work is also included in the Overview and Scrutiny agenda. We expect to go live with the beta release of the CRM this year. Based on a successful implementation, we can expect to see the benefits of the new system in the Q1 performance report of FY 23/24.