

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Date and Time :- Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 10.00 a.m.
Venue:- Rotherham Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.
Membership:- Councillors Clark (Chair), Bacon (Vice-Chair), Baker-Rogers, Ball, Browne, Cooksey, Miro, Pitchley, Tinsley, Wyatt and Yasseen.

This meeting will be webcast live and will be available to view [via the Council's website](#). The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

Rotherham Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair or Governance Advisor of their intentions prior to the meeting.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend the meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 September 2023 and 11 October 2023. (Pages 5 - 17)

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 13 September 2023 and 11 October 2023 and to approve them as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.

4. Questions from Members of the Public and the Press

To receive questions relating to items of business on the agenda from members of the public or press who are present at the meeting.

5. Exclusion of the Press and Public

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.

For Discussion/Decision:-

6. Annual Compliments and Complaints Report 2022-23 (Pages 19 - 72)

To consider a report of the Assistant Chief Executive outlining the complaints and compliments that the Council received in the period 1st April 2022-31st March 2023, highlighting key themes and longer-term trends.

Recommendations

Members of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are asked to:

1. Note the Annual Compliments and Complaints Report for 2022/23.
2. Provide comments on areas that require further improvement regarding complaints handling and reporting.

Items for Pre-Decision Scrutiny

In accordance with the outcome of the Governance Review in 2016, the following items are submitted for pre-scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 20 November 2023. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are invited to comment and make recommendations on the proposals contained within the report.

7. Review and Update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (Pages 73 - 90)

To consider a report from the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services which sets out a review and update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26.

Recommendations

1. That the MTFS update be noted.
2. That Cabinet note the potential requirement to use reserves in order to balance the Council's outturn position for 2023/24.

8. Crisis Support 2024 - 2027 (Pages 91 - 110)

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive outlining proposals to develop a more sustainable crisis support system.

Recommendations

That Cabinet agree:

1. The future provision of crisis support and grant allocations of:
 - a. £60k for Crisis Loans.
 - b. £34k for infrastructure and transport to enable the supply of crisis food to foodbanks (Community Food Members).
 - c. £10k for supporting co-ordination of the Food in Crisis Partnership, collection and dissemination of data and provision of a referrals process.

2. That bids be invited from organisations to work in partnership with the Council, to finalise the implementation details and deliver the provision outlined at recommendation 1.
3. To delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion to enter into a service level agreement with partner organisations to provide crisis support for the years 2024/25 to 2026/27.

For Information/Monitoring:-

9. Work Programme (Pages 111 - 112)

To consider the Board's Work Programme.

10. Work in Progress - Select Commissions

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Select Commission on work undertaken and planned for the future.

11. Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 1 November 2023 - 31 January 2024 (Pages 113 - 123)

To review and identify items for pre-decision scrutiny from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period from 1 November 2023 to 31 January 2024.

12. Call-in Issues

To consider any issues referred for call-in from recent Cabinet meetings.

13. Urgent Business

To determine any item which the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

14. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held on Wednesday 13 December 2023 at 10.00am at Rotherham Town Hall.



SHARON KEMP,
Chief Executive.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 13 September 2023

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Browne, Cooksey, Elliott, Pitchley, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Miro and Wyatt.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

37. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 5 JULY 2023 AND 2 AUGUST 2023

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 5 July 2023 and 2 August 2023 be approved as a true record.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

39. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

40. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no exempt items.

41. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

The Chair invited the Leader of the Council to introduce Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) Report and Action Plan. It was outlined that authorities were encouraged to have a peer review at least once every five years and the process was a way of assessing where local authorities are in terms of the financial visibility, service delivery and organisational health. CPCs were focused on ensuring that Councils have the capacity, governance, leadership, and finance to deliver their ambition. The process was not an inspection and was designed to be forward-looking to help accelerate and drive improvement.

During the Council's CPC, the peer team considered the following five themes, which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges:

- 1) local priorities and outcomes
- 2) organisational and place leadership

- 3) governance and culture
- 4) financial planning and management
- 5) capacity for improvement.

In addition to these five areas, it was outlined that the Council asked the peer team to provide observations and feedback on the Council's progress in the last five years and the work been undertaken to create an inclusive economy.

The CPC was delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers who were selected by the LGA based on their relevant expertise. The review took place in June 2023 and during this time the team gathered information from over 40 meetings; spoke to over hundred people including council staff and members and external stakeholders: reviewed over 70 pieces of evidence and went on a tour of the town centre and parts of the wider Borough.

The CPC feedback report provided a summary of the team's findings, which noted that the council was an impressive organisation that served the town well.

The report included seven recommendations to support the Council's continuous improvement journey:

- Recommendation 1: that the Council's achievements be celebrated.
- Recommendation 2: that an externally facing narrative of place be developed to promote and market the borough and capitalise on Rotherham's assets.
- Recommendation 3: that the significant investments underway be used to support a more inclusive economic future.
- Recommendation 4: that effective pathways and mechanisms for local people, especially young people, be developed to benefit from inclusive growth to help deliver improved health outcomes and address inequalities.
- Recommendation 5: that performance management be reviewed to demonstrate impact and an improvement in outcomes in delivering the council's ambition; and the strong leadership, capacity and capability of the top-team be used to drive and deliver further organisational transformations and change across the borough at pace.
- Recommendation 6: that the Neighbourhood working model be built upon , to develop a clearer and shared understanding of integrated locality working across the public sector and increase the pace of digital transformation across the organisation to deliver improved outcomes for residents and the customer experience.
- Recommendation 7: that the medium-term financial strategy be kept under review – testing assumptions and undertaking sensitivity – and reported to Members on a regular basis.

A high-level action plan had been developed in response to the findings (attached as appendix 2), which would be overseen by the Chief Executive. Examples were given of initiatives being undertaken against each of the recommendations. Once approved the action plan would be published on both the Council's and the LGA's website. A progress review would be scheduled in 2024, with a further progress report published 12 months after the CPC.

The Chair invited comments and questions from the Board and a discussion on the following issues ensued:

- The commitment to celebrate the Borough's achievements was welcomed, particularly in respect of the Advanced Manufacturing Park.
- Further clarification was sought on who the stakeholders were and the time scales for discussions to take place. It was clarified that this involved the Rotherham Together Partnership, public sector partners, the Chamber of Commerce and a number of private sector stakeholders. The meeting will take place in the next eight weeks.
- It was noted that there was a recommendation to engage with the workforce to obtain their ideas for capturing success and sharing these ideas, clarification was sought whether this would also be undertaken with residents. The Leader outlined that the Communications Team had been challenged to seek ways for Rotherham residents to speak in their own words about the things that worked for them and what was going well.
- Further detail was requested about how negative perceptions of the town centre (including safety) could be challenged. The significant investment into public realm was cited and the developments of the cinema and restaurants were referenced as positive improvements.
- Continued oversight of financial planning and management was identified as a key challenge, given current economic volatility, budget pressures and service demands. It was noted that the council's planning was cited in the report as "robust" and it was noted that there was strong stewardship of financial resources.
- The comments in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion were noted. It was felt that further work could be undertaken to understand communities and strengthen the Council's approach to equalities.
- Further details were sought about communications and sharing information within wards. It was observed that the ward newsletters were important in making sure that people understood what was happening in their immediate community as well as the borough more broadly.
- Clarification was sought if there was a dis-proportionate focus on town centre investment compared with other parts of the borough. The Leader outlined the investments which had been undertaken as part of the town and villages fund scheme across Rotherham.

However, he suggested that town centre improvements would play a significant role in improving perceptions of the borough as a whole. Town centre regeneration had emerged as a clear priority in extensive consultation undertaken with residents.

- Details were sought about how the review team had been selected. It was outlined that the LGA had selected the peers and that the approach taken was standard practice.
- It was noted that a number of retail premises were empty. It was clarified that the Council had relatively few shop properties in the town centre however, it was noted that work was being undertaken with landlords to address shopfront dressings. It was recognised that this was a short-term measure.
- The Section 151 Officer offered assurances that the accounts, general reserves, associated risks, and financial planning was under constant review from appropriate bodies, including the Audit Committee and external auditors. It was outlined that whilst general reserves may be lower in comparison to other authorities, the auditors were satisfied that these were at a safe level.

Resolved:

- 1) That a further report be submitted to the Board following the six month progress check prior to the end of the current municipal year.
- 2) That Cabinet be advised that the following recommendations be supported:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the observations and key recommendations made by the Corporate Peer Team to the Council.
2. Approve the high-level action plan which is the Council's response to the findings.

42. DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Chair invited the Leader to introduce the report. He outlined that digital exclusion was a challenge for some people in Rotherham and the lack of digital access could have a detrimental impact on residents. The associated problems of poor digital access could be significant for citizens and families contributing to educational and economic disadvantage, health inequalities and increased social isolation.

The Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion programme was established in 2021 to gain a better understanding of the extent to which digital exclusion affected local communities; and to identify the barriers that prevent people accessing and benefiting from online services and digital

channels.

Through consultations held with a wide range of local people, the cross-organisational Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group had co-created a digital inclusion strategy and action plan designed to target those in the borough that are most at risk of digital exclusion.

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the progress of the Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion programme and seek endorsement and support to the approach undertaken.

The community engagement exercise highlighted that the following groups were more the risk of digital exclusion: older people, people from more deprived backgrounds people with long-term health conditions and younger people. It was also highlighted that certain locations in the borough faced greater challenges, for example East Herringthorpe, Central Rotherham and Maltby. This could relate to lack of access to devices, poor access to reliable broadband or affordability.

The Council was working with Rotherham North Notts College and students had engaged with residents directly to help address some of these issues. Community drop-in sessions were organised to provide information and support, including links to skills training. Free sim cards with a data allowance had been allocated under the national databank project. This was currently offered from Riverside House and the scheme would be rolled out to libraries in Maltby, Rawmarsh, Dinnington and Swinton. Staff had been recruited to support the project.

The Assistant Director for Customer Information & Digital Services outlined that matched funding had been received from health partners for the duration of the action plan and there was a commitment to look at long-term sustainability of this work.

The Chair invited questions from Board Members and a discussion on the following points ensued:

- Clarification was sought on engagement via postal surveys and focus groups in areas of higher deprivation. It was highlighted that the postal survey was sent to a random sample of residents who had been contacted for a previous engagement exercise. The survey findings had been used to inform the action plan and areas of focus.
- Details of how the programme would be rolled out on areas of greater deprivation was sought. It was outlined that work was underway with health and third sector partners to identify suitable venues for delivery, particularly in those areas which did not have libraries or customer service centres.
- A question was asked about the programme's long-term sustainability and how existing infrastructure or gaps in provision was mapped. It was felt that achieving digital inclusion would be an

ongoing challenge and further work was needed with local communities. It was highlighted that the support staff would link with local groups and opportunities to build capacity. The work with the local college was welcomed.

- Clarification was sought if there safeguards in place to protect vulnerable people from digital exploitation (e.g scams). It was confirmed that digital safety was a key part of the programme.
- It was also highlighted that the purpose of the programme was to enable residents to access online information to improve their personal lives, including access to education, job searching or leisure activities. It was noted that local elected members had a good understanding and awareness of local groups and facilities within their wards.
- With reference to the strategy to renew wifi across those Council buildings in long-term use, clarification was sought if this could be rolled out to community centres or other venues. It was noted that the programme operated within limited resources, therefore it was not feasible to renew wifi across all areas.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be advised that the following recommendations be supported:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Notes the work undertaken to date as part of the Digital Inclusion programme.
- 2) Endorse the co-designed Digital Inclusion Strategy and support the approach being taken to help people and communities who are most at risk from digital exclusion

43. JULY 2023-24 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Chair invited the Leader to introduce the report. The report set out the financial position as at the end of July 2023 and forecast for the remainder of the financial year, based on actual costs and income for the first four months of 2023/24. Financial performance was a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance framework and essential to achievement of the objectives within the Council's policy agenda.

As at July 2023, the Council estimated an overspend of £4.5m for the financial year 2023/24. This was largely due to demand led pressures on Children's residential placements and home to school transport as well as the impact of inflationary pressures in the economy, particularly on food prices, and the legacy impact of lockdown restrictions on some directorate's services, especially in R&E. The current economic climate remained turbulent, with challenges in projecting inflationary movements. At present inflation was showing signs of slowing owing to reductions in energy and fuel prices. This would help support the Council's Budget

position for 2022/23, though it was too early in the financial year to be clear on its full benefit.

The Chair invited questions from Board Members and a discussion on the following issues ensued:

- Clarification was sought on the use of hotels to house homeless people and if a decrease in expenditure was expected in the next quarter. It was outlined that there were 40 additional emergency placements to meet some demand, however, there were greater numbers of people requiring support.
- Further details were sought on reducing the use of agency staff. It was outlined that efforts were made to start the recruitment process for vacant posts promptly to reduce reliance on agency posts. There had been a number of in-depth reviews that had led to agency cost reductions.
- Clarification was sought on what efforts had been made to identify other areas for possible savings. It was confirmed that there was a continuous process of check and challenge to identify budget pressures and opportunities for additional funding or savings.
- The high costs relating to children's social care were noted, further details were sought on the reasons behind this and what was being done to address the issues. It was outlined that there was enormous competition for available places and private providers had raised prices in light of demand. An overview of the in-house residential placement programme and fostering campaigns were outlined. The demand pressures placed by accommodating unaccompanied asylum seekers were referenced.
- It was noted that the 'invest to save' budget decisions taken in previous years, had led to a reduction in overspends.
- The Fostering Service was praised for its work.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be advised that the following recommendations be supported:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £4.5m.
- 2) Note that actions will continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it is possible that the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2023/24 financial position.
- 3) That Cabinet approve the capital budget variations as detailed in section 2.61 of the report.

44. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved.

45. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

The Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission gave an update on the work programme and its work on elective home education.

46. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1 SEPTEMBER 2023 TO 30 NOVEMBER 2023

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 September 2023 to 30 November 2023.

Resolved: - That the Forward Plan be noted.

47. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

48. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

49. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 10am on Wednesday 11 October 2023 at Rotherham Town Hall.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 11 October 2023

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Browne, Elliott, Miro, Pitchley, Tinsley, Wyatt and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Ball and Cooksey.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from the public or press.

52. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no exempt items.

53. THE SAFER ROTHERHAM PARTNERSHIP (SRP) ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Chair introduced the report and outlined that under Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Regulations 2009, annual scrutiny was required of the decisions made and the actions taken by responsible authorities in connection with the discharge of crime and disorder functions. The Safer Rotherham Partnership annual report was presented to assist with this statutory requirement, and this function was undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

The apologies of Chief Superintendent Laura Kosciwicz and Superintendent Andy Wright were noted for this meeting.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance in his capacity as Chair of the Safer Rotherham Partnership to introduce the report. The annual report provided an overview of progress against each of the SRP priorities for 2022/23, detailing emerging challenges, performance data and case studies. It provided an overview of how the SRP worked with partners and sought to maximise available funding to meet objectives. The overarching priorities referred to in the annual report were agreed by the board on 7 April 2022, covering a three-year period. These were: protecting vulnerable children; protecting vulnerable adults; safer stronger community; and protecting people from violence and organised crime. It was noted that performance

against these priorities were monitored by the SRP board on a quarterly basis. It was noted that the partnership was about to start the process of reviewing its priorities to ensure any emerging trends are captured. A fundamental review of priorities would take place every 3 to 4 years and this was scheduled for 2025.

The Assistant Director for Community Safety and Streetscene provided further detail of the work undertaken and partnership arrangements in place to meet its objectives. It was outlined that there was a focus on raising awareness and gathering intelligence to protect vulnerable children and adults. It was noted that there had been improvements in the number of intelligence reports that had been submitted. This was thought to have been as a result of a concerted effort given to training and awareness raising and streamlining processes to ensure that it is as easy as possible for partners and stakeholders to do so.

Examples were given of the partnerships work to address criminal exploitation and awareness raising with licensed premises and hotel staff. Details were also provided of mental health support embedded within neighbourhood policing teams to identify those with additional vulnerabilities. It was noted that substance misuse remained a challenge in the borough and the partnership had secured the co-location of probation and drug and alcohol specialist workers. In respect of modern slavery, the recent scrutiny review undertaken by this committee was referenced and there would be a focus on implementing the recommendations arising from its work.

Tackling antisocial behaviour remained a priority for the partnership. It was noted that whilst statistics pointed to a reduction in incidents of anti-social behaviour, there was a need to address negative perception of anti-social behaviour and its impact on perceptions of safety. Further details were given of actions to address hate crime. Initiatives to address road safety and safety around open water were outlined, as well as incidents resulting from extremities of weather conditions (e.g. fires on open land).

It was noted that members had been engaged in the review of domestic abuse support and details were provided on how this work was progressing. Other initiatives to reduce violence against women and girls were outlined. It was noted that violence with injury offences were increasing, and the partnership was working closely to address this with the South Yorkshire Police's Violence Reduction Unit.

The Chair invited questions from the Board and a discussion on the following issues ensued:

- It was noted that there was a mapping process in place to identify organised crime hotspots. Details were requested on how this information was used to influence provision of services from the council and its partners. It was outlined that there were regular review meetings to identify opportunities to increase intelligence or

disrupt activity. An example was given of environmental health officers who have power of entry into private residential properties or businesses and the use of those powers to address organised crime.

- The hate crime awareness work was welcomed, particularly the involvement of students in the design of materials.
- Further details were sought on the issues with the CCTV network and if these had been resolved. It was noted that there has been a significant growth in the number of CCTV assets available in Rotherham. All of the fixed system had been upgraded. However, some of the re-deployable units, separate to the upgrade work, had an issue with connectivity. It was expected that this would be resolved by mid-October. An explanation of reasons behind the technical issues was requested and assurance sought that the partnership would be better placed to anticipate system upgrades in the future. It was confirmed that this was being addressed.
- The improvements detailed in the report were welcomed. Details was sought on how improvements could be sustained in light of staff turnover particularly with the loss of PCSOs.
- The correlation between child exploitation and deprivation was highlighted and assurance was sought that this was reflected in the strategic approach taken by the Safer Rotherham Partnership, particularly in its recognition of increased risk in areas of greater disadvantage. It was highlighted that the community safety partnership adopted an intelligence led approach to its work which informed the strategic allocation of resources. The development of a strategy to address neglect was cited as an example of this approach.
- Increased in intelligence reporting was cited as an indicator that training and awareness raising activities were making a difference, particularly in respect of child sexual exploitation. Assurance was given that the partnership responded to these in a robust manner. This has been validated in independent reports and reviews.
- Assurance was given that children and young people were referred to appropriate mental health support as required (i.e. substance misuse services).
- Arrangements were in place to ensure safeguards were in place to ensure that transition from children to adult services was managed appropriately.
- Examples were given of engagement with children and young people to raise awareness of healthy relationships, knife crime and criminal exploitation and tackle poor perceptions of anti-social behaviour.
- Support for the 'Reclaim the Night' event to be held on 23 November 2023 was welcomed. The event raised awareness of violence towards women and girls, to make streets and public spaces safer for everyone.
- It was noted that the Partnership had separate priorities for both child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation.

Clarification was sought if this separation would continue in the future.

- It was noted that it had not been possible to secure the attendance of South Yorkshire Police representatives at the meeting. Clarification was sought about the 'Right Person, Right Care' approach being rolled out by SYP, particularly in respect of responding to incidents with people who may have mental ill-health. It was noted that SYP were adopting a phased, managed approach to its roll-out, focussing on areas of lower risks in the first instance. Examples were given of partnership arrangements with local services.
- Details were sought of the work undertaken to measure the impact of crimes/ incidents of anti-social behaviour on communities and if the partnership challenged poor perceptions sufficiently well. The process for monitoring community impact and risk was outlined.
- It was confirmed that businesses such as hotels and licensed premises were targeted in relation to awareness raising about criminal exploitation. Further details were given of engagement work with town-centre businesses.
- Clarification was sought on how Councillors could share information safely on social media channels.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board notes the progress of the Safer Rotherham Partnership in tackling crime and disorder in 2022-23 against its key priorities and makes recommendations in relation to the current and future work of the partnership.
- 2) That the Senior Governance Advisor and Assistant Director for Community Safety and Streetscene liaise to ensure every effort be made to secure the attendance of South Yorkshire Police representatives at future meetings of this Board convened to consider the Safer Rotherham Partnership annual report.

54. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved.

55. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

Resolved: That the updates be noted.

56. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS -1 OCTOBER 2023 TO 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023.

Resolved: - That the Forward Plan be noted.

57. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

58. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

59. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 10am on Wednesday 15 November 2023 at Rotherham Town Hall.

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Public Report
Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 15 November 2023

Report Title

Annual Compliments and Complaints Report 2022-23

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

Stuart Purcell, Corporate Complaint Manager, Assistant Chief Executive Directorate,
01709 822661 or stuart.purcell@rotherham.gov.uk

Fiona Boden, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence, Assistant Chief Executive
Directorate, 01709 255233, fiona.boden@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Outline the complaints and compliments that the Council received in 2022/23 in line with statutory requirements.
- b) Identify key trends within complaints and compliments over a five-year period.

Recommendations

Members of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are asked to:

- 1. Note the Annual Compliments and Complaints Report for 2022/23.
- 2. Provide comments on areas that require further improvement regarding complaints handling and reporting.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1	Annual Compliments and Complaints Report, 2022/23
Appendix 2	Ombudsman Annual Review letter 2022/23
Appendix 3	Complaint procedures overview
Appendix 4	Ombudsman complaint handling code advice letter to Councils

Background Papers

Corporate Complaint Policy

Rotherham Council Rotherham Council - Complaints Policy

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

N/A

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Annual Compliments and Complaints Report 2022-23

1. Background

- 1.1 All councils need to provide complaint procedures to respond to customer concerns in an open and transparent way within defined timescales and in accordance with legislation. The purpose of the annual complaint report is to outline the complaints and compliments that the Council received in the period 1st April 2022-31st March 2023, highlighting key themes and longer-term trends.
- 1.2 The report also explains how the Council has performed against the required standards and includes case studies demonstrating how services have learnt from complaints received.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 **The performance headlines outlined within the report include:**
- 2.2 In 2022/23, the overall number of complaints received by the Council increased by **25%**, going from **1117** in 2021/22 to **1397**. Whilst this figure represents a significant increase compared to 2021/22, it is only a **2%** increase on the number received prior to the pandemic in 2019/20.
- 2.3 Positively, based on the data from the first three months of 2023/24, this trend of an increasing number of complaints has not continued as **291** complaints were received, compared to **340** in the same period in 2022/23, which is a **17%** decrease.
- 2.4 Most Council departments saw an increase in complaints from the previous year. The largest increase in complaints in 2022/23 was in Regeneration and Environment which went from **341** to **510**, an increase of **50%**. The 2nd largest increase was in Housing services, which went from **501** to **607**, a percentage increase of **21%**. Showing small increases were Adult Care services from **52** to **55**, a percentage increase of **6%**, Children and Young Peoples Services from **110** to **116**, a percentage increase of **5%** and Assistant Chief Executives from **3** to **4** complaints received. Against this trend Finance and Customer Services saw a small decrease in the number of complaints received from **108** to **105** and Public Health decreased from **2** to **0**. It should also be noted that the increase in complaints received by Regeneration and Environment Services and Housing Services were predominantly due to more complaints being received in respect of Waste Management and Housing Repairs.
- 2.5 Performance has been maintained at **85%** of complaint responses within target timescale. Whilst slightly below the 5-year average of **86%**, this has met the Council Plan target of **85%**. There has been a continued effort made across all Council services to maintain performance to timescales, despite the increase in numbers received.

- 2.6 More complaints were upheld in terms of the percentage of complaints responded to. This is where the Council has investigated and found a problem with the service we have provided, with **443** or **32%** upheld (**268** or **24%** upheld in 2021/22 and **235** or **26%** upheld in 2020/21) of all complaints.
- 2.7 The majority of complaints (**97%**) were resolved at stage 1, only **24**, **2%** of all complaints, were escalated to stage 2, compared with **27**, **2%**, in 2021/22.
- 2.8 **431 (31%)** of all complaints were categorised as quality of service. Complaints within this category have increased from **313 (28%)** in 2021/22 (an increase of **3%**). Lack of service accounted for the second highest category of complaints, with **398** complaints (or **28%**). Complaints within this category have increased from **304 (27%)** in 2021/22 (an increase of **1%**). The third highest was delay in service at **246 (18%)** received. Complaints within this category have increased in terms of numbers received from **201** but have remained the same in terms of percentage of total complaints (**18%**) in 2021/22.
- 2.9 Regarding the number of compliments received, this has increased by **5%** overall, with **39** more received, however, some directorates saw an increase in the numbers received and some saw a decrease. Finance and Customer Services saw the biggest increase at **169%**, **22** more received, followed by Regeneration and Environment **27%**, **52** more received. Housing services and Assistant Chief Executive's also saw a small increase.
- 2.10 **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review letter**
- 2.11 The Annual Review letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) was received on 19th July 2023, setting out their records of referred complaint investigations. In 2022/23 less complaints were investigated and upheld by the LGSCO than in the previous year, with **7** complaints investigated compared to **19** investigated in the previous year. The decrease can be considered as a return to average numbers received following an unusually high number of enquiries investigated in the previous year (an effect of the Covid 19 pandemic).
- 2.12 **6** complaints out of **7** investigations were upheld. This equates to an upheld rate of **86%**, which is slightly higher than the Ombudsman's figure of the average upheld rate of similar authorities at **77%**. **3** upheld complaints were in Childrens and Young Peoples Services, **1** was in Adult Care, **1** in Financial and Customer Services and **1** in Assistant Chief Executives.
- 2.13 Appendix One in the main report outlines the LGSCO decisions for the Council for 2022/23 and how these compare with **16** statistical neighbour councils. It shows that the Council is comparing much better to similar Local Authorities in 2022/23, with fewer complaints investigated and fewer complaints upheld overall.

In 2022/23, the Council is in the top quarter of the numbers investigated and the numbers upheld. It had the **2nd** least investigated out of the **16** similar councils, and the 3rd least upheld. In the previous year, 2021/22, the Council benchmarked in the middle quarter for numbers investigated, numbers upheld and % upheld.

- 2.14 It also shows that the majority of complaints that were brought to the LGSCO (**44** decided) were deemed invalid or incomplete, referred back for local resolution or closed after initial enquiries. This along with the relatively low number of investigations reflects positively that the Council's complaints procedures are working effectively to find fair and appropriate local resolutions.
- 2.15 In addition, **2** Housing Ombudsman complaint decisions were received, which were both not upheld. This compares to **1** decision not upheld in 2021/22.
- 2.16 Overall, the Annual Review letter presents a positive view of the Council's handling of formal complaints in 2022/23. The number of investigations decreased significantly, but the upheld rate is slightly above average. There were no Public Interest Reports in this year.
- 2.17 It should be noted that in the 2021/22 Annual Review letter the LGSCO highlighted a concern with the Council's late response to enquiries and in 2022/23 this has been significantly improved with **100%** of responses provided in time. This was due to efforts made by Council Services and the Complaints Team to ensure that responses were provided in a timely manner.
- 2.18 In addition, although the Council is recorded as being **100%** compliant with the Ombudsman recommendations following investigation, the Council has been recorded as being unsuccessful in resolving any complaints when formal notification of investigation is initially received, from the Ombudsman. RMBC has resolved **0%** of cases at the point of notification that the Ombudsman intends to investigate, compared to a national average of **11%**. This maintains a trend across several years since the Ombudsman began to report this information.
- 2.19 In response the Complaints Team will continue to work with Services to see if there is anything more that can be done to resolve a complaint after notification of investigation is received. There are often a few weeks between notification and the start of the investigation and therefore there is a small window to try and resolve a case at this point. Services need to be encouraged to consider if there is anything else that can be offered to resolve the complaint. The Complaints Team / Service will then write to the resident to explain if anything further can or cannot be offered. Also, the Strategic Director and Assistant Director can also be informed at notification stage, which will allow them additional oversight and ensure that the opportunity to resolve the complaint is maximised.
- 2.20 **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code**
- 2.21 In addition, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has recently launched a consultation with the Housing Ombudsman on a joint complaint handling code (Appendix 4 – advice letter to Councils). The Complaints Team

has worked with Services to provide a response to the consultation, following an initial assessment of the implications of the joint code for Corporate Complaints.

- 2.22 Based on an initial review of the proposals within the consultation document the main change proposed to the Council's Corporate Complaint procedure would be in terms of the current three stage process. As the proposed joint complaint handling code states that:
- 2.23 *"A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the relevant Ombudsman."*
- 2.24 Subject to the outcome of the consultation and the final published complaint handling code, a self-assessment will be undertaken, and a revised policy presented for consideration.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 The statistical analysis of the annual report and the departmental breakdowns should be considered and noted. In addition, consideration has been given as to how the Council can further improve its processes for dealing with complaints and compliments to drive improvements to the service for both residents and the Council. Building on the key developments in 2022/23, the Council will again apply particular focus to the following issues:
- 3.2 Introducing a programme of improvement actions in response to the outcome of our self-assessments that are being completed to ensure the Council's approach is in line with the Housing Ombudsman's and now the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's complaint handling code. This will include a review of all written communication, the Complaints Policy and response timescales.
- 3.3 Continuing to improve the way in which the Council learns from complaints. This will ensure that all learning reported is considered and the impact of service improvement is understood and recorded.
- 3.4 Working to improve performance to complaint procedure timescales.
- 3.5 Ensuring remedy requests by the Ombudsman are completed within required timescales.
- 3.6 Increasing the number of compliments recorded, with the Complaints Team continuing to work with managers to ensure that the process for recording and reporting compliments is improved. Benchmarking with other Local Authorities has taken place and their best practice approaches will be used to further increase the numbers of compliments received.
- 3.7 Continue to train front line staff and managers in respect of the formal complaints process and best practice when responding to customer complaints.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The complaint information contained in this report has been previously reported to each Directorate Leadership Team to enable key areas for improvement to be identified.
- 4.2 There has been no further consultation on this report beyond the requirements of internal processes, alongside consultation with the Cabinet member.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 A simple timetable to show the stages and deadlines for implementing the proposed improvements outlined in section 3 is to be actioned in 2023/24. Progress against these actions will be reported on as part of the annual report for 2023/24.
- 5.2 The Complaints Team will be accountable for leading on these improvements and for engaging with Directorates on how the approach to handling complaints can be improved. Each Directorate will be responsible for ensuring that the improvements identified are disseminated and implemented within each area of the organisation.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The provision of the compliments and complaints service is factored into the Council's budget. If a complaint about an error in a charge for a Council service is upheld, then an appropriate refund will be made in accordance with the Council's Finance and Procurement Procedure Rules
- 6.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Council's approach to handling complaints is informed by the following key pieces of legislation:
 - i. Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 (Making Experiences Count).
 - ii. The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
 - iii. Localism Act 2011 (for Housing Services complaints)
 - iv. The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report. However, Human Resources will provide support on further developing the training offer on handling complaints for officers outside of the Complaints Team.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The statutory complaints procedure for Children's and Adult Social Care provides an opportunity for children and young people and vulnerable adults to have their voices heard and to improve service delivery.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Investigations through the complaint procedure consider all relevant policy and legislation, including those relating to equalities and human rights.
- 10.2 Improvements have been made to the way that complaints are recorded to ensure that information relating to equality and diversity are captured where the complainant is comfortable to disclose this information.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no direct implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change arising from this report.
- 11.2 However, it is possible for complaints to be made relating the Council's approach to CO2 Emissions and Climate Change and these matters can be formally considered through the Complaint Procedures.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 As outlined in the annual report, improving the way that complaints are dealt with requires a whole-Council approach, with services committing to responding to complaints in a timely fashion and using the intelligence provided by the Complaints Team to make service improvements. It is the responsibility of every service to make responding to complaints and learning from customer feedback a priority.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The Council faces pressures on services due to the ongoing impact of national economic conditions as well as a continued ambition to transform services to deliver financial savings and improve customer experiences. It is vital that customer expectations around what is sustainable for the Council to deliver are properly managed.
- 13.2 To mitigate this, the Council is continuing to engage with the public as appropriate through regular communication, as well as where services are being proposed to be amended.

Accountable Officer(s)

Fiona Boden, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence

Approvals obtained on behalf of: -

	Name	Date
Chief Executive	N/A	Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	01/11/23
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	27/10/23
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	Click here to enter a date.
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive	01/11/23
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance - Councillor Alam	01/11/23

Report Author: Stuart Purcell, Corporate Complaint Manager, Assistant Chief Executive Directorate, 01709 822661 or stuart.purcell@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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ANNUAL REPORT COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023



www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints

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I. INTRODUCTION

Rotherham Council is committed to being open and accountable, listening to the views of residents and communities and placing them at the heart of its services. Customer feedback through formal complaints and the way that the Council responds to complaints are vital indicators of the overall performance of the organisation. When the Council cannot resolve a problem straight away, our residents have the safety net of a formal complaint procedure through which they can find a resolution.

The Council can then also use the information gathered from the record of formal complaints to consider how it delivers services. The Council is able to analyse trends using this information and find learning and service improvements. This can then be used to improve customer care and make changes, where necessary, to our policy and procedures.

The number of complaints received is at its highest recorded level. In 2022/23, the number is back to a level that is just above the numbers received in 2019/20 prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic had the effect of suppressing complaint numbers between 2020 and 2022.

Overall, in terms of the complaints' procedure, the Council continued to maintain a high level of performance and improved the quality of service offered to residents via our learning from complaints process (see sections five to nine of the report). There is a continued commitment to providing high quality, timely responses to formal complaints, and the Council continues to learn and improve based on the feedback received. Performance was in line with the Council Plan target with 85 % of complaints being resolved in time.

The purpose of this report is to outline the complaints and compliments that the Council received during 1st April 2022-31st March 2023, highlighting key themes and trends. The report also explains how the Council has performed against the required standards and includes case studies demonstrating how services have learnt from complaints received. This is arguably the most important aspect of the complaints process.

Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board continues to be considered as part of these reports, and in respect of the Council's handling of complaints throughout the year. The questions and queries raised are noted and subject to consideration.

Although customer feedback provides a valuable insight into how the Council is performing, complaints and compliments figures do not reflect the full picture. This report should, therefore, be understood within the context of the number of customers interacting with each service and any changes to those services that occurred within 2022/23.

In addition to this annual report, the Council's complaints data features throughout the Council's Performance Management Framework from the Council Plan through to frontline teams. Complaints information is included within service level performance reports and is considered and triangulated alongside other key performance indicators by Performance Officers, senior managers, and service leaders to inform service and process improvements. The Complaints Manager also attends Directorate Leadership teams to ensure there is strategic oversight and holds specific Lessons Learnt workshops, so staff understand and take preventative action to avoid further issues.

Furthermore, building on the key developments in 2022/23, priority areas of focus, in respect of the Council's response to formal complaints, for next year will include:

- Introducing a programme of improvement actions in response to the outcome of our self-assessments completed to be in line with the Housing Ombudsman's and now the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's complaint handling code. This will include a review of all written communication, the Complaints Policy and response timescales.

- Continuing to improve the way in which the Council learns from complaints. That all learning reported is considered and the impact of service improvement is understood and recorded.
- Working to improve performance to complaint procedure timescales.
- Ensuring remedy requests by the Ombudsman are completed within required timescales.
- Increasing the number of compliments recorded, with the Complaints Team continuing to work with managers to ensure that the process for recording and reporting compliments is improved. Benchmarking with other Local Authorities has taken place and their best practice approaches will be used to further increase the numbers of compliments received.
- Continue to train front line staff and managers in respect of the formal complaints process and best practice when responding to customer complaints.

2. KEY HEADLINES – 2022/23

1,397
complaints
received

1,397 complaints were received.
(compared with 1,117 in 2021/22, this is an increase of 25 %.)

791 compliments were received.
(compared with 752 in 2021/22, this is a 5 % increase.)



More complaints were upheld.
(443 or 32 % were upheld in 2022/23 compared to 268 or 24 % in 2021/22.)

The same proportion of complaints were responded to within timescales.
(85 % in 2022/23 compared with 85 % in 2021/22.)



Seven complaints were investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman.
This is a 61 % reduction from 2021/22 where 18 were investigated.

More complaints were received regarding the quality of service.
(431 compared to 313 in 2022/21. This is a 38 % increase.)



More complaints regarding the behaviour and attitude of staff.
(168 compared with 145 in 2021/22, this is a 16 % increase.)

More complaints were responded to in time by:
Housing Services up to 87 % from 85 %.
R&E up to 84 % from 82 %.
Finance and Customer Service maintained 90 %.



Fewer Complaints were responded to in time by:
Adult Services
(78 % from 79 %.)
CYPs
(64 % from 82 %.)

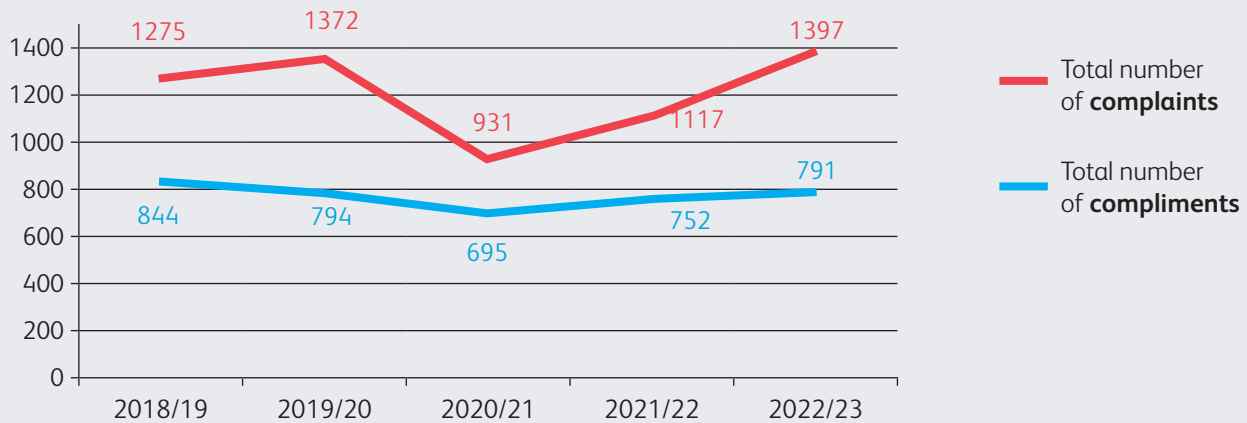
Fewer escalations through the complaint procedure.
(24 or 2 % were escalated to stage two compared to 32 or 3 % in 2021/22.)



3. OVERVIEW

3.1 Summary

Figure 1: Total number of complaints and compliments by year



In 2022/23, the overall number of complaints received by the Council increased by 25%, going from 1,117 in 2021/22 to 1397. However, whilst this is a significant increase compared to the previous year, it is only a 2% increase on the number received in 2019/20 prior to the pandemic. It is also important to note that in the first three months of 2023/24 291 complaints were received compared to 340 in the same period in 2022/23, which is a 17% decrease.

The Council provides a wide variety of services to over 266,200 residents. In this context, 1397 complaints are only a fraction of the number of customer interactions occurring each year. For example, the Council received 1,172,612 new web visitors in 2022/23.

The number of compliments recorded by the Council also increased, from 752 in 2021/22 to 791 (an increase of 5%). It is good to see that the numbers have increased again year on year. Continued efforts by Council departments to capture more of the positive feedback of residents is reflected in this increase. There is clearly better engagement of staff in the process of recording the compliments they received, staff have responded to requests that they make sure that all the compliments they receive are recorded.

It is recognised that both compliments and complaints procedures need to be easy and accessible for customers to allow them to provide valuable feedback.

Most Council departments saw an increase in complaints from the previous year. A breakdown on the numbers received and how much they changed, by department is as follows:

- The largest increase was in Regeneration and Environment from 341 to 510, an increase of 50%.
- The second largest increase was in Housing services from 501 to 607, a percentage increase of 21%.
- Showing small increases were Adult Care services from 52 to 55, a percentage increase of 6% Children and Young Peoples Services from 110 to 116, a percentage increase of 5% and Assistant Chief Executives from three to four complaints received.
- Against this trend Finance and Customer Services saw a small decrease in the number of complaints received from 108 to 105 and Public Health decreased from two to zero.

The following diagrams (Figure's 2 and 3) show the breakdown of complaints and compliments by Directorate in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

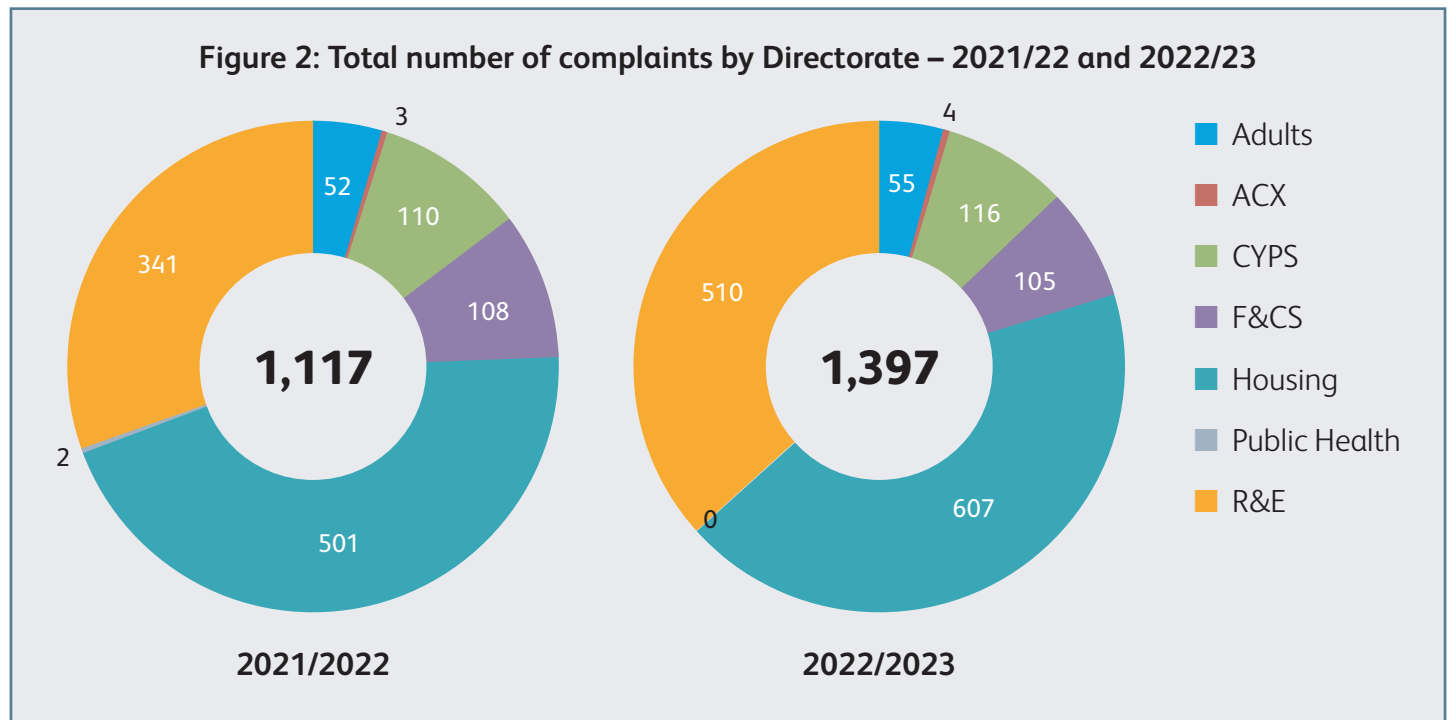


Figure 2 shows that the two highest areas for complaints were Housing Services and Regeneration and Environment. This is consistent with previous years' figures, as these areas typically receive the highest volume of complaints. They deal with the largest number of customers and are responsible for a high number of service transactions over the year.

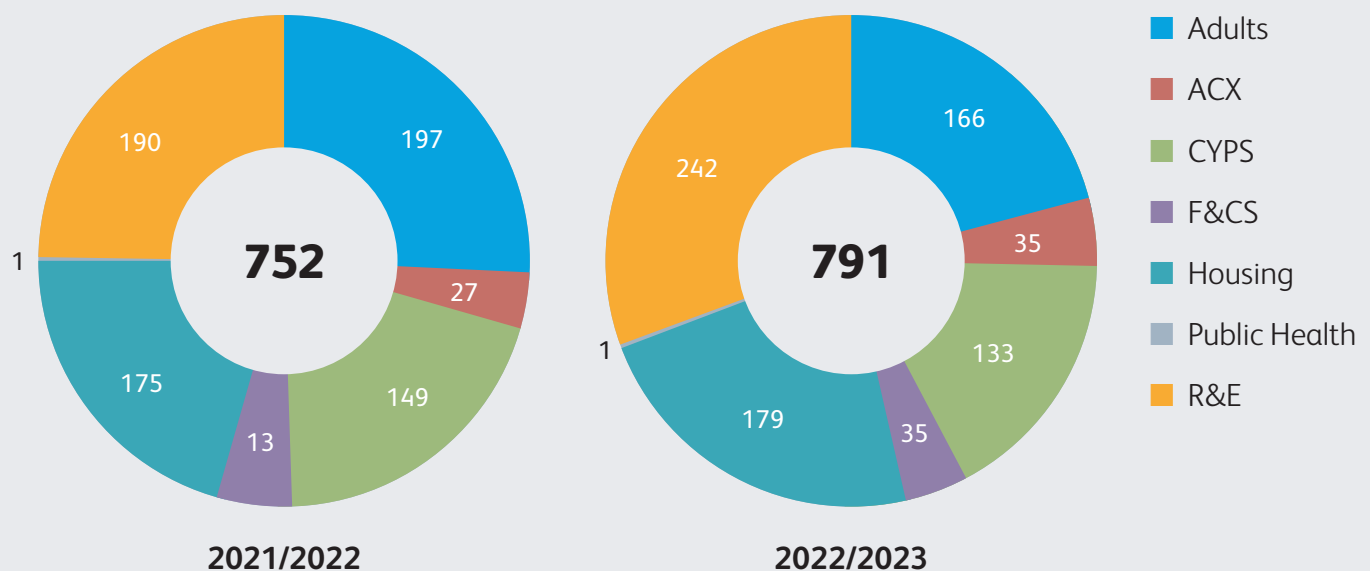
The number of complaints received generally correlates with the number of customers that are served by the directorate. Therefore, a directorate receiving a higher volume of complaints is not necessarily reflective of poor performance and should be understood within the context of services provided.

However, the increases in these two service areas are primarily as a result of an increase in Waste Management service complaints and an increase in complaints received in respect of property repairs. Please see Appendix 5 and 7 for further information.

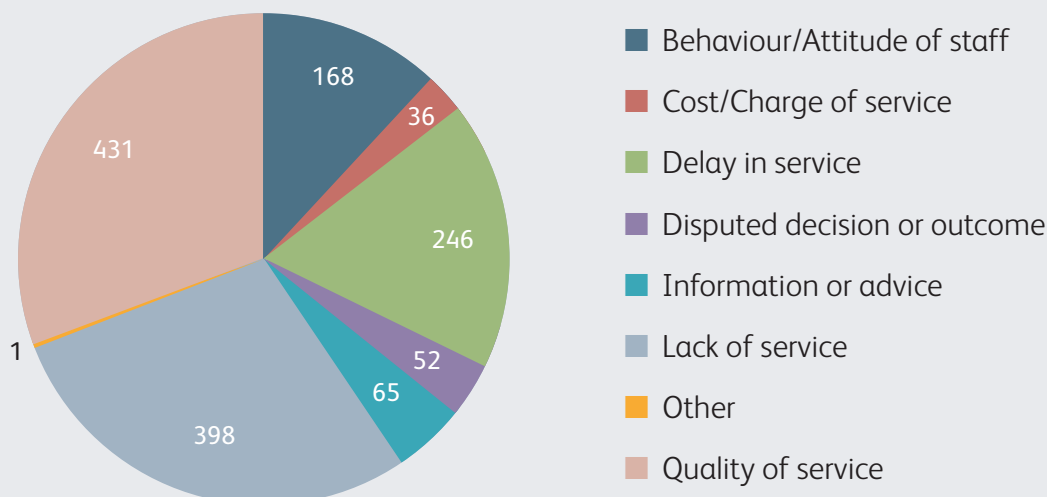
Regarding the number of compliments received, this has increased by 5 % overall, with 39 more received. Finance and Customer Services saw the biggest percentage increase at 169 %, with 22 more received, followed by Regeneration and Environment 27 %, with 52 more received. Housing services and Assistant Chief Executive's also saw a small increase.

Adult Care services and Children and Young People's services decrease in terms of numbers received and Public Health saw no change.

Although the overall increase is positive, the large changes in numbers received by directorate makes it clear that there can be a better engagement in the compliment process by staff, to make sure that all positive feedback is captured including feedback from satisfaction surveys.

Figure 3: Total number of compliments by Directorate – 2021/22 and 2022/23

As part of the process of monitoring and handling customer feedback, the Complaints Team is responsible for categorising complaints based on the subject matter. The following diagram outlines the categories of complaints received in 2022/23:

Figure 4: Total number of complaints by category – 2022/23

431 (31 %) of all complaints were categorised as quality of service. Complaints within this category have increased from 313 (28 %) in 2021/22 (an increase of 27 %).

Lack of service accounted for the second highest category of complaints, with 398 complaints (or 28 %). Complaints within this category have increased from 304 (27 %) in 2021/22 (an increase of 24 %).

The third highest was delay in service at 246 (18 %) received. Complaints within this category have increased in terms of numbers received from 201 in 2021/22 but have remained the same in terms of the proportion of total complaints (18 %).

Although the numbers of complaints in the categories of quality of service and lack of service were significant across all directorates, the majority of the complaints categorised as lack of service were within Regeneration and Environment, with 238 (175 in the Street Scene department and of these 125 were in Waste and Recycling) of the 398 total complaints in this category (see section 7).

In terms of quality of service, the majority were received in Housing services at 228, with 73 received in Housing Property Services (they are responsible for programmed works and repairs inspections), out of the 431 total complaints in this category (see section 5.2)

In addition to reporting against general subject areas there is a need to report complaints in more detail to directorate and service management teams. To assist with this level of reporting additional complaint classifications were developed, reviewed at year end, and updated. These are service specific and more accurately reflect the types of complaints received.

Examples of the most common complaint types recorded by this classification are as follows:

- Attitude / Conduct
- No Service Provided/Action Taken
- Quality of Service Provided /Standard of Work
- Delay in Service Being Provided/Action Taken
- No Response to Enquiry
- Lack of Information/Advice
- Application/Assessment Outcome or Decision
- Missed Appointment/Service
- Lack of Enforcement Action/Sufficiency of Enforcement Action
- Damage to Property
- Incorrect/Inaccurate written or verbal advice
- Dispute Over Liability or Debt
- Lack of Communication
- Accessibility of Service/Facilities
- General Practice/Competence
- Refusal to Provide Service/Take Action

For further detail around directorate complaint trends please see sections 5 to 11 of the report.

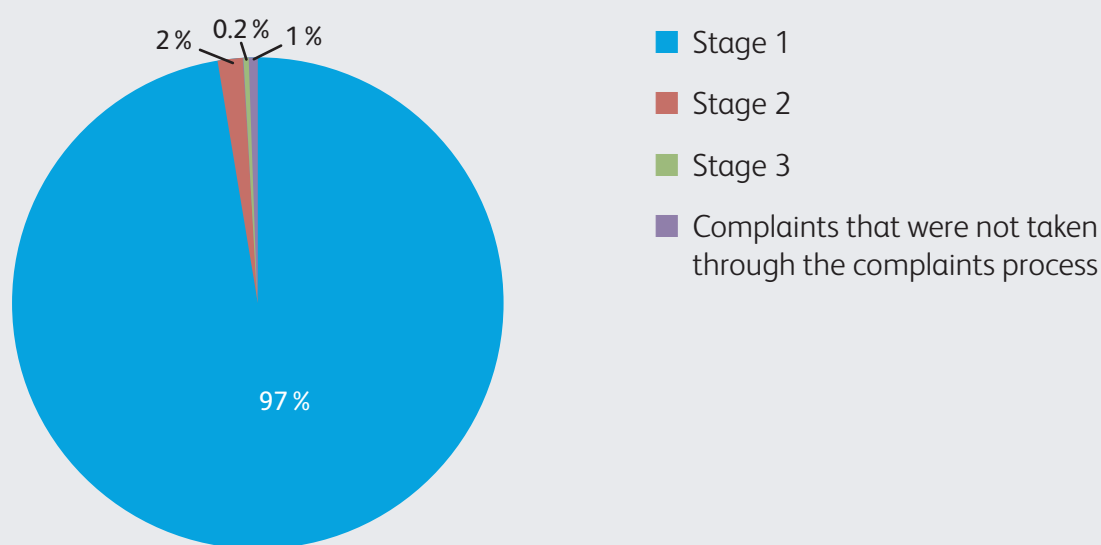
It should also be noted that more complaints were upheld in terms of the percentage of complaints responded to. This is where the Council has investigated and found a problem with the service provided, with 443 or 32 % upheld (268 or 24 % upheld in 2021/22 and 235 or 26 % upheld in 2020/21) of all complaints. Sections 5 to 11 contain more detail of upheld complaints by directorate and how the Council has learnt from upheld complaints.

3.2 Dealing with Complaints

The Council follows three different complaints' procedures: children's social care, adult social care, and the corporate complaints' procedure. The social care complaints' procedures are legislative and have individual statutory requirements about how complaints are dealt with.

A relatively small proportion of complaints are not taken through the formal complaint's procedure (referred to as informal complaints). These are complaints that are in relation to Council policy or decisions that have been formally approved in Cabinet. In these cases, the complaint is not taken through the formal procedure as it cannot be upheld, however all complainants receive a formal (written) response. This report includes these complaints in the overall total figures. In 2022/23, this amounted to only nine (1 %) out of a total of 1397 complaints (in 2021/22 it was 19 (2 %) out of a total of 1117 complaints).

Figure 5: Percentage of complaints escalating through the complaints procedures

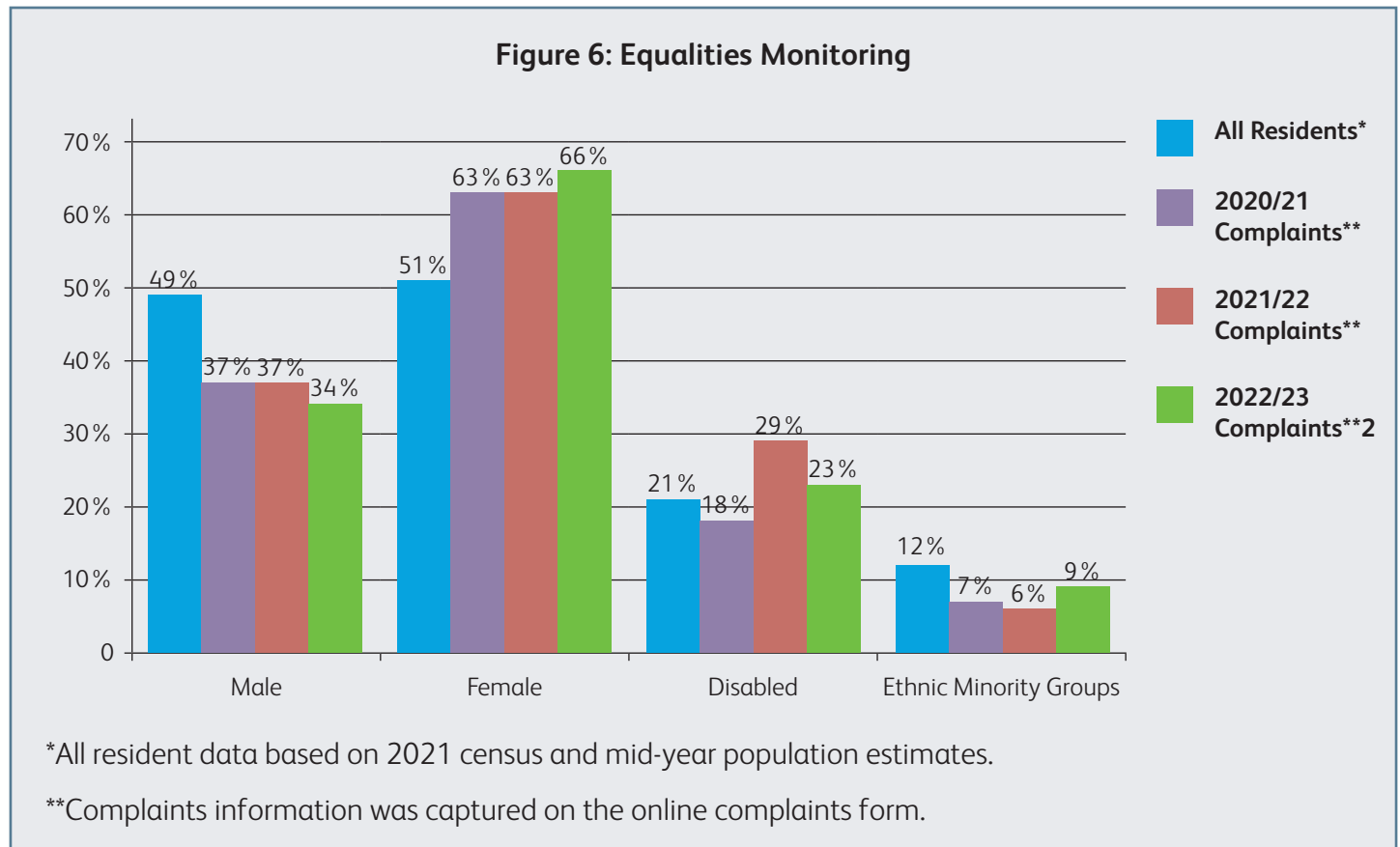


The diagram above outlines the number of complaints that reached the various stages of the complaint's procedures.

The extent to which complaints escalate through the complaints' procedure is an important measure, as it is preferable to find resolutions for customers at the earliest possible stage. As shown in figure 5, the majority of complaints (97 %) were resolved at stage 1, only 24, 2 % of all complaints, were escalated to stage 2, compared with 27, 2 %, in 2021/22.

3.3 Equalities Monitoring

The Council collects equalities information via its online complaint webform. This entails collecting the demographics of customers making formal complaints, as this information will be used to ensure that the complaints' process is fair and accessible for all customers.



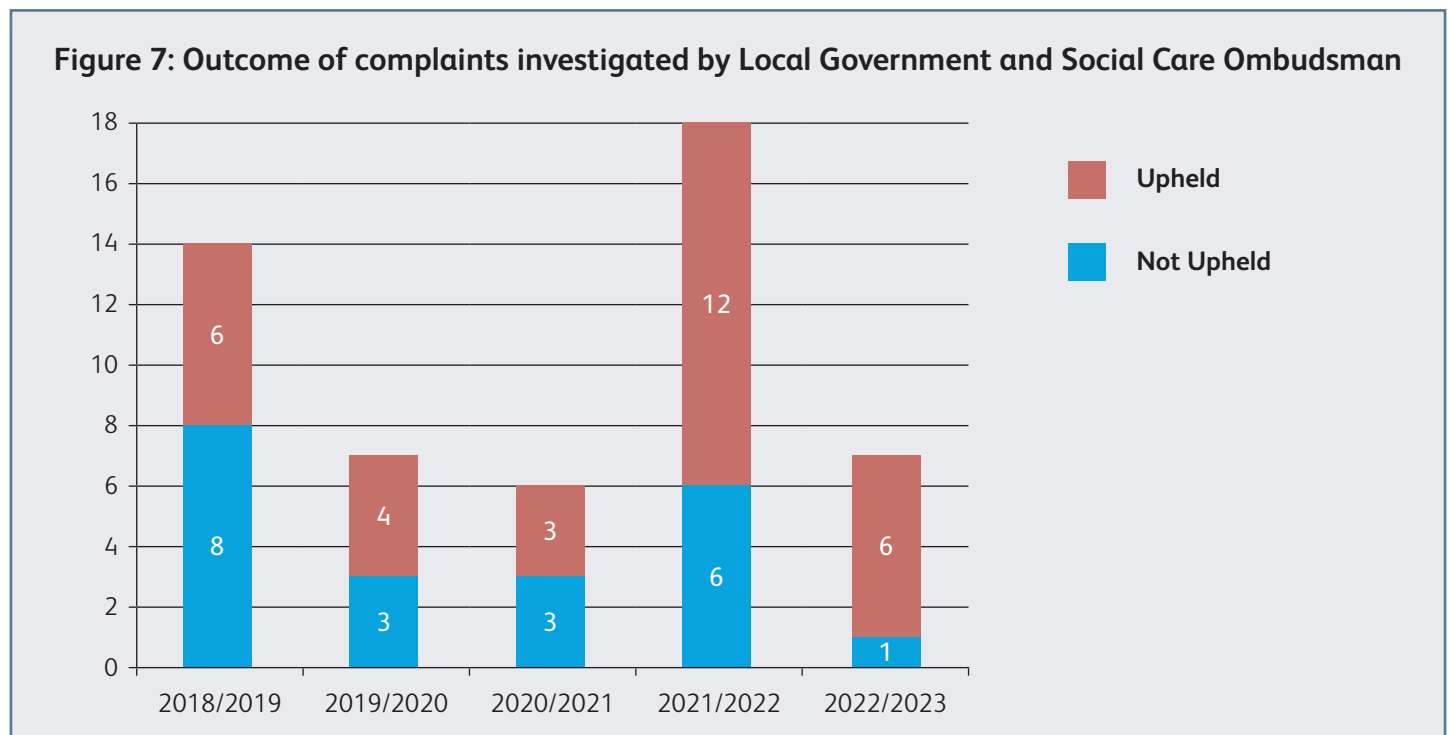
The information received indicates that significantly more female customers complained about Council services in 2022/23 and this is a consistent trend over the last three years. All directorates recorded a higher number of female complainants. For example, in Housing services the percentage of female complainants was 74 % and Regeneration and Environment it was 52 %.

It is also noted that numbers have decreased for those customers who are disabled, but it is still slightly above the average for all residents. In addition, the number of customers in ethnic minority groups who have made a complaint has increased and but is still lower than the average all residents' figure.

3.4 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If complainants are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint as investigated through the Council's complaints' procedures, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). 45 complaints enquiries were directed to the LGSCO in 2022/23 (57 received in 2021/22) and of these, the LGSCO investigated seven (18 investigated in 2021/22). This is back to average numbers escalating from an unprecedented number investigated in 2021/22.

Figure 7 (see below) illustrates the number of complaints considered by the Ombudsman over the last five years. It shows that there have been 52 complaints investigated by the LGSCO between the financial years of 2018/19 and 2022/23 with a median five-year average of 10.4 per year.



In 2022/23, less complaints were investigated and less complaints were upheld by the LGSCO than in the previous year. Seven investigations compared to 1397 complaints is 0.5 % of formal complaints received that have escalated to the LGSCO.

Six complaints out of the seven investigations were upheld. This equates to an upheld rate of 86 %, which is in line with the Ombudsman's figure of the average uphold rate of similar authorities at 77 %. Three upheld complaints were in Childrens and Young Peoples Services, one was in Finance and Customer Services, one was in Adult Care services and one in Assistant Chief Executives Directorate.

Appendix 1 outlines the LGSCO decisions for the Council for 2022/23 and how these compare with 16 statistical neighbour Councils. In 2022/23, the Council is in the top quarter in terms of the numbers investigated and the numbers upheld. It ranks as second out of 16 of the total investigated and third out of 16 of those complaints that were upheld. In the previous year, 2021/22, the Council benchmarked in the lower quarter for numbers investigated and numbers upheld.

Furthermore, it shows that the majority of complaints that were brought to the LGSCO (44 decided) were deemed invalid or incomplete, referred back for local resolution or closed after initial enquiries. This along with the relatively low number of investigations (0.5 % escalation rate) reflects positively that the Council's complaints' procedures are working effectively to find fair and appropriate local resolutions.

3.5 Housing Ombudsman

From April 2013, the Housing Ombudsman has dealt with all complaints from tenants regarding social housing. There were two decisions made by the Housing Ombudsman in 2022/23, which were both not upheld, in comparison there was one decision in 2021/22, which was not upheld.

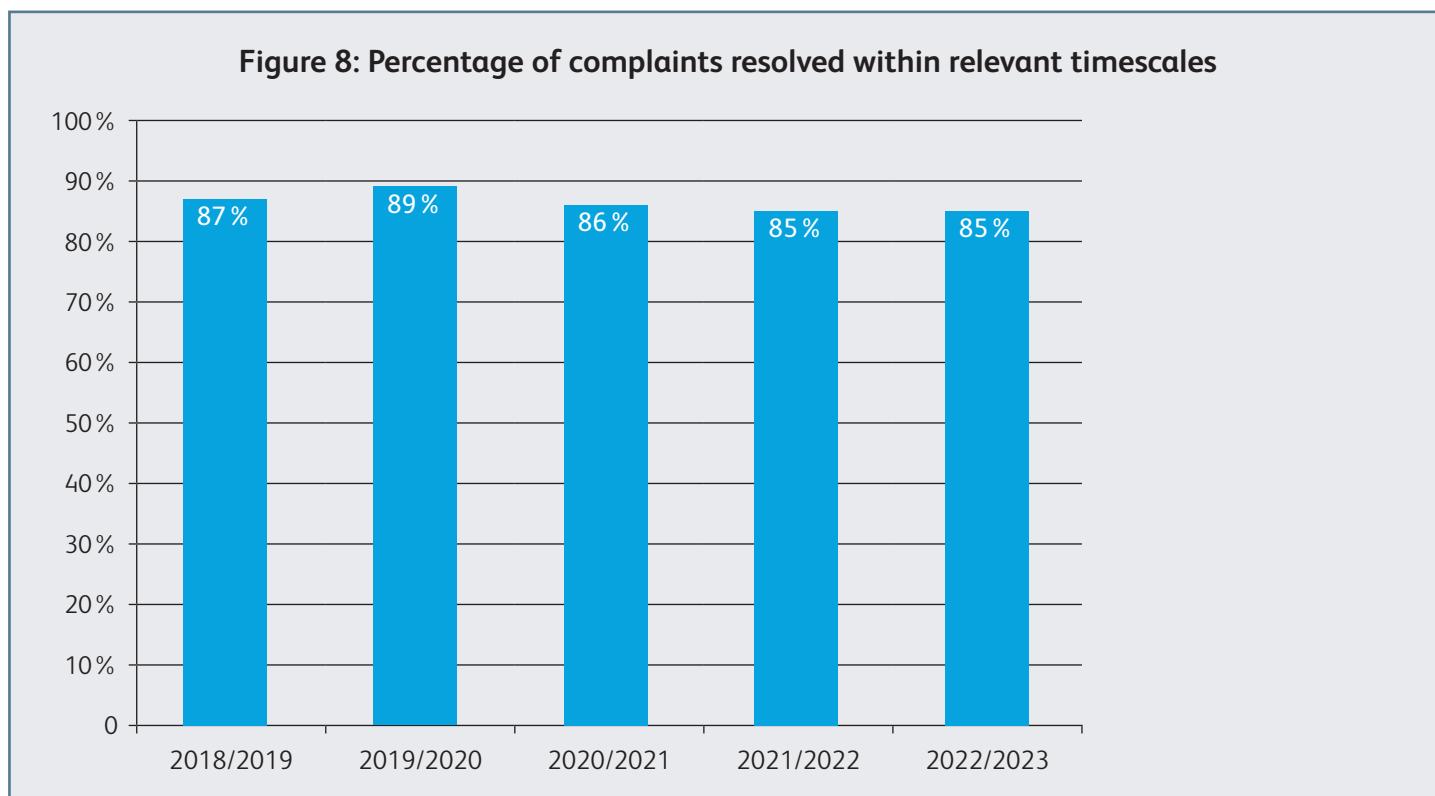
The complaint issues in these decisions were regarding a request to renew a kitchen and the response to neighbour nuisance reports.

4. PERFORMANCE

4.1 Performance Overview

Performance against the time allowed by the formal complaint procedure is monitored through regular (weekly, monthly, and quarterly) performance reports presented to Council Directorate Leadership Team meetings and Service Management Team meetings.

The following graph compares the overall Council performance against timescales for the past five years:



Performance has been maintained at 85 % of complaint responses within target timescale. It is slightly below the five-year average of 86 % and it has met the Council Plan target of 85 %. There has been a continued effort made across all Council services to maintain performance to timescales, despite the increase in numbers received from 1117 to 1397, a 25 % increase.

4.2 How we are improving

Improving the way that complaints are dealt with requires a whole Council approach, with services prioritising complaints and making improvements based on the feedback from customers. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every service to make responding to complaints and learning from customer feedback a priority.

A number of service improvements have been made over the year based on feedback from our customers. Key themes of service improvements have included the training and performance management of staff, reviews of processes and policies and the revision of communication materials. Examples of case studies where service improvements have been made based on complaints are outlined within each directorate section.

5. ADULT CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTORATE

5.1 Adult Care

Figure 9: Total number of complaints and compliments relating to Adult Care

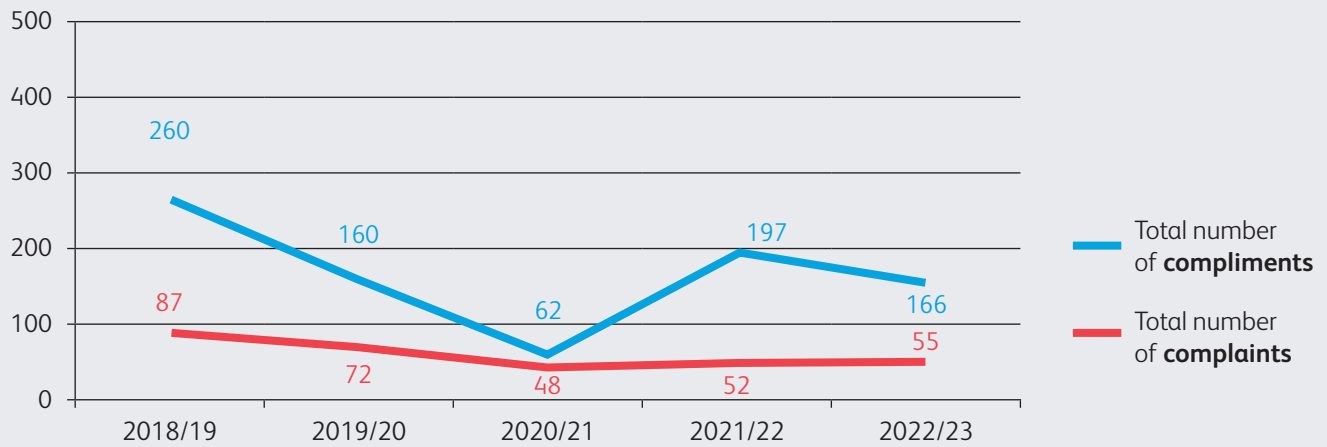


Figure 10: Percentage of complaints about Adult Care closed in timescales

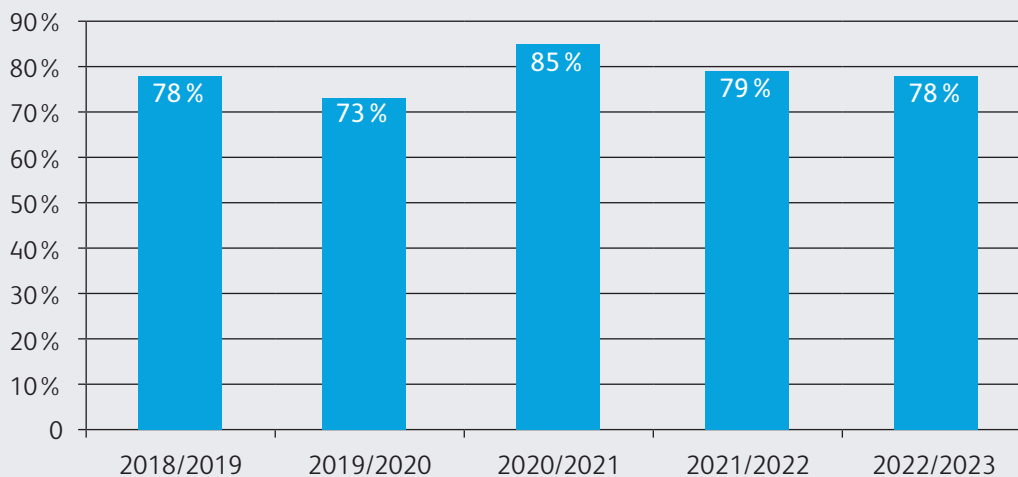
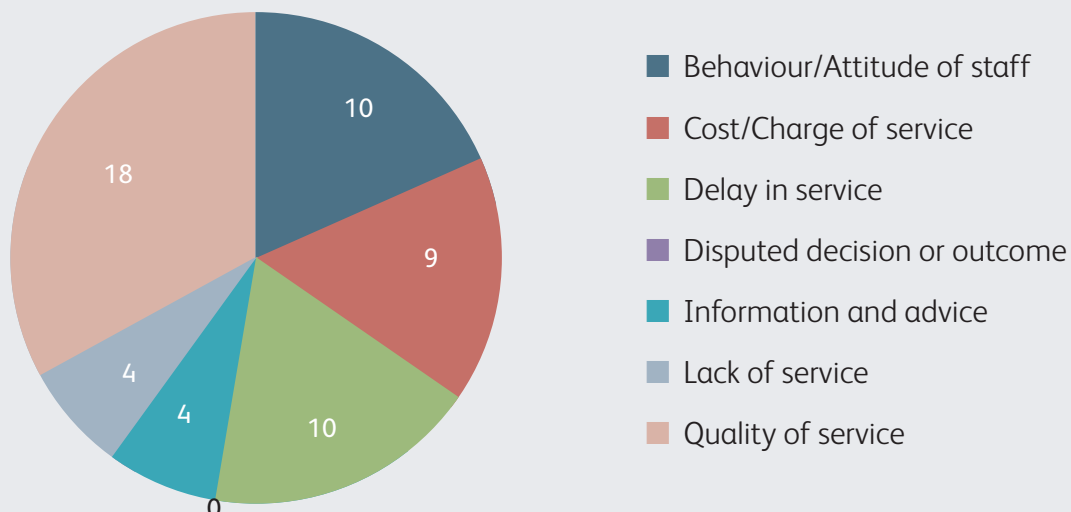


Figure 11: Complaints about Adult Care by category – 2022/23



5.1.1 Key Headlines

6%

more
complaints
received

More complaints were received about Adult Care. (55 in 2022/23 compared to 52 in 2021/22.)

Less compliments were received about Adult Care. (166 in 2022/23 compared to 197 in 2021/22.)

69%

fewer
compliments
received



Fewer complaints were upheld. 12 complaints were upheld in 2022/23 compared with 14 in 2021/22. This is a 14 % decrease.

78% of complaints were responded to within timescales. Compared with 79 % in 2021/22.



One Ombudsman complaint was received. It was upheld.

18 of 55 complaints were regarding Quality of Service. Ten were due to delay in service, and ten were regarding behaviour and attitude of staff.



Prevalent themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for adult services complaints were:

- Delay in Service Being Provided/Action Taken
- No Service Provided/Action Taken
- Lack of Information/Advice
- Lack of Financial Support/Eligibility
- Dispute Over Liability or Debt

In addition, the increase in the number of formal complaints of 6 % is significantly lower than the all Council increase of 25 %. The largest change in complaints received was in the Integrated Discharge Team (Hospital Social Work Team) where they reduced from ten to four complaints received. This indicates that a better focus on communication with customers and their families, in part informed by the response to complaints, has contributed to this reduction. Community Occupational Therapy also saw a reduction in complaints received from three to one received this year.

Other services saw a small increase in complaints received, Safeguarding and MCA/DoLS Service, increased to six complaints received from one received in the previous year. Revenue and Payments increased from two to seven complaints received this year, which indicates additional financial pressures felt by the community in general. Finally, Locality Social Work Teams also saw a small increase from 24 to 28 received, this indicates the efforts made by front line Social Workers and managers to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity despite pressures on the service.

Another positive was the significant reduction in Ombudsman enquiries, from six decisions to one decision in the year. One decision received is in line with the average number of investigations and the large increase in the previous year (2021/22) can be understood as an effect of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Adult Care in 2022/23:

Compliment for First Contact Team. "I wanted to say thank you very much for visiting me yesterday. You lifted my spirits and gave me hope. Thank you too for acting so quickly in getting me the aids to improve my abilities to be more independent."

Compliment for Hospital Social Work Team. "Her compassion and professionalism have shone through. Some people are the right type for their jobs and C is one of them. Please pass on our gratitude to C. All our family are grateful for all she's done."

Compliment for Reablement Team "Thank you for getting my mum back on her feet. Reablement a worth the weight in gold and all the ladies that have been really supportive and a great help to D and me as it was all getting a bit on top of me".

Compliment for Locality Social Work Team. "You've been brilliant you have done everything we have asked and followed up on everything that has been promised."

5.1.2 Lessons Learned

Adult Care made several service improvements based on customer feedback in 2022/23. An example of these improvements is outlined in the case study below.

The Complaint

The customer had experienced delays when they requested a care assessment. In addition, they had been provided with unclear advice about the assessment process and how to access care.

What did the Council do?

Investigating the complaint, we reviewed the information and advice provided and the time taken to respond to the requests for assessment. Through sharing the learning from this complaint and providing additional training and advice to key members of staff the service will now ensure correct information and advice is given about the assessment process. It will ensure that acknowledgement letters are sent when requests are received for assessments/ re-assessments so that there is better information if the service cannot action the request immediately.

Who is better off?

Improvements to the Council's Adult Social Care assessment process will benefit all current and future users of adult social services in Rotherham. Through clear advice that has been more accurately recorded, the Council will ensure that problems experienced in this complaint will not reoccur and that services have been improved for all residents.

Other lessons learned from complaints.

Some additional examples on where we have improved our service are as follows.

Improved the information and advice around Direct Payments to ensure customers and their families and supporters are happy with the level of information given at the time they are set up.

Ensuring we explain with thoroughness, in plain language, the principals of making safeguarding personal to those who have had to make a referral. To make sure that they fully understand what will happen.

Providing training to Social Work staff to better ensure that contingency plans are realistic and achievable and that they can be put in place without delay when required.

5.2 Housing Services

Figure 12: Total number of complaints and compliments about Housing Services

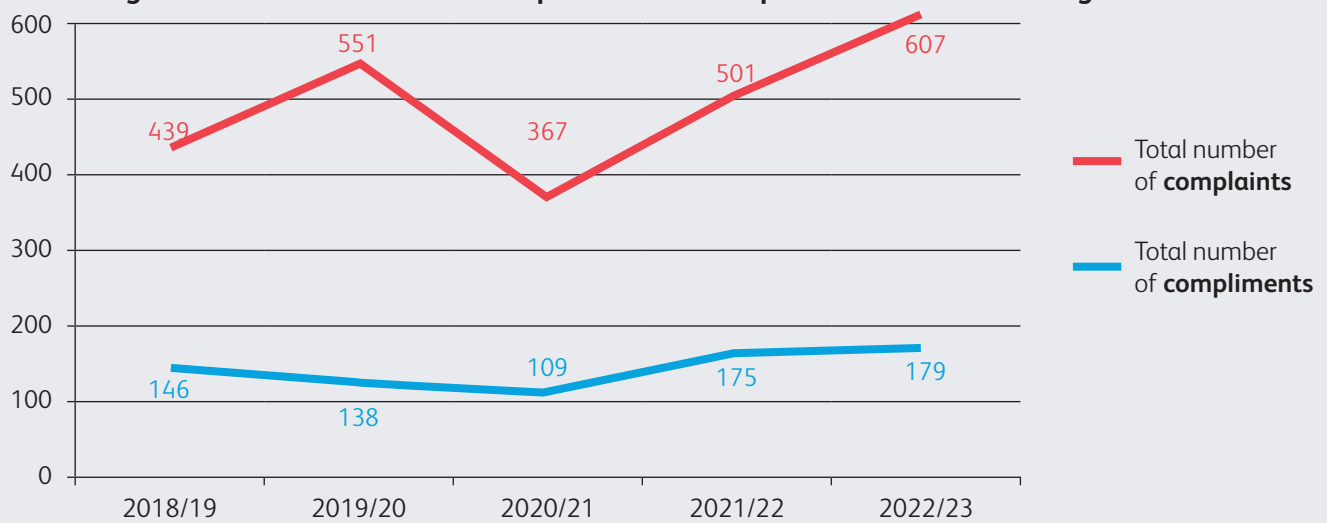


Figure 13: Percentage of complaints about Housing Services closed within timescales

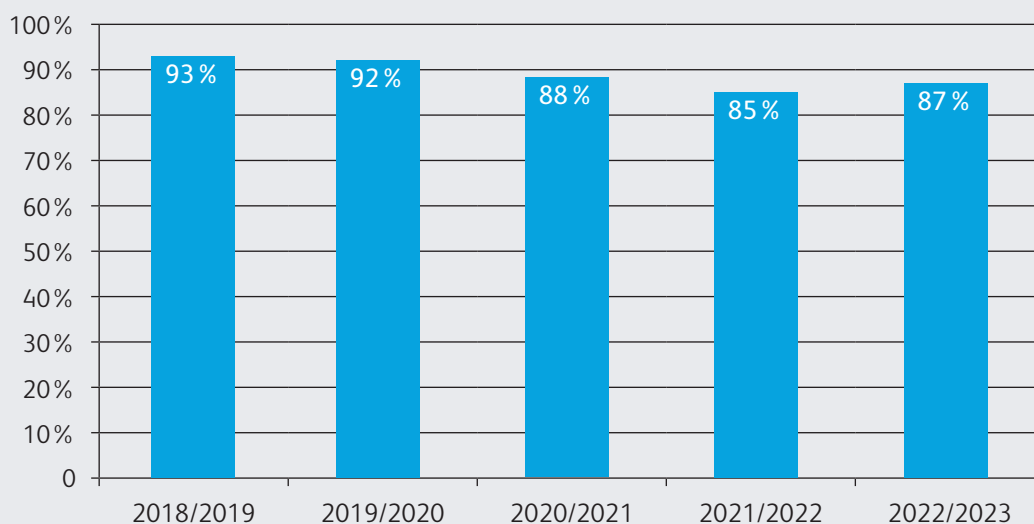
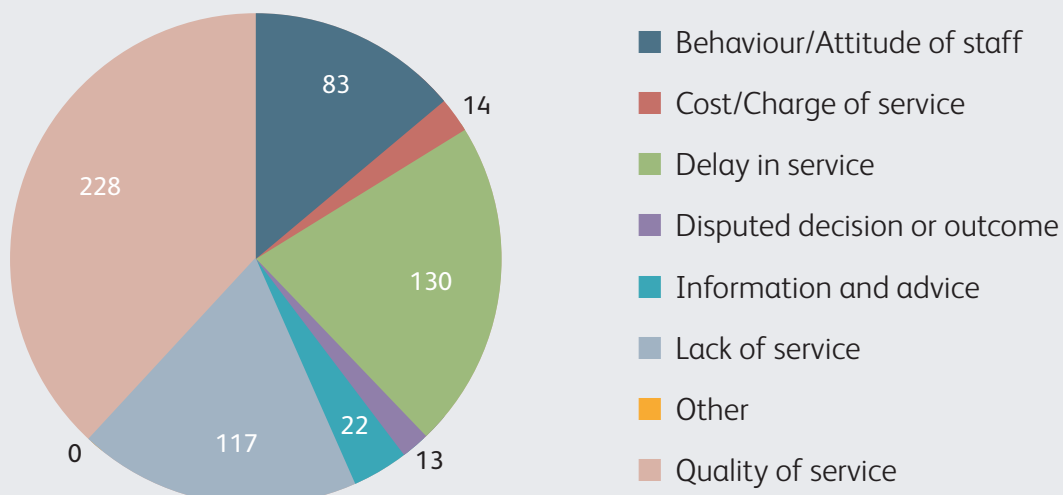


Figure 14: Complaints about Housing Services by category – 2022/23



5.2.1 Key Headlines

21%

more
complaints
received

More complaints about Housing Services were received.
(607 in 2022/23 compared with 501 in 2021/22.)

Compliments have remained consistent.

(179 in 2022/23 compared to 175 in 2021/22.)

2%

more
compliments
received



Consistent proportion of upheld complaints.

27 % (163/607) in 2022/23 compared to 2021/23 27 % (135/501).

87% of complaints were responded to within timescales. This meets the Council Plan target of 85 % and is an improvement on 2021/22 (85 %).



Two Ombudsman complaint decisions were received.

Neither were upheld.

228 complaints were regarding Quality of Service. 130 were due to delays in service and 117 were regarding lack of service.



Examples of some of the compliments received for housing services in 2022/23:

- "The two electricians who attended the property were very polite and made sure everything was clean and tidy and checked additional items before leaving."
- "My sincere thanks for all you have done together with your supporting staff."
- "The operative was very professional and carried out the works to a very high standard, I am very impressed."

Themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for housing services complaints were:

- Quality of service being provided.
- Delays in service provided/action taken.
- Lack of service provided.
- Attitude and behaviour of team.

Complaints received for Housing Services increased by 21 %; this is lower than the total Council increase of 25 %. Housing and Estates and Strategic Housing Development saw a decrease in complaints: 2 % (two complaints) and -18 % (three complaints) respectively. Delays in service had been reduced and applications had been processed in a timely manner.

Business and Commercial Services saw the greatest increase in complaints, 95 %, from 2021/22 to 2022/23 (39 to 76). 43 % (33) of these were related to the attitude and conduct of team members and a common theme from these complaints is their relation to difficult conversations around rent collection.

Housing Property Services had an increase of 27 % from 2021/22 to 2022/23 (135 to 172). The service responded to a large portion of complaints between January and March (36 %). The winter months saw an increase in complaints around boiler issues, leaks from roofs and pipework and then resulting damp and mould issues. Throughout the year quality of service accounts for 42 % (73) of complaints for Housing Property Services where return visits had to be made to complete work previously started or where customers were dissatisfied with the actions taken to deal with damp and mould.

Repairs Contractors received 22 % more complaints in 2021-22 compared to 2022-23 (112 to 137). 20 % (28) of the complaints received for this service were for the quality of the service provided and 16 % (22) were due to the standard of the work carried out requiring repeat visits to rectify.

Housing Options have received 16 % more complaints (76 up to 88). Complaints for this service are mostly attributed to quality of service provided (45 %) and lack of service (21 %) where customers believed they should have had more, or quicker support. This is reflective of the issues attended by Housing Options including homelessness, temporary accommodation, and advice and assessment around this.

5.2.2 Lessons Learned

Housing Services made several service improvements based on customer feedback in 2022/23. An example of these improvements is outlined in the case study below.

The Complaint

The customer was chased for arrears for their District Heating payment, due to a problem with the direct debit payment, which on investigation it was found to have not been set up correctly by the Council.

What did we do?

An investigation found that there had been a technical issue with the new housing online website portal where the direct debit mandate was created. The service provided an apology, resolved the payment issue, and temporarily removed the option for residents to create a direct debit mandate online, until the issue had been rectified. The problem was quickly resolved, and all District Heating payments can now be paid by direct debit via the website.

Who is better off?

This will benefit all current and future users of District Heating.

Other lessons learned from complaints.

Some additional examples on where we have improved our services are as follows.

A complaint about mess left on a driveway during an empty property clearance by a Council contractor. The issue was raised at their staff training events to avoid this happening in the future.

A complaint about a delay in processing tenancy succession. Steps were taken to learn from the complaint and improve the communication procedures between key departments.

5.3 Public Health

It is a statutory requirement to report annually on the complaints received for Public Health services. Please note that the Public Health team predominantly commission services and it is the commissioned service providers who will respond to any formal complaints via their own complaint procedures. The information below relates compliments and to complaints responded to by the Public Health services directly under the Council's complaint procedure.

5.3.1 Key Headlines

- No complaints were received. (Two in 2021/22)
- One compliment was recorded. (Nine in 2021/22)
- No complaints were upheld. (None upheld in 2021/22)
- No complaints were investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

5.3.2 Complaints

- None received

5.3.3 Compliments

Detail below.

Compliment for Public Health. "The memorial event was R's creation, and she has worked extremely hard to make it the success it is."

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Figure 15: Total number of complaints and compliments about Children and Young People's Services

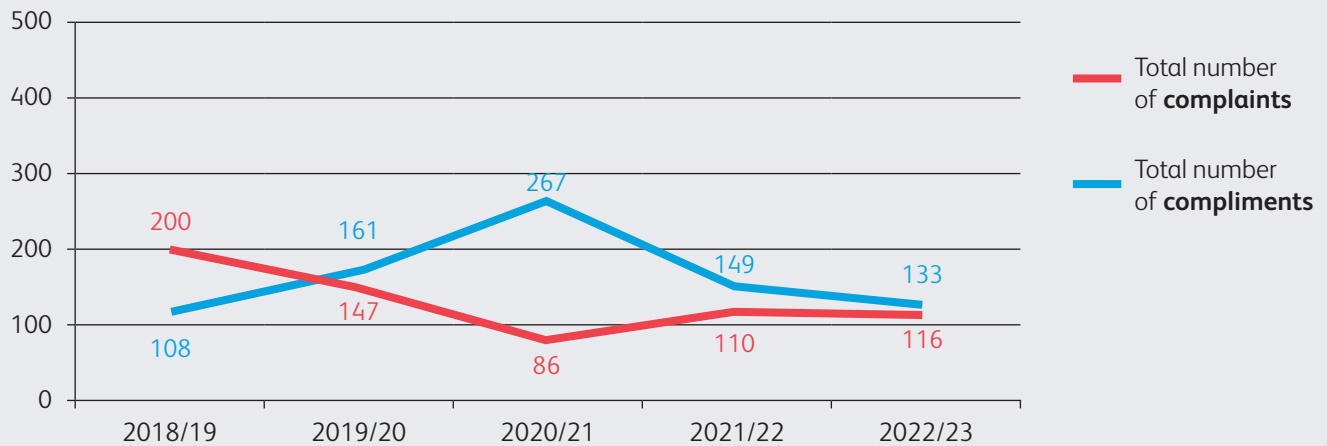


Figure 16: Percentage of complaints about Children and Young People's Services closed within timescales

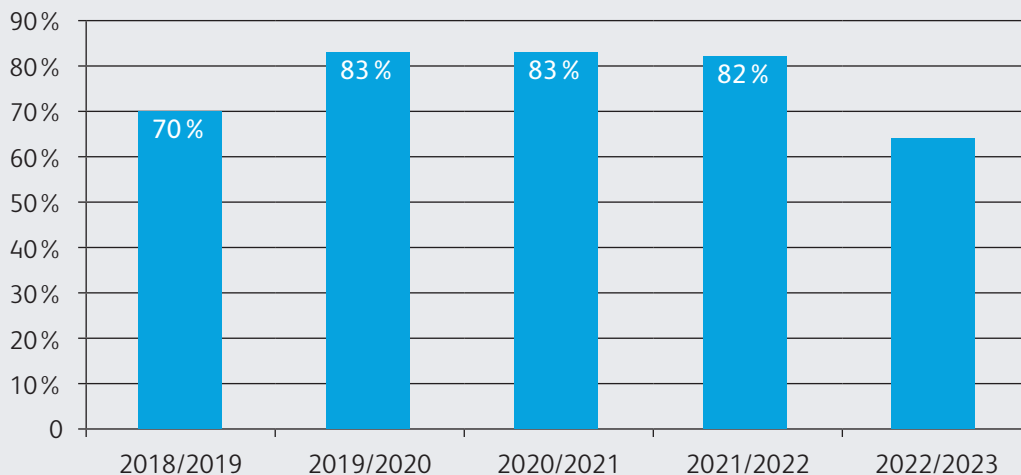
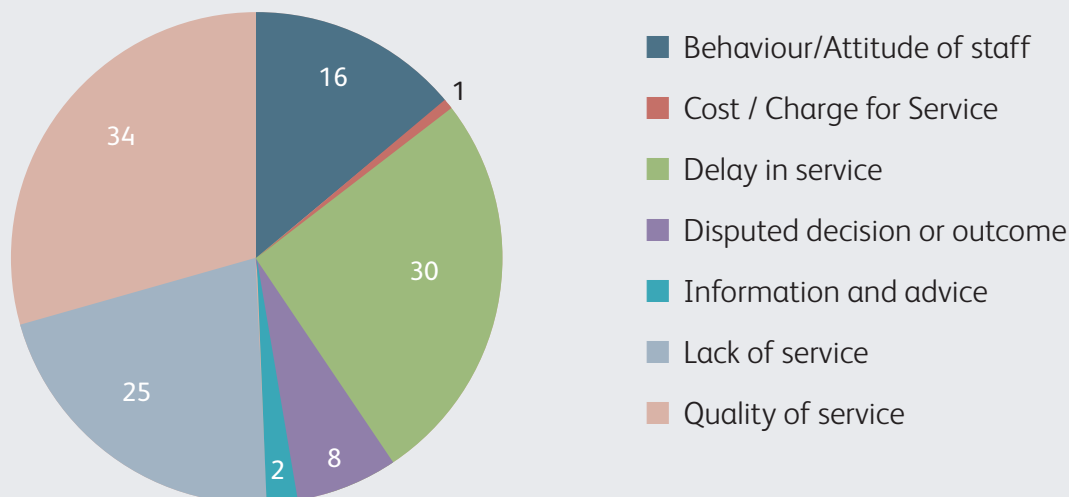


Figure 17: Complaints about Children and Young People's Services by category – 2022/23



6.1 Key Headlines

5%

more
complaints
received

**More complaints
about Children and
Young People's
services were received.**

(116 in 2022/23
compared with 110
in 2021/22.)

**Less compliments
were received about
Children's and Young
People's services.**

(133 in 2022/23
compared with 149 in
2021/22.)

11%

fewer
compliments
received



**More complaints were
upheld.**

(80 in 2022/23
compared with
57 in 2021/22.)

**64% of complaints
were responded to
within timescales.**

This is lower than
the previous year.



**Three Ombudsman
complaint decisions
were received,
compared to four last
year.**

All of these were upheld.

**Most complaints were
regarding delay in
service, 34 of 116.**

Followed by quality of
service, 30 of 116.



Prevalent themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for Children and Young People's Services complaints were:

- Disagreements with decisions made and the outcome of assessment.
- Delays in preparing reports or assessments.
- Delays/difficulties with communication

Managers have continued to be encouraged and supported to address concerns at the earliest opportunity, so that any problems can be resolved before they enter the formal complaint procedure, which means the complaint levels remain at a lower level.

Some key learning and improvements from complaints:

- Improved recognition, and therefore action by Social Workers to refer cases to the Edge of Care team to prevent relationship breakdowns.
- Development sessions for Social Workers focusing on reviewing family plans to prevent delays, improving communication regarding sharing difficult information about their child's care plan, and providing opportunities to involve the parents in relevant conversations and improve two-way communication.
- Reminding staff of the importance of responding to parents/SENDCos in a timely manner and managing expectations early.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Children & Young People's Services in 2022/23:

"She always treats them with respect, keeps them updated and is always available when needed. She keeps in contact with them regularly."

"Thanks so much for all your patience, support and guidance in helping me understand what was needed as I had no idea and was struggling."

"Want to commend social work practice and the Virtual school. I have very little contact with Rotherham being from a Sheffield school but wanted to say that the VS have been excellent in supporting us with the children's educational needs. I also want to add that the moment that I picked up the phone yesterday to report the concerns regarding the child, that the social work practice has been 'outstanding'. I work in a highly deprived area as a safeguarding lead and feel that others could 'learn a lot from you guys in Rotherham.'"

6.2 Lessons Learned

Children and Young People's Services made several service improvements in 2022/23 following the feedback from customers. An example of this is outlined in the case study below.

The Complaint

The Council received a complaint from a carer relating to financial assistance and the delay in providing monies. The information received by the carers gave approximate figures based on the information that was held on file but stated that this could change once evidence had been received as the financial assessment is a means tested assessment. Once this information was received, it resulted in a lower amount being awarded.

What did we do?

The learning from this complaint was shared within the relevant services so that practitioners were mindful about the language that they used when discussing finances and communication to be clearer as the process can be complex.

Who is better off?

Families dealing with complex financial assessments, ensuring that information is clear and sets out what is an estimate and the explanations around what a means test actually means.

Who is better off?

Some additional examples on where we have improved our service are as follows.

The process for approval of Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangement Order allowances was lengthy and repetitive. The process was reviewed to prevent future delays and duplication of reports, documents, and authorisations.

The locality model within the Education Health Care Planning Team was introduced in order to support communication and when handing over cases. Caseworkers are now linked to schools and hold a caseload.

Focused learning sessions around the importance of accurate record keeping and the importance of communication.

7. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Figure 18: Total number of compliments and complaints about Regeneration and Environment

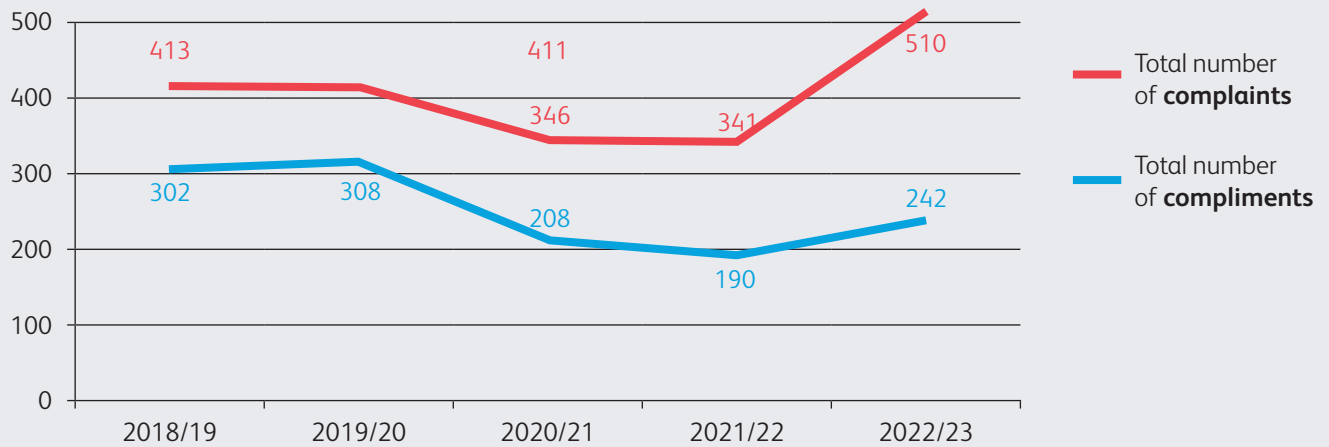


Figure 19: Percentage of complaints about Regeneration and Environment closed within timescales

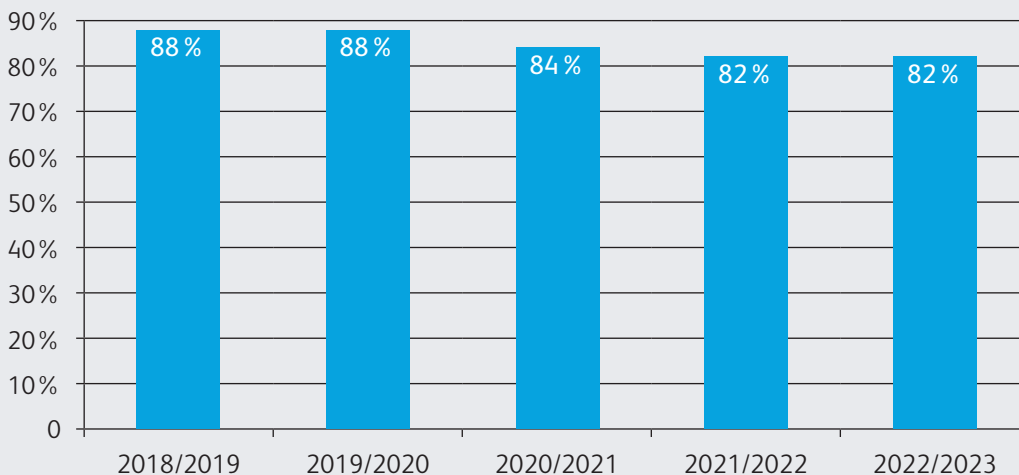
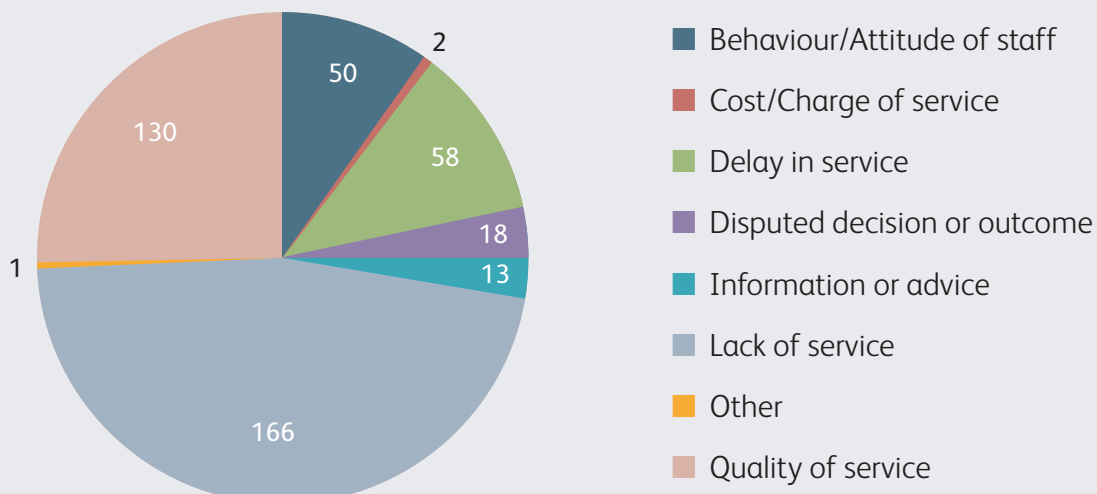


Figure 20: Complaints about Regeneration and Environment by category – 2022/23



7.1 Key Headlines

50%

more
complaints
received

More complaints about Regeneration and Environment Services were received (510 in 2022/23 compared with 341 in 2021/22.)

More compliments were received about Regeneration and Environment Services (242 in 2022/23 compared with 190 in 2021/22.)

27%

more
compliments
received



More complaints were upheld (200 in 2021/22 compared with 73 in 2021/22.)

More complaints responded to within timescales. (84% in 2022/23 compared with 82% in 2021/22.)



1 Ombudsman complaint decision was received. The complaint was not upheld. Six received in 2021/22.

47% of complaints were regarding lack of service (237 of 509 complaints). 129 complaints were regarding the quality of service.



Prevalent themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for Regeneration and Environment Services were:

- Missed bin collections and complaints about bins not being returned to the correct location.
- Delay in delivery of new or replacement bins.
- Actions and conduct of waste operatives.
- Lack of action in respect of environmental health and community protection issues.
- Lack of maintenance of trees following issues being reported to the Council.

The largest number of complaints were regarding domestic waste and recycling collections in the Waste Management service, with 261 complaints received. This was the main contributing factor in the increase of complaints for the directorate and was primarily as a result of staffing issues over the summer period, which had a significant impact on the level of service provided.

The number of complaints received for Regulation and Enforcement also increased significantly from 26 to 46 between 2021/22 and 2022/23, where complaints primarily related to the perceived lack of enforcement action.

The Tree Service also received a significant number of complaints regarding lack of action in response to reports regarding trees; increasing from 19 complaints received in the previous year to 21 received in this year.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Regeneration and Environment Services in 2022/23:

- “Just wanted to take a moment to pass on my thanks to you, you’ve both been incredibly helpful. Really appreciate how prompt you guys have been answering queries and coming out to site, thank you for providing such good service.”
- “The team are very easy to deal with, always act in a professional manner and go above and beyond their normal duties. This team always blow me away with their hard work, dedication, and commitment to the task in hand. Today I visited the above property, and I could have cried at the transformation. I have attached before and after photographs and I invite managers to recognise the team’s hard work. I honestly do not think these guys are paid enough and I feel they should be considered for a pay regrade. I also feel they should be nominated for the heart awards, if they still take place.”
- “It’s great to see the improvements on the recent road surfacing and markings and I’d like to offer my thanks to all those involved, residents in the Ward are very grateful for all the work done.”
- “Thank you for all your help you proved there are still people who take their job looking after people seriously.....you made a horrible situation so much better by being so good at your job. We can’t thankyou enough.”
- “I wish to send praise and thank you to the gentlemen who carried out repairs and resurfacing work to the road on which I live, I have campaigned for a long time for this to be done and hope that you will personally pass the message on to the chaps involved with this work. A massive thank you.”

7.2 Lessons Learned

Regeneration and Environment Services made several service improvements based on customer feedback in 2022/23. An example of these improvements is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

Complaints were received regarding missed waste and recycling collections and delays in returning to empty bins that had been missed. Complaints were also received regarding delays in the delivery of new and replacement bins.

What did we do?

During summer 2022, the Waste Management Service experienced significant staffing issues, which led to an increase in complaints. This meant that the service operated with minimum staffing levels for an extended period of time which caused an increase in missed collections as well as delays in returning to collect missed bins and the delivery of new and replacement bins.

An improvement plan was put in place, and which included the following improvements to the service:

- Recruitment of additional staff to cover periods of staffing pressure.
- Working with colleagues in Customer Services to improve the advice and information provided to residents when reporting issues with collections.
- Completed an exercise to optimise collection routes which has provided more efficient collections.
- Introduced new processes for missed collections and assisted collections.

Who is better off?

The contingency measures put in place have ensured that the impact on staffing levels during the summer months has not been repeated. The number of missed collections has decreased and the number of complaints has also decreased.

This has resulted in fewer missed collections and no further delays in returning to collect bins that have been missed.

Other lessons learned from complaints

Customer's data is more secure and there is less opportunity for incorrectly addressed correspondence to. Some additional examples on where we have improved our service are as follows.

- Clifton Park Museum is now operating card and cash payments from April 2022. The temporary system of only accepting card payments was due to Covid measures that were put in place to ensure safe working practices and limited access to cashiers and cash transportation.
- Reviewed the system of monitoring telephone messages for the Planning Department to prevent enquiries being missed in the future.
- Internal recording systems to be implemented in Education Transport so that all communications are actioned, documented, and recorded; so that any member of staff dealing with a query is aware of any previous communications, incidents, complaints, and actions.
- The Service has set up a Neighbourhood Road Safety Scheme Fund to facilitate requests from residents for road safety improvements.

8. FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Figure 21: Total number of complaints and compliments about Finance and Customer Services

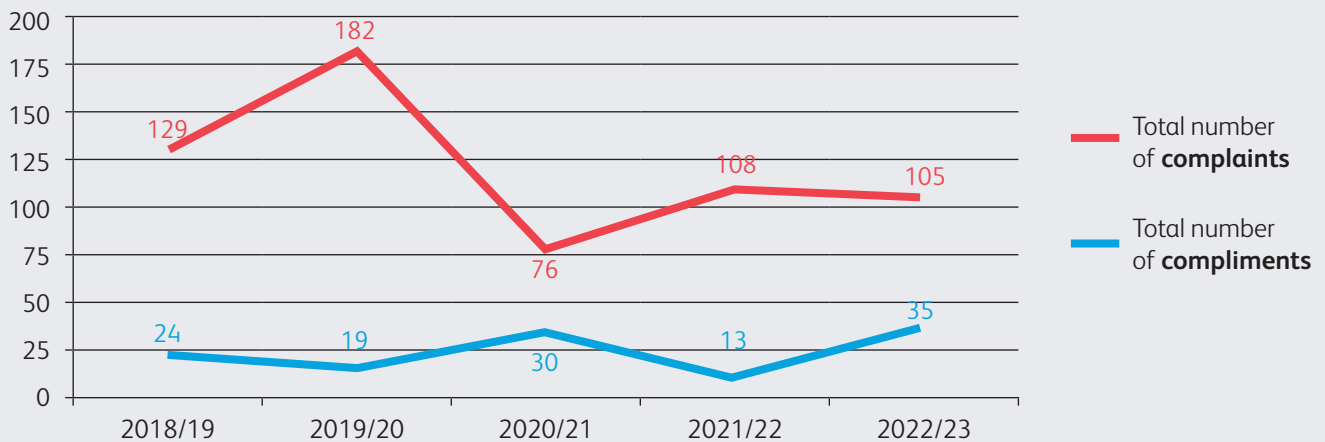


Figure 22: Percentage of complaints about Finance and Customer Services closed within timescales

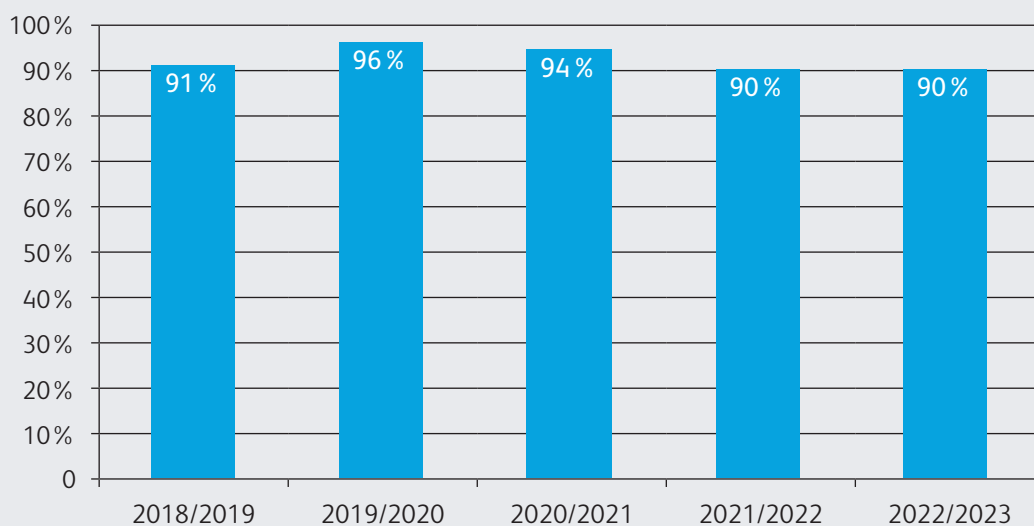
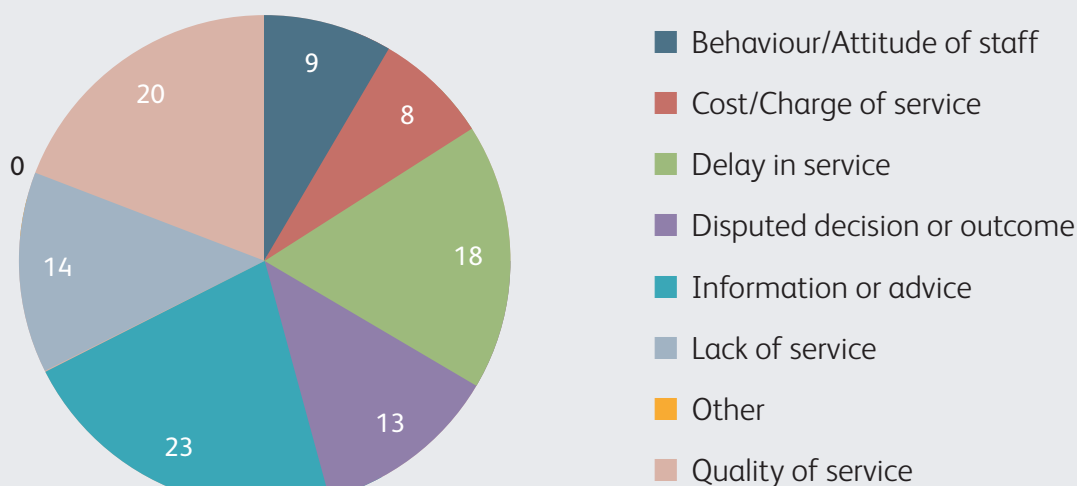


Figure 23: Complaints about Finance and Customer Services by category – 2022/23



8.1 Key Headlines

1%

less
complaints
received

Less complaints about Finance and Customer Services were received.

(105 in 2022/23 compared with 106 in 2021/22.)

More compliments were received about Finance and Customer Services.

(35 in 2022/23 compared with 13 in 2022/21.)

169%

more
compliments
received



More complaints were upheld.

(24 in 2022/23 compared with 19 in 2021/22.)

90% of complaints were responded to within timescales.

This is above the 5-year council average of 83 % and is consistent with the performance in 2021/22, 90 %.



One Ombudsman complaint decision were received.

It was upheld. None were received in 2021/22.

20% of complaints were regarding information and advice.

(21 out of 105) and 19 % were regarding delay in service and quality of service (20 out of 105.)



Prevalent themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for Finance and Customer Services were:

- Inaccuracy of advice and information provided by Customer Service Advisors in relation to Council home repairs and bin collections.
- Inaccurate advice and lack of information provided regarding Council tax, housing benefit and Council Tax Support.
- Call waiting times for Customer Services.
- Errors in administration of Council Tax accounts.

The directorate saw a significant decrease in the number of complaints received in previous years due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, complaints for this year and the previous year have remained consistent and are still significantly less than pre-pandemic numbers of complaints.

Complaints for Customer Services increased by 26 % due to an increase in demand for service and call volumes from June 2022 and the introduction of new staff into the service to meet demand.

In addition, complaints in relation to Council Tax have decreased by 18 % from the previous year. This in part appears to reflect the impact of the continuation of additional financial support being provided to customers, which led to complaints being received in the past.

In addition, a further six complaints were received in relation to Legal Services.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Finance and Customer Services in 2022/23:

- “I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the officer in the account management department. That lady saved my day after a rough few months this lady helped me above and beyond and I will be eternally grateful...I would love this message to get back to her. She really has made an impact on me in a very good way.”
- “I’m just writing to thank the lady who helped me get a marriage certificate fast tracked to another passport office; without your help he wouldn’t have the passport. Thank you for being kind and patient with me and keeping in contact the entire process. We appreciate it.”
- “I would like to express my thanks to a gentleman who has helped my son apply for a bus pass who is in receipt of DLA.....Very impressed with the service I have received, and I just wanted to let you know that you have a great asset to your team.”

8.2 Lessons Learned

Finance and Customer Services made several service improvements in 2022/23 following the feedback from customers. An example of these is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

A customer complained about a delay in a repair being undertaken to lighting in a communal area of a block of flats and had to make several phone calls to the Council before the repair was completed.

What did we do?

The service identified that the repair had been incorrectly recorded against the property address of the customer who had reported the issue rather than to the location of the block of flats. It was also identified that there was an issue with the postcode on the system, which meant that when the repairs operative attended, they could not locate the property or communal area of the relevant block.

The issue with the postcode on the system has been rectified to ensure that operatives are able to locate the property for any future repairs. Further training has also been provided to our Customer Service Advisors to ensure that repair jobs for communal areas are recorded correctly.

Who is better off?

There are no longer delays in repairs being completed in communal areas as all Customer Services Advisors are aware of how to correctly records repairs for these areas. No further complaints have been received where this was the cause of a delay in completing a repair.

Other lessons learned from complaints.

Some additional examples on where we have improved our service are as follows:

Trained Customer Service Agents to make full use of information held on the Council’s Housing System to provide accurate advice to customers.

Further checks put in place to negate an issue where some customers did not receive online Council tax bills.

9. ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE

The directorate is mainly comprised of services internally supporting the Council, the largest service area being Human Resources. The majority of services within the directorate only have limited contact with external customers (except for the Neighbourhoods Team and the Complaints Team) and due to the nature of services they provide they will not generate a lot of complaints or compliments.

As such, information on what was received in 2022/23 is provided in summary below.

9.1 Key Headlines

- Four complaints were received (Three in 2021/22).
- 35 compliments were recorded (27 in 2021/22).
- All Four were stage 1 complaints. No Stage 2 complaints.
- Two complaints were upheld (Three upheld in 2021/22).
- One Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman decision (Upheld).
- 75 % of complaints were resolved within statutory timescales (100 %, in 2021/22).

9.2 Complaints

The subject matter of each complaint received is listed below:

Democratic Services

- Governance of a school admissions appeal hearing.

Human Resources - Shared Service Centre

- Unhappy with referral to a debt collection agency over an overpayment.

Neighbourhoods - South Area

- Incorrect information on council website in respect of Waverley Community Council.

Policy, Performance and Intelligence

- Seeking compensation for property damage under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

9.3 Compliments

Examples include:

Compliment for Democratic Services. "I would like to thank you for the professionalism and promptness you have displayed in handling our numerous enquiries over the last two years."

Compliment for Learning and Development Team. "Thank you for all the support & assistance you have given me over the past few years when trying to co-ordinate the Training Programme."

Compliment for Policy, Performance, and Intelligence Service. "Can I just say thank you to you all for helping out today. The feedback on the workshop from all the people I spoke to was overwhelmingly great, and that isn't an easy to please group!"

10. NEXT STEPS, 2023/24

During 2022/23 the numbers of complaints increased demonstrating the challenges facing the Council and the pressures on the delivery of services, as services normalised following the pandemic.

The need to provide excellent customer services that are efficient and cost effective is fundamental to the management of the Council. Therefore, it is vital that complaints are responded to in a timely manner and the complaints procedures work effectively for both customers and staff.

The following are the planned actions in 2023/24 to ensure that the way the Council deals with complaints and responds to customer feedback continues to improve.

Key actions included:

- Self-assessment to be completed for the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- Complaints Team self-assessment completed every 12 months to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- Complaint Policy and Complaint Procedures will be changed to comply with the new requirements of the code.
- Stage 2 complaints for all Corporate Complaints, including Housing Services, will have a response time of four weeks (previously five weeks).
- Complaint satisfaction survey to be fully rolled out for all complaints.
- New Housing Services complaint web page to include better information for tenants, including learning from complaints case studies and satisfaction information.
- Continuing review of all customer complaint literature, including website information, easy read guidance and information for children and young people.
- Ensure compliance against benchmarked standards ahead of expected inspections in Adult Care and Housing Services.
- Ongoing complaints training for staff. Continue to seek ways to deliver training to front line staff to allow them to understand the role and purpose of the complaint procedures.
- Work with management meetings in all departments to create a better learning from complaints programme. That all learning reported is considered and the impact of service improvement is understood and recorded.
- Complaints Team will work with Council departments to check to see if there is anything more that can be done to resolve a complaint after notification that an Ombudsman investigation has been received.
- Work to improve performance to complaint procedure timescales.
- Increase the number of compliments recorded, Complaints Team to continue to work with managers to ensure that the process for recording and reporting compliments is improved. Benchmarking with other Local Authorities has taken place and their best practice approaches will be used to further increase the numbers of compliments received.
- Continue to train front line staff and managers in respect of the formal complaints process and best practice when responding to customer complaints.

APPENDIX ONE

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman decisions 2022/23, Rotherham Council and statistical neighbours.

Authority Name	Invalid or Incomplete	Advice Given	Referred Back for Local Resolution	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Total Investigated	Total	Uphold rate (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	1	0	26	20	5	3	8	55	38%	77%
Halton Borough Council	1	2	5	9	1	4	5	22	80%	72%
Rotherham Council	5	3	15	14	1	6	7	44	86%	77%
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	2	1	12	15	2	7	9	39	78%	77%
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	1	0	13	13	3	7	10	37	70%	72%
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	3	1	18	20	3	8	11	53	73%	77%
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council	6	9	15	20	6	8	14	64	57%	77%
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	2	1	14	31	3	9	12	60	75%	77%
Wakefield City Council	6	5	13	20	4	10	14	58	71%	77%
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	1	0	20	19	2	12	14	54	86%	77%
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	4	5	15	31	3	12	15	70	80%	77%
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	1	1	14	30	4	15	19	65	79%	77%
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	3	3	21	26	7	15	22	75	68%	72%
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	1	4	16	27	1	17	18	66	94%	77%
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	8	5	15	23	6	21	27	78	78%	77%

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

19 July 2023

By email

Ms Kemp
Chief Executive
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Ms Kemp

Annual Review letter 2022-23

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2023. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints. As always, I would encourage you to consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Leader of your Council and Chair of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, to encourage effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer such valuable opportunities to learn and improve.

The end of the reporting year, saw the retirement of Michael King, drawing his tenure as Local Government Ombudsman to a close. I was delighted to be appointed to the role of Interim Ombudsman in April and look forward to working with you and colleagues across the local government sector in the coming months. I will be building on the strong foundations already in place and will continue to focus on promoting improvement through our work.

Complaint statistics

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic.

Over the past two years, we have reviewed our processes to ensure we do the most we can with the resources we have. One outcome is that we are more selective about the complaints we look at in detail, prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate. While providing a more sustainable way for us to work, it has meant that changes in uphold rates this year are not solely down to the nature of the cases coming to us. We are less likely to carry out investigations on 'borderline' issues, so we are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall.

Our average uphold rate for all investigations has increased this year and you may find that your organisation's uphold rate is higher than previous years. This means that comparing uphold rates with previous years carries a note of caution. Therefore, I recommend comparing this statistic with that of similar organisations, rather than previous years, to better understand your organisation's performance.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and we were satisfied with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and credit organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your organisation with similar authorities to provide an average marker of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data, and a copy of this letter, will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), on 26 July 2023. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

I know that complaints offer organisations a rich source of intelligence and insight that has the potential to be transformational. These insights can indicate a problem with a specific area of service delivery or, more broadly, provide a perspective on an organisation's culture and ability to learn. To realise the potential complaints have to support service improvements, organisations need to have the fundamentals of complaint handling in place. To support you to do so, we have continued our work with the Housing Ombudsman Service to develop a joint complaint handling code that will provide a standard for organisations to work to. We will consult on the code and its implications prior to launch and will be in touch with further details.

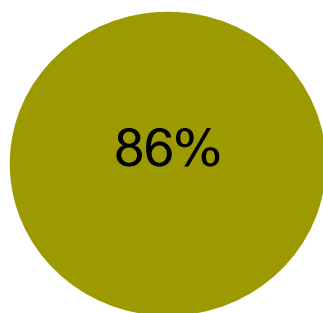
In addition, our successful training programme includes practical interactive workshops that help participants develop their complaint handling skills. We can also offer tailored support and bespoke training to target specific issues your organisation might have identified. We delivered 105 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1350 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training or get in touch at training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Najsarek
Interim Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Interim Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaints upheld



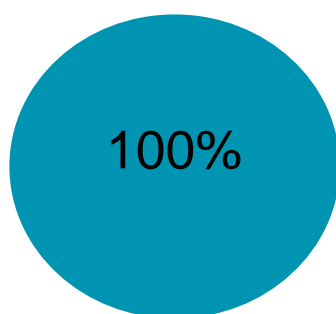
86% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **77%** in similar organisations.

6
upheld decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **7** investigations for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



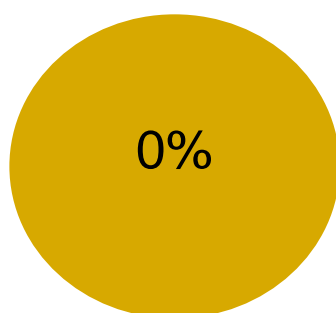
In **100%** of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.

This compares to an average of **99%** in similar organisations.

Statistics are based on a total of **7** compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

- Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An organisation with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation



In **0%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **10%** in similar organisations.

0
satisfactory remedy decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **6** upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

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Appendix 3

Complaint procedures overview

There are 3 stages to the Council's Corporate and Social Care complaint procedures.

There are 2 stages about complaints in respect of the Council's Landlord function. (Most Housing Services complaints)

Stage 1 - Response from line manager

Full response within **10** working days for Corporate Complaints. Up to **20** working days for Social Care complaints.

Stage 2 - Investigation by independent officer (Corporate and Adult Social Care stage 2 complaints are investigated by the Council's Complaint Team and Childrens Social Care complaints by an externally contracted investigator)

Full response:

- Up to **25** working days for Corporate Complaints.
- Up to **45** working days for Adult Social Care complaints.
- Up to **65** working days for Childrens Social Care complaints.

Complaints about the Council's Landlord function end after stage 2. Tenants have the option of having their complaint considered by an Independent Tenants Panel (operated in Rotherham by Rotherfed) or by an Independent Person (Councillor or MP)

Stage 3 – Complaint's review panel / review by Assistant Director

Full response:

- Up to **25** working days for Corporate Complaints (Members panel).
- Up to **20** working days for Adult Social Care complaints (Review by Assistant Director).
- Up to **50** working days for Childrens Social Care complaints (Externally contracted independent professionals).

If unresolved, a complaint can be taken to,

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman / Housing Ombudsman (Landlord function complaints)

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28 September 2023

Dear Chief Executive,

We are writing to invite you to respond to our consultation on our joint Complaint Handling Code which will apply to all local councils in England. As your local council has housing powers we are writing to you jointly as your services may come under the jurisdiction of both the Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Given some councils are within both our jurisdictions, we have partnered to make the Code the single gold standard for complaint handling in the local government sector. We believe a joint Code will make it easier for local people to hold councils and social landlords to account and for those organisations to have confidence that they are employing best practice. It will also align complaints about housing management, which is already subject to the Code through the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, with local authorities' other services.

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (the Code) has been in operation since 2020 and has been successfully adopted by most councils for its housing management responsibilities. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act places the Code on a statutory footing and requires the Ombudsman to monitor Scheme members compliance with it, regardless of whether or not a complaint is received.

Whilst the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has not previously issued a complaint handling code it has issued good practice on complaint handling. The Code will also become statutory for councils in the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's jurisdiction as it has the power to issue such guidance under the Local Government Act 1974.

We have a duty to consult with relevant organisations and bodies before issuing the Code. As an organisation who may deal with both Ombudsman services we wanted to make you aware of the proposed changes and consultation period. Our consultation will run between 28 September and 23 November.

As you will see, there are minimal proposed changes to the existing Code issued by the Housing Ombudsman. This is intended to support continuity and certainty for complaint handling in the sector in reflection of the sound principles on which the Code was first developed.

The Code is new for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and other council services outside of housing management. However, we are aware that some local councils are already applying the Code in other service areas and we believe there should be no difference in how complaints are dealt with between different service areas within councils.

This letter is accompanied by FAQ factsheets which provide further information on our joint approach to the Code as well as explanations of where our approach may differ due to differences in our roles and powers and services we deal with.

The Housing Ombudsman will begin using its powers relating to the statutory duty to monitor landlords' compliance with the Code from 1 April 2024. The existing Code will remain a condition of Scheme membership and obligations on landlords between now and 1 April 2024 will remain unchanged; we will continue to take action where required. This means councils should self-assess against the Code, taking that assessment through governance and publishing it.

During the consultation period, we are holding a webinar for landlords and local councils with housing stock on Tuesday 10 October between 11am and 12pm. We are also running a webinar for local councils on Tuesday 17 October between 2pm and 3pm. Meanwhile, the Housing Ombudsman's monthly Code drop-in session on 26 October between 2:30pm and 4pm – is another opportunity to ask any questions about the Code and duty to monitor. Further details of how to join the webinars will be provided closer to the time.

We are asking local councils who are also members of the Housing Ombudsman scheme to complete two surveys in response to the consultation.

This is because the Housing Ombudsman is updating its existing Code and consulting to put it on a statutory footing under the Social Housing (Regulation Act) 2023 whereas this is a completely new Code for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Therefore the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are consulting about the impact the Code will have on wider services delivered by local councils outside of housing management.

This means each Ombudsman needs to ask different questions as part of the consultation process in order to properly consider the impact it has on the organisations they deal with. Local councils who are not members of the Housing Ombudsman scheme will only need to complete the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman consultation survey.

You can submit your response to the Housing Ombudsman's consultation through this link: <https://ecv.microsoft.com/velyU5jFm4>

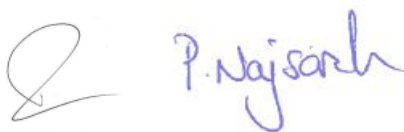
You can submit your response to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's consultation through this link: <https://ecv.microsoft.com/jEiAuJeKdI>

You can find out more information about the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's consultation [here](#).

You can find out more information about the Housing Ombudsman's consultation [here](#).

We look forward to receiving your consultation responses and please do make use of the webinars and Code drop-in sessions if you feel these would be useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Najsarek', with a stylized flourish to the left.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman
Paul Najsarek, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 20 November 2023

Report Title

Review and Update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Judith Badger, Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services

Report Author(s)

Rob Mahon, Assistant Director of Financial Services
01709 254518 or Rob.Mahon@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report sets out a review and update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26.

This is an update of the Council's Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26, including the technical updates and following the volatility in the UK and international markets caused by global factors, high inflation and fluctuating energy prices. The MTFS will be revised further in advance of the Council Budget setting meeting in February 2024, to take account of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25, when issued, along with budget policy proposals on levels of Council Tax and fees and charges and any budget savings or investments.

This position may change should Government announce changes to the funding of local authorities or if inflation assumptions change significantly from current assumptions. There is due to be a budget announcement as part of the Autumn Statement on the 22 November, so after the publication of this report, as such any impact of this Government announcement has not been factored into this MTFS update.

The MTFS review, alongside the latest Financial Monitoring 2023/24 report to Cabinet in November, envisages a financial overspend that will require the use of the Council's reserves to achieve a balanced financial outturn position for 2023/24. However, Directorates are working on recovery plans to mitigate the financial overspend for

2023/24 as much as possible to minimise the use of reserves. Within the current forecast overspend of £4.2m for 2023/24, the Directorates have a forecast overspend of £9.2m. This is largely due to the following overall issues:

- Placement pressures within Children and Young People's Services and Adult Social Care.
- Home to School Transport pressures within Regeneration and Environment and Children and Young People's Services.
- Pressures relating to the longer term recovery from Covid-19 on income generation within Regeneration and Environment.
- Inflationary costs impacting the cost of food in Schools Catering and contractual and provider inflation impacting Children and Young People's Services.
- Increased costs of homelessness due to increased demand.
- Increased property costs within Regeneration and Environment

Whilst the core directorates services have a forecast year end overspend of £9.2m on the General Fund this is offset by the £5m corporate budget risk contingency within Central Services approved within the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24.

The current MTFS forecasts identify that the Council is able to provide a balanced budget for 2024/25 but faces a significant financial challenge in setting a balanced budget for 2025/26. Therefore, it is expected that additional use of reserves will be required for 2023/24 and likely for 2025/26. This position is subject to review when the Finance Settlement for 2024/25 is received. The key challenge for 2025/26 is that there is significant uncertainty as to how Governments Financial Settlement for 2025/26 will look, as Government are only releasing single year Financial Settlements and where there are multiple year grants they only run up until 2025/26. In addition, there is due to be national Government elections prior to the 2025/26 financial year.

Nationally, the Local Authority financial environment presents a very challenging position with a number of LA's declaring S114 notices, stating that they cannot create a balanced budget. In addition, there are a growing number of LA's that have publicly stated they are on the brink of declaring a S114 notice. This reflects the challenges Council's across the UK are facing but also that whilst this Council's position is a challenge it is much more robust than many Council's across the UK.

It is therefore possible that announcements made by Government on the 22 November 2023 or within the subsequent Finance Settlement for 2024/25 add further financial pressures to the Council's MTFS position, either through Government not inflating public sector resources as assumed or through other cuts to public sector funding.

Recommendations

1. That the MTFS update be noted.
2. That Cabinet note the potential requirement to use reserves in order to balance the Council's outturn position for 2023/24.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 2 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 and Medium Term Financial Strategy, Council March 2023.
Financial Outturn 2022/23, Cabinet July, 2023.
September Financial Monitoring Report, Cabinet November 2023.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Review and Update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 through to 2025/26 was approved at Council in March 2023. Since approval of the MTFS there have been continuing financial challenges as a result of global factors, with inflation remaining high and impacting costs, in particular impacting food prices and the costs of materials/goods and so impacting repairs, maintenance and transport costs. Although inflation has been reducing during the year it has not been at the pace projected in the Council's MTFS that mirrored Governments and the Bank of England assumptions. In addition, the Local Government Association (LGA) Pay Award for 2023/24 was agreed on 1st November 2023. The impact of this pay offer is estimated to be £4m above the position built into the Council's Budget for 2023/24 and will be funded during 2023/24 through temporary savings from Treasury Management factored into Central Services. The ongoing impact will be factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.2 The Local Government Pay Claim 2023/24 has now been considered by national employers and has been accepted by Trade Unions. The offer includes an increase of £1,925 on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive and an increase of 3.88 per cent on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer from 1st April 2023. In addition, there will be a 3.88% increase on allowances. At the lowest spinal column point that the Council uses, this will be a 9.42% pay rise, reducing down to 1.09% for the most senior role. The financial impact of this pay award is £4m greater than the budget assumed within the Council's Budget and MTFS which was based on a 2% pay award.
- 1.3 This update of the MTFS includes resource forecasts based on estimated increases to core funding streams that are inflated annually by CPI. These resource assumptions will be reviewed again when the Provisional Local Finance Settlement 2024/25 is released in December 2023, which will set out the specific amounts of Government funding to be provided to the Council or should Government make any clear announcements before then. Government may clarify their expectations for inflating core funding streams in their announcement on the 22 November 2023.
- 1.4 This update of the MTFS also includes the Council's latest financial assumptions, taking into account estimated income from Business Rates and Council Tax, impact of inflation on service cost and demand pressures and the Council's timeline for the delivery of agreed savings across the MTFS. This update will support and inform the detailed budget setting process for 2024/25, alongside taking into account the outcomes of the Finance Settlement and Members' policy choices and decisions on Council Tax levels.

2. Key Issues

MTFS Update – Planning Assumption

- 2.1 The MTFS has been updated across the three years 2023/24 to 2025/26 and models the following:

- Government Grant forecasts based on the Spending Review 2021, that set a 3 year spending review period 2022/23 to 2024/25.
- The Council's anticipated resources from Council Tax and Business Rates.
- The planning assumption for Council tax annual increases remains at 3%.
- Pay, Contractual, Price and Income inflation estimates including capital projects and National Living Wage. This includes maintaining the planning assumption of a 5% increase on fees and charges for 2024/25, reducing to 2% for 2025/26.
- Assumption that the agreed budget savings remain deliverable, within the agreed profile. Work is underway to review this position and has been tracked monthly through the Council's financial monitoring procedures.
- The ongoing costs of decisions made in previous budget rounds including financing costs of capital investment.
- Service demand and cost pressures are not factored into this update beyond 2023/24 (excluding some capacity to cover these risks whilst detailed work is underway to assess the longer term position especially in relation to Home to School Transport & School Meals) but will be considered as part of the final MTFS within the Budget and Council Tax Report 2024/25.

2.2 The Council's collection rates for Council Tax and business rates are holding up well during the impact of Covid. In 2022/23 the Council's in-year collection rate of Council Tax remained above 96% and was the 5th highest in-year rate of all 36 Metropolitan Councils. The in-year rate for business rates was 97%, the 18th highest of all Metropolitan Councils. Similar collection rates are being maintained in 2023/24 which informs prudent forecasts of future years' income included within the MTFS.

2.3 The estimated impact of inflation and the current reducing energy prices has been factored into the MTFS update. Whilst food prices and costs of goods and materials is increasing the Council's base costs and contracts, reducing energy prices is helping to mitigate this position. In addition, there are some areas of escalating cost with service demand pressures being experienced in a number of areas, in particular adult care services, home to school transport and waste services. These service demand pressures are being reviewed and as yet have not been factored into the MTFS update, except for the known pressures in relation to home to school transport. School Meals provision is also being hit by significant additional costs in relation to food prices, as such this pressure has been factored into the MTFS update. Work is underway to try to better understand the financial and service impacts of home to school transport and school meals.

2.4 A significant assumption the Council has made within the current MTFS update is that Government will continue to honour the inflationary uplift in a number of core resources that have historically been inflated by September CPI (inflation on business rates is set in regulation). The impact of every 1% of inflation on these core funding streams is the equivalent of £1m extra resource for the Council. As such the Council will need to continue to closely monitor announcements from Government between now and the provisional financial settlement.

New pressures

- 2.5 Since the Council's Budget for 2023/24 was approved at Council on the 1st March 2023, there are significant financial challenges facing the Council's position for 2023/24 that will continue to impact the Council's MTFs beyond 2023/24.
- 2.6 Following review of the 2023/24 position the following financial challenges have been identified and will need to be considered as part of the Council's Budget and MTFs setting process for 2024/25.
- Placement pressures within Children and Young People's Services and Adults Social Care.
 - Home to School Transport pressures within Regeneration and Environment and Children and Young People's Services.
 - Inflationary costs impacting the cost of food in Schools Catering and contractual and provider inflation impacting Children and Young People's Services.
- 2.7 The Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 outlined that cost pressures outside of the Council's control such as inflation, energy prices and Local Government Association Pay Awards presented the most significant risk to the Council's Budget. This still remains the case with inflation at the heart of most of the cost pressures identified above, either increasing the costs of current provision or through exacerbating the impact of rising demand. For example, CYPS placements are actually reducing in terms of placement numbers, however, inflation and market pressures is causing the base cost of all types of placements to rise significantly.

Delivery of Agreed Budget Savings

- 2.8 The MTFs update assumes delivery of the remaining agreed budget savings, these are effectively split across two categories. Those that were approved prior to the 2023/24 Budget setting process and those new savings agreed as part of the 2023/24 Budget setting process. Against the previously agreed budget savings, the Council is able to report secured delivery of £1.618m against the planned savings for 2023/24.
- 2.9 Of these £11.5m of planned savings that had been re-profiled for delivery over the medium term, £4.4m of which were delivered during 2022/23. During 2022/23 the Council successfully delivered £4.9m savings, £4.4m on a permanent basis. As such £7.1m remains to be delivered across 2023/24 and 2024/25, with £4.4m to be delivered by the end of 2023/24 and the full £7.1m by the end of 2024/25. To date £1.618m has been secured at the end of September from savings in CYPS placements and management costs and R&E operational property budgets, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Previously agreed savings

Saving	To be delivered by end of 2023/24	Total to be delivered end of 2024/25	Secured as at 30 th September 2023
	£000	£000	£000
CYPS	3,713	6,385	1,594
R&E	388	410	24
R&E Customer & Digital	300	300	0
Total Savings	4,401	7,095	1,618

- 2.10 As part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 a series of new temporary and permanent savings were approved. These were £4.3m for 2023/24, of which the Council has already secured £3.4m of savings, as set out in table 2 below, with the bulk of the remaining savings rag rated green for delivery in the current financial year. Then for 2024/25 £4.7m of savings were agreed and will be monitored and tracked through the Council's financial monitoring reports to Cabinet. On a permanent basis the longer term savings total is £3.3m and is factored into the MTFS from 2025/26 onwards.

Table 2 – New Savings agreed as part of the Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 report

Directorate	2023/24	2024/25	Secured as at 30 th September 2023
Finance and Customer Services	308	238	362
Assistant Chief Executive	303	407	153
Children's and Young Peoples Services	1,348	1,059	1,348
Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	1,224	1,998	718
Regeneration and Environment	1,161	1,001	800
Total	4,344	4,703	3,381

- 2.11 The Council's financial monitoring report to November Cabinet is projecting a forecast overspend of £4.2m. This includes Directorate overspends (excluding Central Services) of £9.2m, whilst the core directorates services have a forecast year end overspend of £9.2m on the General Fund this is offset by the £5m corporate budget risk contingency within Central Services approved within the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24. The main pressures being;

- Placement pressures within Children and Young People's Services and Adults Social Care.
- Home to School Transport pressures within Regeneration and Environment and Children and Young People's Services.
- Pressures relating to the longer term recovery from Covid-19 on income generation within Regeneration and Environment.
- Inflationary costs impacting the cost of food in Schools Catering and contractual and provider inflation impacting Children and Young People's Services.
- Increased costs of homelessness due to increased demand.
- Increased property costs within Regeneration and Environment.

2.12 At present these pressures are not built into the MTFS on a re-occurring basis. However, the MTFS does include some capacity to cover these risks whilst detailed work is underway to assess the longer term position. Whilst the Council will aim to mitigate these in year pressures, it is anticipated that a level of the Council's reserves will be required to fund the 2023/24 revenue outturn position.

Summary MTFS 2023/24 to 2025/26

2.13 The MTFS in summary, taking into account the issues described in this report is summarised in Table 2 below. As can be seen it is currently projected that the Council through use of Treasury Management Savings, energy savings and Directorate saving recovery plans the 2023/24 outturn position can be balanced and 2024/25 has a small funding surplus. However, for 2025/26 due to the following main reasons there is a projected £6m funding gap.

- Home to School Transport - **£3m**
- School Meals Service - **£1.5m**
- Funding gap that existed in 2025/26 at the time the Budget was set for 2023/24 - **£1.7m**

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£000	£000	£000
<u>Resources</u>			
Council Tax and Business Rates	184,748	193,029	199,437
Government Grant	118,736	124,521	126,623
Total Resources	303,484	317,550	326,060
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Base Budget Requirement at 2023/24 pay and prices	283,433	287,828	291,226
Inflation Provision	31,304	42,756	48,283
Service Costs and Demand	6,000	4,000	4,000
Directorate Savings	-8,300	-11,353	-9,938

Use of energy savings	-1,500	-2,500	-1,500
Use of Treasury Management Savings	-7,453	-3,800	0
Total Expenditure	303,484	316,931	332,071
Funding Gap (Pre-Settlement)	0	-619	6,011

Revenue Budget Position 2023/24

- 2.14 The latest Financial Monitoring 2023/24 report to Cabinet in November, envisages a financial overspend that will require the use of the Council's reserves to achieve a balanced financial outturn position for 2023/24. However, the Children and Young Peoples Services and Regeneration and Environment Directorates have been tasked with developing budget recovery plans to reduce as far as possible the overspend in those two Directorates. In addition, the Council's Treasury Management function continues to generate significant short term savings and the price of energy is reducing below budget following the significant increases required during 2022/23. Through these approaches it is estimated that the Council will be able to reduce the need to use reserves.
- 2.15 Following this initial update of the MTFS, the summary position reflects a challenging position for the Council, for 2025/26 in particular, as it is for all councils, with the bulk of the cost pressures stemming from inflation, demand, and market pressures along with the impact of the 2023/24 pay award.
- 2.16 It is important to note that this position is before the exact amount of Government grant funding for councils is provided within the Finance Settlement. This is also a technical update of the MTFS before any Members' policy choices and decisions on levels of Council Tax.
- 2.17 Updated MTFS information will therefore form part of the Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 report to Cabinet and Council in February 2024 which will set out the full details of Budget and Council Tax proposals for 2024/25 alongside the final MTFS estimates for the medium term.
- 2.18 Given the financial position outlined for the Council, work has commenced with Strategic Directors to consider both possible investments as well as opportunities for scaling back some operations, reducing or delaying non-essential expenditure. The focus of savings and cost reductions at present is on the current financial year position and in particular on the CYPs and R&E Directorates.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 In refreshing the MTFS the Council has made several financial assumptions as detailed within the main body of this report. Whilst various scenarios for how Government funding could be changed and the Council's costs could vary linked to in year and potential future cost pressures, the update presented is the Council's current MTFS.
- 3.2 Given the level of uncertainty within financial markets, global factors and their impact on inflation, energy and the level of Government funding, elements of the MTFS

remain complex to project. As such it is expected that when Government release the Provisional Financial Settlement for 2024/25, there may be substantial changes to the availability of public sector funding.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The Council consulted on budget proposals for 2023/24 ahead of the approval of the Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 report at Council in March 2023. Consultation on the 2024/25 budget is planned to be undertaken across December 2023 and January 2024.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The information, proposals and recommendations will feed into the development of specific budget proposals for 2024/25 within the Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 report to Cabinet and Council in February 2024.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The financial implications are set out in the report. The Council's MTFS position is effectively broadly a balanced position for the period 2023/24 to 2024/25, on the basis that the Council will deliver savings plans and make use of savings in treasury and energy budgets to balances 2023/24. The 2025/26 position is however a challenge with a funding gap of £6m, as a result of a budget gap of £1.7m that already existed at the time of setting the 2023/24 Budget, home to school transport projected £3m and School Meals service pressures £1.5m.
- 6.2 It should be noted that whilst the directorate overspend is £9.2m, before factoring in the budget contingency, the Council will be able to work to mitigate these pressures and reduce them before the financial year end, to require a lower level of use of reserves. Treasury management savings and reduced energy prices will be vital to this approach and it should be noted that the treasury management savings are temporary, largely generated from the Council having cash balances to investment and minimise the need to borrow in a high interest market. This position cannot be sustained in the current economic climate. The Council did build into the MTFS prudent levels of inflation and has over recent years increased its levels of reserves. However the significant Local Government Association Pay Awards across 2022/23 and 2023/24 have presented a significant, permanent increase in the Council's base costs.
- 6.3 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct HR implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The implications are as set out in the report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 There are no implications arising from the recommendation in the report.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no direct implications arising from the recommendation in the report.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 There are no direct implications arising from the recommendation in the report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Risks and mitigation are described in the report

14. Accountable Officers

Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	06/11/23
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	03/11/22
Assistant Director Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	03/11/22

Report Author: Rob Mahon, Assistant Director Financial Services
01709 254518
Rob.Mahon@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title

Title:

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Directorate:

Finance and Customer Services

Service area:

Financial Services

Lead person:

Rob Mahon

Contact number:

01709 822064

Is this a:

☐

Strategy / Policy

☒

Service / Function

☐

Other

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The report sets out a technical update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26.

The information within the report will support the development of detailed budget proposals for 2023/24. No changes to the Council's approved budget and financial strategy are proposed within the report.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>		✓
Could the proposal affect service users? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>		✓
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? <i>(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)</i>		✓
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? <i>(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)</i>		✓
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)</i>		✓
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)</i>		✓
If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason		

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4**.

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

- **Key findings**

- **Actions**

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Rob Mahon	Assistant Director – Financial Services	2/11/23

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

<p>If this screening relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.</p> <p>A copy of all screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.</p>	
Date screening completed	2/11/23
Report title and date	Medium Term Financial Strategy Cabinet
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	

Appendix 2

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from transport?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				

Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	<i>no impact</i>				
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:
As this report is a technical financial update and doesn't approve anything directly to happen, it does not have any carbon implications.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services.
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 20 November 2023

Report Title

Crisis Support 2024 - 2027

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Authors

Steve Eling

Policy and Equalities Manager

Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

Steve.eling@rotherham.gov.uk

Laura Stapleton

Policy Officer

Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

Laura.stapleton@rotherham.gov.uk

Wards Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Crisis support services in Rotherham are currently delivered through a partnership agreement between the Council, FareShare, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) and LASER Credit Union. The ongoing level of demand together with available supplies of food has led to the need to develop a more sustainable crisis support system, with the aim of supporting people to move from being in crisis towards independence and resilience.

To develop the new model, including the elements funded by the Council, a co-design process has been followed, engaging with a range of providers and referring organisations. A key element of the revised wider model is ensuring it is aligned with holistic and wider support services, which would work to ensure that fewer people experience crisis on a repeated basis. This will be supported through a new referral system to better co-ordinate information for front line staff, offering a broader range of food types that make up crisis food parcels, flexible to the requirements of

different organisations and utilising a revised definition of crisis support to enable this.

Following approval of the recommendations within this report, bids would be invited from partner organisations to finalise the implementation details and to then deliver the model. This would be via service level agreements covering the years 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Recommendations

That Cabinet agree:

1. The future provision of crisis support and grant allocations of:
 - a. £60k for Crisis Loans.
 - b. £34k for infrastructure and transport to enable the supply of crisis food to foodbanks (Community Food Members).
 - c. £10k for supporting co-ordination of the Food in Crisis Partnership, collection and dissemination of data and provision of a referrals process.
2. That bids be invited from organisations to work in partnership with the Council, to finalise the implementation details and deliver the provision outlined at recommendation 1.
3. To delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion to enter into a service level agreement with partner organisations to provide crisis support for the years 2024/25 to 2026/27.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Initial equality screening (Form A)

Appendix 2 Carbon impact assessment

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Crisis Support 2024 – 2027

1. Background

- 1.1 Crisis support (Local Welfare Provision), provided by the Council started in 2013 following abolition of the Government's Discretionary Social Fund. The current model for the provision of this support was agreed by Cabinet in October 2019 and commenced in April 2020.
- 1.2 The current arrangements funded by the Council are for the delivery of crisis loans, provision of food, and support for the Food in Crisis Partnership (FIC). The annual funding of £100k provides for three separate service level agreements to be entered into on an annual basis for:
 - Crisis Loans (£60k) currently provided via LASER Credit Union.
 - Infrastructure provision to enable a supply of ambient food to foodbanks (£30k), currently provided via FareShare Yorkshire. It should be noted that this does not include the costs of purchasing the food itself, but rather the underpinning infrastructure.
 - Support for co-ordination of the Food in Crisis (FIC) Partnership and collection and dissemination of data (£10k), currently provided via Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR).
- 1.3 During November and December 2022, the Council invited bids for the development of a new three-year SLA to operate from April 2023. However, no bids were received, with informal feedback indicating that this was linked with the crisis food element of the SLA. As a consequence, the existing SLA was extended by a year and is due to expire at the end of March 2024.
- 1.4 As part of this extension it was agreed that a new model would be developed through a codesign process to provide a more sustainable solution for crisis food and holistic support, which would work to ensure that fewer people experience crisis on a repeated basis. This would include the Council-funded elements of the model. Whilst this work was undertaken, food supply into the borough was maintained through additional Council funded investment by FareShare in ambient food provision.
- 1.5 This report details arrangements for service provision that includes the Council-funded elements delivered through an SLA, running from April 2024 to March 2027.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 **Demand for crisis food is nearly three times higher than when the current SLA was agreed**
 - 2.1.1 The overall scope for the current SLA was predicated on the continuation of the demand for crisis support seen in the proceeding years, where monitoring returns indicated that demand had been relatively steady. However, just before the commencement of the SLA in April 2020, the country went into Covid lockdown and the scope and demand for crisis food and other support changed dramatically, resulting in nearly 20,000 food parcels being issued in

2020/21. This was an increase of 342% on 2018/19 figures, which was pre-Covid level. Additional government support for the purchase of food through organisations including FareShare ensured that the level of demand in Rotherham was met even at the height of the crisis.

- 2.1.2 As the level of demand caused by the Covid pandemic reduced, the rising cost-of-living generated additional pressures. This resulted in over 12,000 food parcels being issued in 2021/22 and 2022/23. Table 1 below shows both the number of parcels issued and number of households, based on those who received a first food parcel, from 2018/19 to 2022/23. 2018/19 represents the last full year with no Covid impact.

Crisis Food	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of parcels	4,408	3,571	19,464	13,089	12,408
Number of households supported	1,044	809	1,574	1,527	2,660

Table 1: Number of food parcels provided, and households supported, 2018/19 to 2022/23.

- 2.1.3 The ongoing high level of food parcels being provided, has led to problems with supply meeting demand. Central to this issue is a reduction in the supply of surplus ambient (mainly tinned) food, particularly with regard to the rising cost of living and specifically rising food prices. To address this, Household Support Fund (HSF) monies have been allocated to purchase additional stocks between October 2022 and March 2024, which are meeting needs. However, the funding available is time-limited and is therefore not seen as a sustainable solution. It has also been recognised that one driver of continuing high demand is because the service that evolved during the pandemic of providing regular food parcels, rather than the pre-Covid crisis provision, has continued at many foodbanks.
- 2.1.4 Unlike for crisis food, the demand for crisis loans has reduced between the comparator years of 2018/19 and 2022/23 (see table two below). This may in part be explained by 2018/19 having a higher-than-average number of loans being provided.

Crisis Loans	2018/19	2022/23
Number of loans	466	350

Table 2: Number of crisis loans provided, 2018/19 and 2022/23 comparators.

- 2.1.5 Given the rise in demand for crisis food and the challenges faced in securing an appropriate food supply, the need to develop a wider sustainable model that meets need in the borough for those in crisis, without creating dependency, was one of the core issues considered through the co-design process for the new SLA that commenced in April.

2.2 **The landscape for crisis support in the borough has changed and more support is now available**

2.2.1 The landscape around food poverty has evolved since the introduction of crisis support. Food poverty now has a significant national profile. Many new initiatives have been launched including social supermarkets and others providing access to low priced food, often from surplus food sources.

2.2.2 Over the last five years, four social supermarkets have been established in the borough. In 2023 the Council invested c.£15k for each of the organisations to support their operations, as part of their journey to becoming sustainable organisations for a three-year period between 2023/24 – 2025/26. These are not crisis food provision but are often able to support people over the longer term. Some of the foodbanks in Rotherham are able to provide both crisis and ongoing support, but it is not always clear where crisis support ends and ongoing support begins.

2.2.3 In Rotherham, food poverty has also been addressed through tackling “holiday hunger” with the provision of vouchers to children who received free school meals in term time, to cover school holidays. In 2022/23, 134,370 vouchers were provided to 7,785 families across the borough. The Council also supports the provision of packed lunches for children participating in the Holiday Activities and Food programme during school holidays. The provision of food support has also been addressed in the context of the impact of the rising cost-of-living and the broader use of Household Support Fund.

2.3 **A co-design approach has been undertaken to develop the proposed new model**

2.3.1 The new model began to be developed in April 2023, using a workshop approach, to engage a wide range of organisations. This included those making referrals or providing linked advice, together with support services, those engaged in the supply of food and foodbanks providing front line provision. This enabled frank discussions about the challenges and presented a way forward to engage in producing a sustainable new model, that is in part funded by the Council through the c.£100k per annum SLA contribution. Following the workshop, working groups were established to take forward the detail as part of the co-design process.

2.3.2 The working groups, which were each chaired by a crisis support partner organisation and focused on the following issues:

- **The Referral Process** – this explored a more refined referral pathway in and out of food in crisis.
- **The Holistic Support Offer** – this explored how holistic support can be built into the emergency food offer at every step to prevent people from experiencing regular and repeat crisis.
- **The Food Offer** – this explored gaps in the food offer and developed options for solutions.

- **No Recourse to Public Funds** – this element intended to explore emergency food solutions for this particularly vulnerable client group.
- **Community Food Members** – this involved engaging with those delivering food in crisis, to ensure all provision was understood and captured in the process.

2.4 **Outcome of the co-design process: a preferred option for crisis support provision from April 2024**

- 2.4.1 The outcome of the co-design process supports the continuation of the wider model of crisis loans and food along with links to holistic and ongoing support, providing access to low-priced food and additional social and economic support. This approach seeks to meet crisis need, together with being able to refer to other support services and medium to long term help where needed. Importantly, a priority will be to support people to avoid repeat crisis need.
- 2.4.2 The preferred approach for the Council-funded elements of the model continues a single SLA, produced and entered into by the partners as a collective, rather than separate SLAs for different components. This builds on experience and good practice developed to date.
- 2.4.3 With the continuing provision of c.£100k per annum over the three-year period 2024/25 to 2026/27, the breakdown of funding would be for the following activity:
- £60k for the provision and administration of crisis loans.
 - £34k for the provision of infrastructure and transport for the supply of surplus food, but not for the direct purchase of food.
 - £10k for the provision of partnership functions including support for foodbanks and collection of data along with strategic links to other support provision and development of services.
- 2.4.4 At a headline level the make-up of the proposed activities comprising the new SLA appear unchanged from the SLA that is currently in place. However, this masks a number of revisions to the wider model including the crisis food element and the provision of partnership functions. These are that:
- A new referral system will be put in place, building on what works in other organisations, to help strengthen the co-ordination of food in crisis information.
 - A broader range of food types will be made available as part of the supply of crisis food provision, moving beyond the ambient goods in the current SLA, tailored to the capacity of different organisations to process different types of food.
 - To support people when they need it the most, thereby reducing the incidences of repeat crisis in the borough, more emphasis will be placed on the provision of holistic support.

- As a result of the above and to enable this to be delivered, there will be a renewed emphasis on the provision of food parcels to people in crisis, rather than on a regular basis.

2.4.5 Holistic support is seen as a critical component to preventing people experiencing regular and repeat crisis and is therefore at the heart of the proposed approach. For example, it goes beyond the provision of a crisis loan or food parcels and may include access to low-priced food and other support over a longer period. This could be through access to a social supermarket. It is recognised that not all providers involved in this agenda will be able to, or currently have the capacity to, provide a full range of holistic support. An improved referral process is therefore proposed as part of this approach to enable any organisation to provide some initial support and then make a referral within the model to other organisations as required, making the best use of their respective and complementary strengths.

2.5 Crisis food provision to organisations that sign up to the Food in Crisis partnership

2.5.1 The recommended approach from the co-design process, continues the arrangements for the supply of industry surplus food to CFMs for them to provide crisis food parcels to the community. As with the current SLA this would also continue the current arrangement whereby the Council is funding the provision of infrastructure and transport of this surplus food, rather than the direct purchase of food itself.

2.5.2 Within these arrangements it should be noted that the four social supermarkets in the borough do not currently provide crisis food parcels, but have the option to do so.

2.5.3 There would not be a direct SLA relationship between the Council and CFMs, with them instead signing up to the model to access the supply via the SLA partner. This provides for a streamlined set of relationships and enables flexibility for when / if an organisations ceases to provide support or new organisations are established.

2.5.4 As part of the wider model, a regular and sustainable supply would be allocated to all organisations that sign up to the FIC Partnership. This would include access to a full range of food including fresh, chilled, and frozen goods, but would be dependent on the ability of each individual organisation to handle and store such products.

2.5.5 Having explored different options for the provision of food and holistic support, the co-design is predicated on a four-tier model that is flexible to and reflects the strengths of the different types of organisations found in the borough. Some providers have already developed their offer including holistic and specialist support (e.g. advice provision or crisis loans) and others, such as foodbanks, may only provide crisis food.

- 2.5.6 The proposed four tier model from the co-design is set out below, which reflects the different roles played by different types of organisations in the borough.

Food – tier one:

- Provider of food parcels, signed up to the Food in Crisis (FIC) partnership.
- Provision of data in line with the FIC partnership.
- Referral pathways to holistic support.

Food Plus – tier two:

- Provider of food parcels, signed up to the FIC partnership.
- Provision of data in line with the FIC partnership.
- May host some delivery of holistic support.

Specialist Providers – tier three:

- Provider of food parcels, signed up to the FIC partnership.
- Provision of data in line with the FIC partnership.
- Host some delivery of holistic support – offer specialist services, working in depth with vulnerable groups that require long term case work.

Social supermarket / pantry model – tier four:

- The most sustainable model of moving people away from crisis support, working on the basis of individual members making a small contribution in order to gain access to a greater supply of food, that would usually exceed the value of their contribution.
- Social supermarkets can provide crisis food provision in addition to their existing provision, should they wish to do so.
- Provision of data in line with the FIC partnership.
- Referral pathways to holistic support.

- 2.5.7 Organisations would be able to move between the tiers with their progression supported. Should this proposed model move forward as part of the next steps (implementation), it would involve working with partners, to identify which tier they would form part of.

- 2.5.8 The food provided under the infrastructure and transport provisions of the SLA would be for members at all tiers of the Food in Crisis Partnership.

2.6 **Holistic support: supporting people to avoid repeat crisis**

- 2.6.1 The crisis food model and supporting people to avoid repeat crisis requires a holistic support approach looking at the whole person or family and their needs, linking them into the bigger network of agencies that can provide help. Having no access to food is often a symptom of broader issues that people may be facing.

- 2.6.2 Food in crisis is a necessary safety net and a temporary measure, but it cannot solve people's issues in isolation. People may need holistic support to

help address those broader issues and to help prevent them returning to crisis. For example, this can include someone in financial difficulty requiring debt advice from an organisation like Citizens Advice (CARD).

- 2.6.3 The four-tier model and referral process would facilitate an holistic approach with CFMs at the front line playing a critical role. Additionally, organisations that provide advice in the borough, such as CARD, have been involved in the process.
- 2.6.4 The current process for referrals differs from CFM to CFM, and from agency to agency. It is recognised that a central referral system would be beneficial to both receive referrals and to make them to wider holistic support offers. It is critical to delivering the new model that ensures that the full range of support is provided, rather than people remaining in a cycle of crisis need. CFMs signing up to agreeing to engage in the model would mean committing to using a new referral system.

2.7 Continuing to provide crisis loans

- 2.7.1 The preferred approach continues the current crisis loans provision and criteria for access, which has proven effective over the last ten years in meeting a range of crisis needs. This involves a flexible approach to assessment of an individual's crisis and the financial support needed to resolve it. Crisis loans can be provided to purchase food, essential household goods (e.g., bed, mattress) and electrical goods (e.g., cooker, washing machine). Crisis loans can also be provided to pay urgent bills including the payment of / top up of essential utilities such as gas, electric and water. The list is not exhaustive or restrictive as an individual is assessed based on the crisis and how to resolve it.
- 2.7.2 The minimum amount of a crisis loan is £40, and the maximum amount is £120 although exceptions can be made to a maximum of £250 for purchase of essential furniture or electrical goods. Crisis Loans are interest free, there are no administration fees or credit reference searches. Like other loans, crisis loans are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Criteria covering eligibility include being a Rotherham resident, affordability of the loan and the application of other regulatory requirements.
- 2.7.3 Currently, crisis loans are provided by LASER credit union. Where crisis loans are provided by a credit union, it is a regulatory requirement that to access a crisis loan the applicant must be a member of, or become a member of, the credit union and have, or open, a membership account.

2.8 Supporting co-ordination of the Food in Crisis Partnership, collection and dissemination of data and provision of a referrals process

- 2.8.1 The partnership functions would continue to support the work of the Food in Crisis Partnership to oversee the whole approach to crisis food and related support services. This includes work outside the parameters of crisis food including social supermarkets / pantries and other potential low-cost food provision.

- 2.8.2 The provision of the referral system and its use for collation of data from CFMs is also include. This would also incorporate the data about demand provided to the Council. The broader range of functions would include:
- Co-ordinating the information of 'food in crisis' provision for front line workers and provide information about crisis loans.
 - Providing a co-ordination point for appeals and donations.
 - Working with stakeholders to implement appropriate systems which will assist in clearer, more efficient, and co-ordinated pathways to provision (holistic support).
 - Identify and secure additional resources / funding to support the VCS members of Food in Crisis Partnership and CFMs.

2.9 **Proceeding to co-production, a new SLA and implementation**

- 2.9.1 In accordance with the Council's Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules, if the recommendations in this report are agreed by Cabinet, bids will need to be invited for partners to finalise the implementation details and to enter into a three-year SLA to deliver the provision.
- 2.9.2 It is likely that this final stage will require partnership working across a range of activity and organisations in order to provide the whole model, including the Council-funded elements. This will be achieved by the requirement for either a lead organisation to bid identifying the partner agencies engaged, or a joint partnership bid. A successful bid would also require participation of a partner of surplus food, in order to create a viable model.

3. **Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 Three options have been considered.
- 3.2 Option one is the preferred option. This would lead to the finalisation of the implementation details and to then deliver the provision outlined in sections 2.4 to 2.8. An SLA would be entered into with the partner(s) in receipt of grant support, allocating the annual budget sum of £104k.
- 3.3 Option two provides a fall-back provision should a partnership-based bid not be received, or a partnership agreement and SLA not be reached. This option maintains the three components of crisis loans, crisis food and the partnership function, but would provide for separate arrangements and SLAs. The crisis loans provision is a more specialist function in that it can only be delivered by an organisation registered with the Financial Conduct Authority. The partnership functions are most likely to be delivered by an organisation providing VCS infrastructure provision, given that the partnership function is predominantly an extension of that. It is likely, therefore, that if a partnership approach failed in relation to any component, it would be around the supply of food. This could be because no provider of surplus food participated in a bid, or that agreements between a food provider and CFMs could not be reached. In these circumstances, the option would be to provide small grants to CFMs, through a grant process agreed with and operated by the partnership functions provider. This would give CFMs some resource to

engage with providers of surplus food. SLAs would be entered into with the relevant organisations. To put this in context, given the current budget of c.£30,000 for this element of the SLA, this would equate to a grant of £2.5k each year if this was divided equally between CFMs.

- 3.4 Option three would discontinue the current crisis support arrangements. This would deliver a budget saving of c.£100k per year. Whilst crisis support is a wholly discretionary function and the budget can be withdrawn, it is likely that an impact assessment would identify that people with protected characteristics would be disproportionately impacted, should this option be pursued. There would inevitably be a disproportionate adverse impact on low income and vulnerable households. For these reasons, this option is not recommended.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The preferred model has been produced through a co-design process. This has involved workshop sessions with provider and referrer agencies along with the establishment of working groups to take forward components of the co-design. Additionally, direct engagement with CFMs has taken place to ensure that all organisations have been engaged and have participated in determining how the new model can work.

- 4.2 Detail of the engagement is covered in section 2.3 of the report.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The new SLA will need to be operational from 1 April 2024 to secure continuity of provision.
- 5.2 Key dates include:
- By the end of November, advertising for bids for lead and key partners to take forward the implementation details leading to a new SLA by end of November.
 - Evaluation and selection of key partners before Christmas.
 - New SLA completed by end of January 2024.
 - Launch of new model and provision, early March 2024.
 - Commencement of SLA, 1 April 2024.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 A budget of c.£100k per year is available for the provision of crisis support.
- 6.2 The invitation for bids and selection of partner organisations would be in accordance with the provisions of Section 12 (Grants to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations) of the Council's Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules. The Council's standard VCS service level agreement would be used for all SLAs entered into.
- 6.3 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the grant activity described in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Council has the ability to provide support for people in need through various provisions including S. 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (c. 20) (Local authority's general power of competence); S. 17 of the Children Act 1989 (c. 41) (Provision of services for children in need, their families and others) among other provisions.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 Many vulnerable families with children are helped through crisis provision. In 2018/19, arising from the 4,408 food parcels provided, 5,867 people were fed with 1,696 recorded as being under 18 years. In 2022/23, arising from the 12,408 food parcels provided, 15,148 people were fed with 4,376 recorded as being under 18 years.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Crisis support provides for the most vulnerable people in society, many of whom will also have protected characteristics.
- 10.2 Maintaining support for crisis provision mitigates against adverse impacts arising from a number of circumstances that affect people including cost of living pressures and unexpected demands. The recent range of organisations providing food in a diverse community, supplied through crisis support further assists addressing inequalities.
- 10.3 Anonymised data covering the ethnicity, gender and where available disability will be provided to monitor demand and usage of the services. This will help, as part of the review process, to identify and address any equalities issues throughout the period of the agreement and that the relevant protected characteristics are fully addressed.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no direct impacts for CO2 emissions or climate change.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The recommended option furthers the objective of partnership working through the provisions of the Rotherham Compact, engaging with the voluntary and community sector.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There are two key areas of risk.

- 13.2 The principal risk is that a partnership approach is not achieved either because no bid is received to that effect, or completion of an SLA is not achieved. To mitigate this risk, an option two has been prepared which is set out in paragraph 3.3.
- 13.3 The secondary risk is that the budget of c.£100k per year proves to be inadequate to achieve the agreed outcomes. This risk would most likely materialise if the supply of surplus food could not meet demand and the purchase of food needed to be considered. Options to mitigate this risk include the allocation of additional resources, including what may be available through external funding streams, some reprofiling of the provision to bring the services within the allocated budget, or a combination of the two.

14. **Accountable Officers**

Fiona Boden, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence.

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	06/11/23
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	06/11/23
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	06/11/23

Report Authors: Steve Eling
Policy and Equalities Manager
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate
Steve.eling@rotherham.gov.uk

Laura Stapleton
Policy Officer
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate
Laura.stapleton@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Crisis Support 2024 - 27	
Directorate: ACX	Service area: PPI
Lead person: Steve Eling	Contact: 54419
Is this a:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service / Function
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
If other, please specify	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
<p>The current arrangements for delivering Crisis Support; Crisis Loans; Crisis Food and support for the Food in Crisis Partnership expire at the end of March 2024.</p> <p>The proposals enable provision of provide Crisis Support for three years 2024/25 to 2026/27 through Local VCS organisations. To progress this a co-designed model has been developed under the terms of the Rotherham Compact. The next steps will be to co-produce a service level agreement for delivery with VCS partners.</p>

3. Relevance to equality and diversity
<p>All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser</p>

relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	X	
Could the proposal affect service users? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	X	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? <i>(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)</i>	X	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? <i>(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)</i>		X
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)</i>		X
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)</i>		X
If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason		

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4**.

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society

by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

This is a development and continuation of existing provision. Crisis support by its very nature supports the most vulnerable people in society and impacted by inequalities.

- **Key findings**

Maintaining crisis provision will mitigate against adverse equalities implications. A range of VCS organisations close to communities provide crisis support, tackling inequalities through the services they provide. Equalities data is collected as part of the delivery of crisis support which assists in understanding derivation impacts and needs within communities.

- **Actions**

The co-design process has enabled the broad range of issues relating to crisis support to be taken into account, building on past experience and data available through the preferred model recommended to Cabinet. It has enabled a model to be developed that focuses support at crisis whilst also providing a route into holistic support that will help people to avoid repeat crisis in future.

The final details of the model for delivery and SLA will ensure that equalities provisions are incorporated into the delivery model. The co-production and SLA is scheduled to be completed by February 2024 which will include an equality analysis.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:

By end of November 2023.

Date to complete your Equality Analysis:

By February 2024.

Lead person for your Equality Analysis
(Include name and job title):

Steve Eling
Policy and Equalities Manager.

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Steve Eling	Policy and Equalities Manager	15 th September 2023

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of all screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date screening completed	15 th September 2023
Report title and date	Crisis Support 2024 - 2027
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	Cabinet 20 th November 2023
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	26 th October 2023

Appendix 2

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from transport?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				

Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	<i>no impact</i>				
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:
As this report is a technical financial update and doesn't approve anything directly to happen, it does not have any carbon implications.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services.
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	

Appendix 1: Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – Work Programme 2023-24

The following principles were endorsed by OSMB at its meeting of 5 July 2023 as criteria to long/short list each of the commission's respective priorities:

Establish as a starting point:

- What are the key issues?
- What is the outcome that we want?

Agree principles for longlisting:

- Can scrutiny add value or influence?
- Is it being looked at elsewhere?
- Is it a priority – council or community?

Developing a consistent shortlisting criteria e.g.

- T: Time: is it the right time, enough resources?
- O: Others: is this duplicating the work of another body?
- P: Performance: can scrutiny make a difference
- I: Interest – what is the interest to the public?
- C: Contribution to the corporate plan

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
14 June 2023	Pre-decision School Accessibility Strategy Finance Update Multiply Programme
5 July 2023	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report (2022/2023) Council Plan 2022-2025 and Year Ahead Delivery Plan Progress report Outturn report
2 August 2023	UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Years two and three Rotherham Markets & Library Redevelopment
13 September 2023	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action plan July 2023-24 Financial Monitoring Report
11 October 2023	Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report. 2021 Census Presentation (informal)
15 November 2023	Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
	Crisis Support 2024 - 2027 Complaints Annual Report
13 December 2023	Pre-decision items TBC Social Value (six-month update)
16 January 2024	Housing Revenue Account Rents and Service Charges HRA Business Plan Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 Council Plan 2022-2025 and Year Ahead Delivery Plan Progress report
21 February 2024	Pre-decision tbc
13 March 2024	Climate Change Action Plan and Annual Report Social Value Annual Report LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan (Update) Pre-decision tbc
10 April 2024	Pre-decision tbc

Items for Scheduling

Review Activity	
Quarter 3 - 2023	Spotlight Review Byelaws/Life saving equipment
	Spotlight Review Consultation and Engagement (agreed at meeting of 14 December 2022)
DATE TBC (early 2024)	Children Commissioner's Takeover Challenge – meeting with Youth Cabinet
Visits/meetings to be arranged	Cost of living pressures Focus on energy efficiency; financial inclusion; crisis food support (specifically social supermarkets); school uniform (working with the Youth Cabinet); and communications, awareness and targeting
	Employment Support Team

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
1 November 2023 – 31 January 2024**

This is formal notice under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 of Key Decisions due to be taken by the Authority and of those parts of the Cabinet meeting identified in this Forward Plan will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information as defined in the Local Government Act 1972.

Contact Information:-

Democratic Services
Riverside House
Main Street
Rotherham
S60 1AE

Email: governance@rotherham.gov.uk
Tel: 01709 822477

What is the Forward Plan?

The Forward Plan contains all the key decisions the Council expects to take over the next three months. It will be refreshed monthly and will give at least 28 days' notice of any Key Decisions and, if applicable, the Cabinet's intention to discuss an item in private. This gives you the opportunity to submit relevant documents to the decision maker concerning any individual Key Decisions and draws to your attention any relevant constitution process.

What is a Key Decision?

A Key Decision is one which is likely to:-

- relate to the capital or revenue budget framework that is reserved to the Council, or
- result in income, expenditure or savings of £400,000 or greater, or
- have a significant effect on two or more wards

A Key Decision can be made by the Cabinet. The Forward Plan also includes some matters which are not Key Decisions under the heading "Decisions which are not Key Decisions".

What does the Forward Plan tell me?

The plan gives information about:

- what key decisions are to be made in the next three months.
- the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made.
- who will make the key decisions.
- when those key decisions are likely to be made.
- what documents will be considered.
- who you can contact for further information.

Who takes Key Decisions?

Under the Authority's Constitution, Key Decisions are taken by the Cabinet. Key Decisions are taken at public meetings of the Cabinet. The Cabinet meets once a month on a Monday at 10.00am at Rotherham Town Hall. Meeting dates for 2023/24 are:

19 June 2023	7 August 2023	16 October 2023	18 December 2023	12 February 2024	15 April 2024
10 July 2023	18 September 2023	20 November 2023	22 January 2024	18 March 2024	

Further information and Representations about items proposed to be heard in Private

Names of contact officers are included in the Plan.

If you wish to make representations that a decision which is proposed to be heard in private should instead be dealt with in public, you should contact Democratic Services by no later than five clear working days before the meeting. At the end of this document are extracts from the Local Government Act 1972 setting out the descriptions of information which may be classed as "exempt", and the definition of confidential information.

The members of the Cabinet and their areas of responsibility are: -

Councillor Chris Read	Leader of the Council
Councillor Sarah Allen	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Housing
Councillor Saghir Alam	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance
Councillor Amy Brookes	Cabinet Member for Housing (Currently on maternity leave. For all Housing Portfolio matters, please contact Cllr S Allen)
Councillor Victoria Cusworth	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Councillor Denise Lelliott	Cabinet Member for Jobs and Local Economy
Councillor David Roche	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor David Sheppard	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 20 NOVEMBER 2023								
ADULT CARE, HOUSING AND HEALTH								
Canklow Development – Adult Care and Housing Delivery Programmes	August 2023	Approve construction of new council properties on the Warden Street site including two specialist accommodation dwellings and the Castle View day centre.	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Boston Castle	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
ASSISITANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S								
Crisis Support 2024 - 2027	September 2023	To consider recommendations for a new model of crisis support and to approve entering into a service level agreement with partners for the three years 2024-2027.	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Jo Brown Tel: 01709 255269 jo.brown@rotherham.gov.uk
Advice Services and Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Service Level Agreements 2024-2027	September 2023	To consider recommendations for Service Level Agreements for (i) voluntary and community sector infrastructure and (ii) advice services, for the three years 2024-2027.	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Jo Brown Tel: 01709 255269 jo.brown@rotherham.gov.uk
CHIEF EXECUTIVE								
Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2023 - Approval of Polling Districts and Polling Places Scheme	September 2023	To seek Cabinets recommendation to Council that the recommendations in the Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2023 are accepted and that the Electoral Registration Officer makes the necessary amendments to the polling districts to take effect from publication of the revised register on 1 December 2023	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Sharon Kemp Tel: 01709 822770 sharon.kemp@rotherham.gov.uk

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
Transfer of Police and Crime Commissioner Functions to South Yorkshire Mayor - May 2024	November 2023	Cabinet approves the response and recommend to Council the transfer of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner to the Mayor of South Yorkshire from May 2024.	Leader of the Council	This is the Council's response to the Governments Consultation.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Sharon Kemp Tel: 01709 822770 sharon.kemp@rotherham.gov.uk
FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES								
September 2023-24 Financial Monitoring Report	September 2023	To note the current revenue and capital monitoring position and agree any required actions.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
Medium Term Financial Strategy Update	September 2023	To note the updates to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices		Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
Disposal of land at Doncaster Gate Rotherham	September 2023	To seek approval to the disposal of the ground lease	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Boston Castle	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
Covid Recovery Fund	September 2023	To approve the use of part of the Covid Recovery Fund to support funding of domestic abuse services and flood recovery support payments.	Leader of the Council	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT								
Borough wide Public Space Protection Order	June 2023	To approve a Borough wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) following consultation and at point of renewal.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
Town Centre/Clifton Park Public Space Protection Order	June 2023	To approve a Town Centre/Clifton Park Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) following consultation.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	Boston Castle; Rotherham East	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Sex Establishment Policy	September 2023	To approve the revised policy.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
House to House Collection Policy	September 2023	To approve amended House to House Collection Policy.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Cumulative Impact Assessment (Licensing Act 2003)	August 2023	To approve the Cumulative Impact Policy.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy	August 2023	That Cabinet recommend the Gambling Act Licensing Policy to Council.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, officers and stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
NON-KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 20 NOVEMBER								
FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES								
Disposal of 1 Treefield Close Rotherham	September 2023	To seek approval to the direct disposal of the property	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Greasbrough	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT								

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
Cabinet's Response to Scrutiny Review Recommendations - Impact of Selective Licensing	September 2023	To approve the response to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Scrutiny Review recommendations on Impact of Selective Licensing.	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	Boston Castle; Dinnington; Maltby East; Rawmarsh East; Rawmarsh West	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 18 DECEMBER 2023 OR LATER								
ADULT CARE, HOUSING AND HEALTH								
Adult Social Care Mental Health Review	September 2023	To note the review outcomes and approve the proposals for Adult Social Care mental health services.	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
Rothercare Review and New Service Model	September 2023	To note the Rothercare consultation outcome and approve next steps to implement a new delivery model for Rothercare.	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy.	September 2023	To approve the new Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy.	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES								
Neglect Strategy 2024 - 26	September 2023	To endorse the Neglect Strategy 2024-26	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Nicola Curley nicola.curley@rotherham.gov.uk
Expansion of Waverley Junior Academy	September 2023	To increase capacity at Waverley Junior Academy by one form of entry through s106 contribution.	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	Brinsworth; Aughton & Swallownest; Rother Vale	Open	Nicola Curley nicola.curley@rotherham.gov.uk
FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES								
Covid Recovery Fund	September 2023	To approve the use of part of the Covid Recovery Fund.	Leader of the Council	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant funded decarbonisation works	September 2023	<p>To note the Council's bid for Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant.</p> <p>To support the Council's use of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant to decarbonise 7 operational buildings.</p> <p>To delegate authority to agree the grant acceptance should the Council's bid for Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant be approved, to the Assistant Director Financial Services.</p>	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Members of the public and relevant stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT								
Rotherham Markets & Central Library	August 2023	To approve the implementation of the Markets & Central Library development.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, officers and stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Boston Castle	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Home to School Transport Policy	September 2023	To approve the amended Policy.	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	Relevant Members, officers, stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy	September 2023	To approve the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, officers, stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Fly Tipping and Littering Fixed Penalty Charge Increase	November 2023	That Cabinet approves the increase in the cost of a fine related to littering and fly tipping offences.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
NON-KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 18 DECEMBER OR LATER								

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES								
New Applications for Business Rates Relief	September 2023	To consider the recommendation for a new application for Business Rates discretionary relief.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance		Report	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
Land off Farfield Lane, Wath upon Dearne	November 2023	To approve the the disposal of land to Barratt Homes and the acquisition of land to allow statutory allotments to be replaced.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, officers, stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	Wath	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 22 JANUARY 2024 OR LATER								
ADULT SERVICES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH								
Adult Social Care Strategy for Rotherham 2024-27	November 2023	Approve the new Council Strategy for Adult Social Care 2024 – 2027.	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
Housing Delivery Programme Report 2024-25	November 2023	Approve the continuation of the Housing Delivery Programme.	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting Charges 2024-25	November 2023		Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working			All Wards		Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES								
Corporate Parenting Strategy	June 2023	To approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023- 2026	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Nicola Curley nicola.curley@rotherham.gov.uk
FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES								
November 2023-24 Financial Monitoring Report	November 2023	To note the current revenue and capital monitoring position and agree any required actions.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.		Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT								
Maltby Neighbourhood Plan	November 2023	To note the outcome of the local referendum on the Maltby Neighbourhood Plan and to recommend to Council that the Plan be adopted.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Hellaby & Maltby West; Maltby East	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Local Labour Policy - Planning	August 2023	To approve the implementation of the local labour policy – planning.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
ASSISITANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S								

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
Quarterly Council Plan 2022-2025 and Year Ahead Delivery Plan Progress Report	November 2023	To note performance against the Council Plan and achievements of the Year Ahead Delivery Plan. That Cabinet note: · <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The overall position in relation to the Year Ahead Delivery Plan activities.• The data for the Council Plan performance measures for the second quarter of 2023-2024.	Leader of the Council	Relevant officers, Members and stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Jo Brown Tel: 01709 255269 jo.brown@rotherham.gov.uk
FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES								
New Applications for Business Rates Relief	November 2023	To consider the recommendation for a new application for Business Rates discretionary relief.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 SCHEDULE 12A
ACCESS TO INFORMATION: EXEMPT INFORMATION
PART 1
DESCRIPTIONS OF EXEMPT INFORMATION: ENGLAND

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes –
 - a. to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - b. to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

PART 2
QUALIFICATIONS: ENGLAND

Paragraphs 1-8 repealed.

- 9 Information is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission pursuant to regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.
- 10 Information which –
 - a. falls within any of paragraphs 1 to 7 above; and
 - b. is not prevented from being exempt by virtue of paragraph 8 or 9 above, is exempt information if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
SECTION 100A(3) – DEFINITION OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Confidential information means –

- a. information furnished to the council by a Government department upon terms (however expressed) which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public; and
- b. information the disclosure of which to the public is prohibited by or under any enactment or by the order of a court;

and, in either case, the reference to the obligation of confidence is to be construed accordingly.

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