

Customer Feedback Annual Report Shropshire Council 2017/18

Information, Intelligence and Insight Team, Commissioning Support
July 2018



1. Introduction

The annual customer feedback report provides details of the complaints, compliments, comments and other types of formal feedback received by Shropshire Council. The report covers the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. The annual customer feedback report is made available to members of the public, councillors and council staff. The report complements the quarterly reporting and regular monitoring reporting that takes place within the Council during the course of the year. The ongoing work to monitor customer feedback ensures an up to date understanding of customer experiences and enables the identification of learning and implementation of actions designed to generate service improvement.

Complaints containing an element of social care fall under the statutory guidelines. These are classed as statutory complaints for either adult or children's services and are handled in line with the statutory complaints procedures. The remainder of complaints are corporate complaints. Corporate complaints relate to a support service or services that do not provide social care and these are handled under the Council's corporate complaints procedure. You can find out more on Shropshire Council's website.

This report covers both statutory complaints and corporate complaints, providing a whole council view of formal customer feedback. Annual reports are also prepared for Adult Services and Children's Services allowing for a more detailed consideration of feedback for those service areas.

Complaint

We aim to make it as easy as possible to make a complaint. A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about a service provided. Family members and advocates may also make a complaint on behalf of one of our customers.

We will ask for consent to ensure that the complaint is not being made against the customer's wishes.

Compliment

Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. It is really helpful to learn when a service has been provided well or when a member of staff has done a great job. We like to recognise compliments alongside any complaints. It is good for us to say 'thank you' to our teams and staff members too.

Comment

Feedback about a service could be:

- a suggestion to improve it.
- a question as to whether something could be done differently.
- an idea for delivering a service differently.



2. The Complaints Process

Shropshire Council encourages users of our services, their family members and carers to give feedback and highlight any concerns so that they may be addressed as quickly as possible. If problems cannot be resolved and the customer wishes to make a complaint, staff members offer advice on how to make a complaint. Support is also available from complaints officers based with Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team.

- Speak to a member of staff and fill in one of our complaints leaflets.
- Telephone us: 0345 678 9000
- Email us at: customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk
- Fill in the customer feedback form on the council's website. Use the 'make a complaint' button at: <https://new.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/corporate-complaints/>



Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of being received and we let the complainant know how their complaint will be handled.

STAGE 1

An appropriate Investigating Officer will be allocated to the case and asked to investigate the complaint. This is usually a manager within the service area the complaint relates to. The complainant will be provided with a written response within approximately 6 weeks (12 weeks is the timescale for stage 1 and stage 2 responses and 6 weeks is usually allocated to each). In some complex cases it may take longer than 6 weeks at Stage 1 but we let the customer know if this extra time is needed and why. The Investigating Officer will write to explain the outcome of their investigation, any learning or actions and information outlining how to progress the complaint if the customer is not satisfied with the outcome.



STAGE 2 - Review

The complaint will be reviewed by a more senior manager, commissioner, or in most cases, the Complaints Monitoring Officer. They will decide if there is more the service can do to address the concerns raised. If the reviewing officer believes the service has done all they reasonably can do, the customer will be written to and advised of this. They will also be given information about the Local Government Ombudsman.



Ombudsman

If a complaint cannot be resolved locally it can be investigated by the Ombudsman. The council has a timescale of 28 calendar days to provide a response to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Responses are often complex, lengthy and require a large volume of appendices to be collated, catalogued and returned to the LGO. Complainants can request to go to the Ombudsman without a review if they choose to.

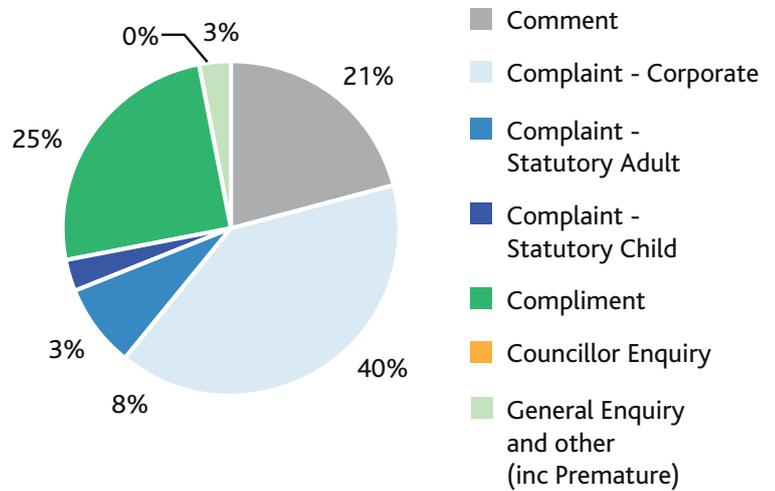
We cannot promise to get the result complainants want, but we do make sure that complaints are dealt with as quickly and as thoroughly as possible and we work to keep customers informed of what is happening and the progress being made.

3. Customer Feedback 2017/18

In 2017/18 there were 2,187 cases of formal feedback recorded by Shropshire Council. There were:

- 874 corporate complaints
- 171 Adult Services statutory complaints
- 74 Children’s Services statutory complaints
- 5 councillor enquiries
- 74 general enquiries and other types of feedback (including premature enquiries).
- 448 comments
- 541 compliments

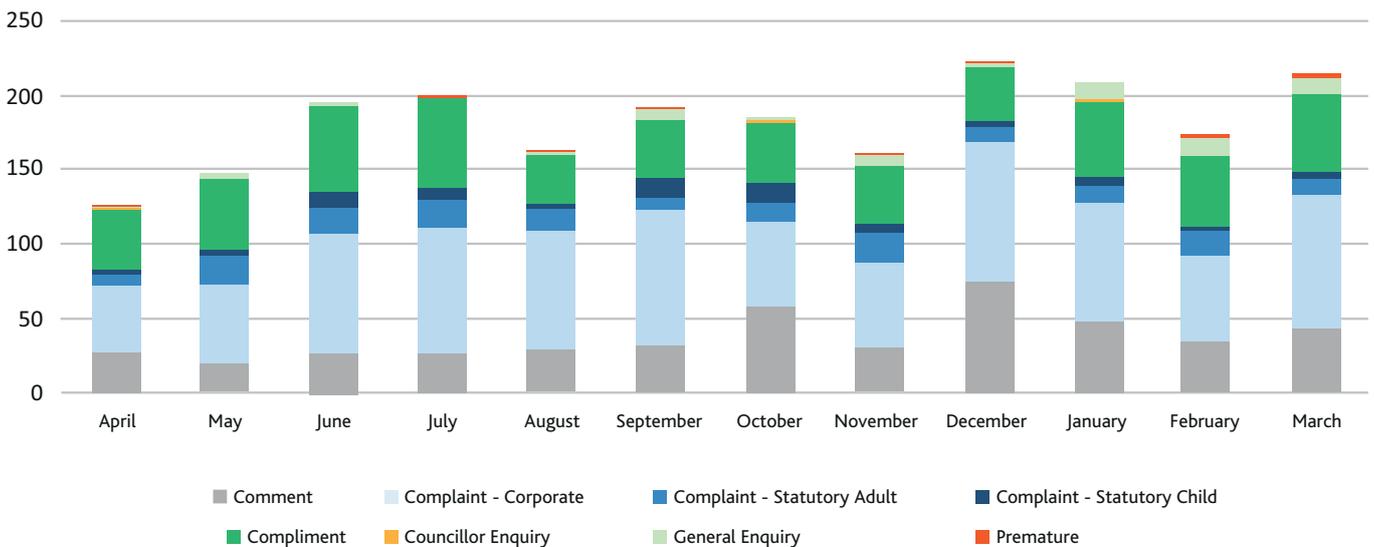
Types of Customer Feedback Received 2017/18



Complaints formed 51% of all cases, followed by compliments at 25%. 20% of all customer feedback cases were comments and 4% of cases were other types of enquiry.

A separate report is available for MP enquiries since MP enquiries often relate to complaints and inclusion would result in double counting and the over reporting of cases

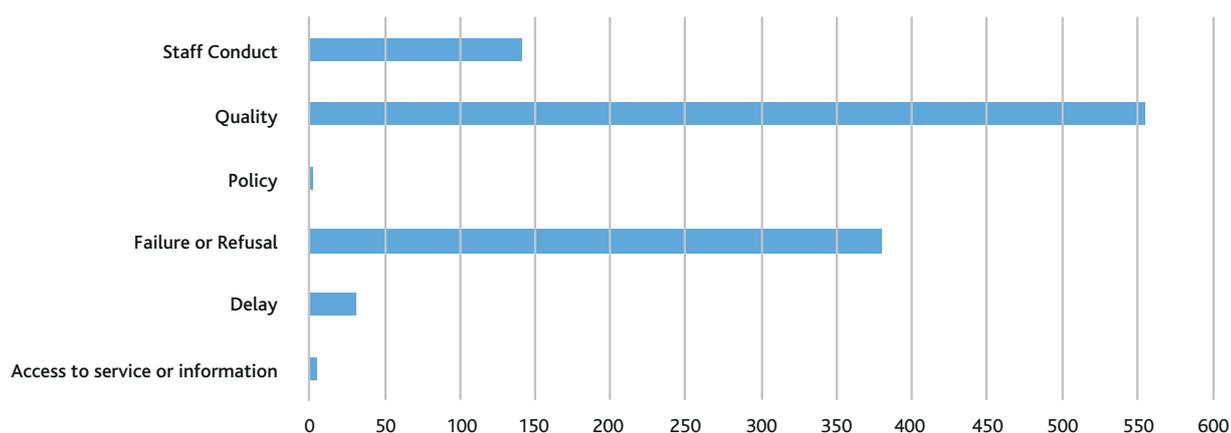
Customer Feedback by Month 2017/18



Over the year, the monthly average was 182 customer feedback cases. December 2017 saw the greatest number of cases at 222, followed by March 2018 at 215 cases. Unlike 2016/17 there were no decreases in case numbers during the months associated with main holidays (December and August). Overall case volumes increased over the course of the year. On average 93 complaints were made to Shropshire Council each month (compared to 77 in 2016/17).

The last quarter of 2017/18 (January to March 2018) saw a greater volume of customer feedback cases than any other quarter in the year. The quarter totals increased over the year highlighting a steady increase over the course of the year.

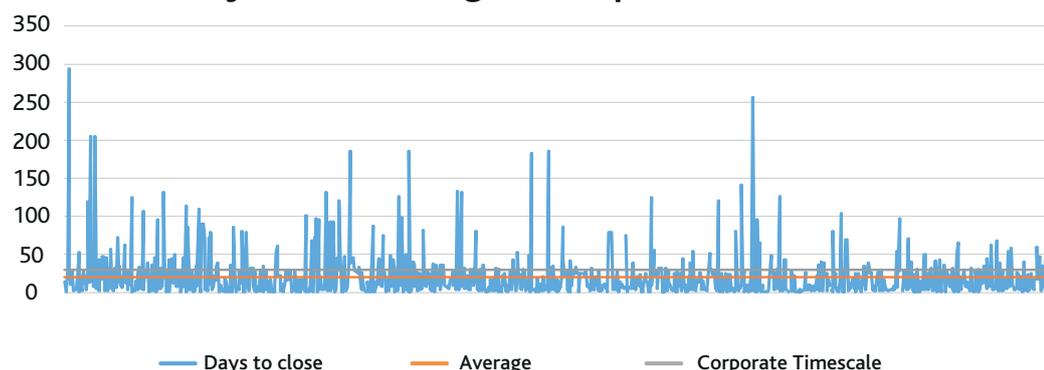
Category of Complaints Received 2017/18



There were 1,119 complaints made within the year. 'Quality' was the main category under which complaints were made. Only the main or dominant issue may be recorded and it should be noted that some complaints are more complex and cover a number of different categories. Within 'quality' there are a number of sub categories and analysis highlights that 'quality – service provided' and 'quality - unreasonable decision' were the dominant sub categories. 'Failure or refusal' was the second main category under which complaints were recorded in 2017/18 and the dominant sub category within that was 'failure or refusal to deliver a service', followed by 'failure or refusal to take action'. It seems likely, when reading the complaints in full, that a proportion of complaints have been generated as a result of service changes or reductions caused by budget reductions.

During 2017/18 Shropshire Council took an average of 20.4 working days to respond to stage 1 complaints which is consistent with the 20.2 working days in 2016/17. This is well within the 30 day timescale Shropshire Council works to and it is encouraging to see timescales have not increased as a result of a growth in numbers of feedback cases and complaints. However it should be noted that there is significant variation around the average and some cases, particularly complex complaints, can take longer than the 30 days allocated to respond. The Council has 60 working days in total to respond to corporate complaints, 30 working days for each stage (stage 1 and stage 2). Days to close is a key measure within ongoing performance monitoring.

Days to Close Stage 1 Complaints 2017/18

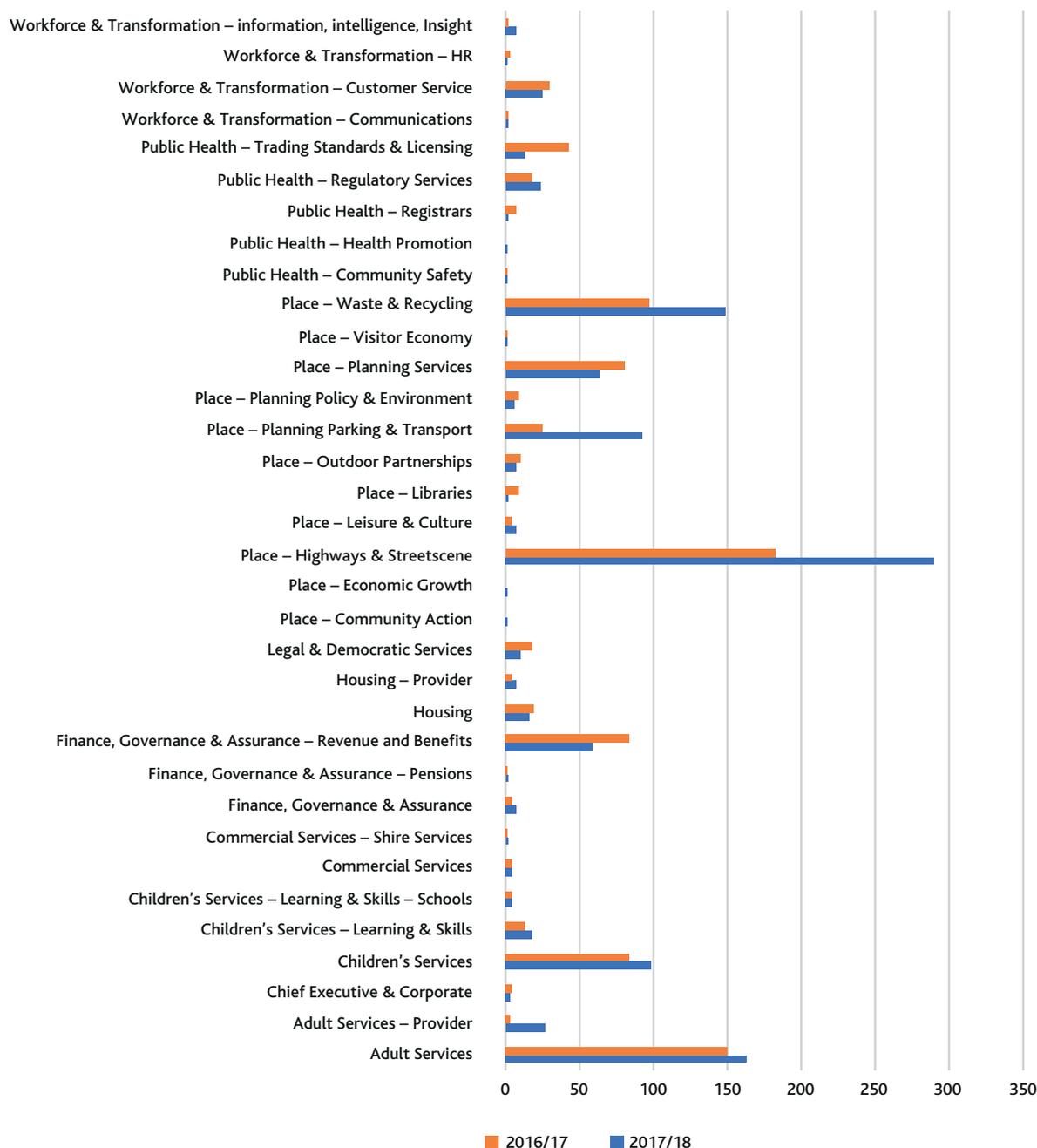


Some types of service are more likely to result in complaints than others and the chart on the following page highlights complaints by service area. Highways and Streetscene received 26% of all Shropshire Council's complaints during 2017/18 followed by Adult Services at 19%. Waste & Recycling services received 13% of complaints followed by Children's Services (11%), Parking and Transport (8%), Planning (6%) and Revenue & Benefits (5%).

Highways and Waste are the service areas where the most significant increases in complaint numbers have occurred over the last year. Reading the complaints and considering which month they were made suggests that a proportion of complaints for these service areas resulted from the more extreme weather conditions in 2017/18. These services appear to be affected more by weather conditions than other areas of service and they are also services which every household in Shropshire uses in some way which means more people will have been impacted. A more in-depth analysis of Highways complaints has been carried out and considered by the Council's Scrutiny Committee for Place. This has explored causes and remedial action.

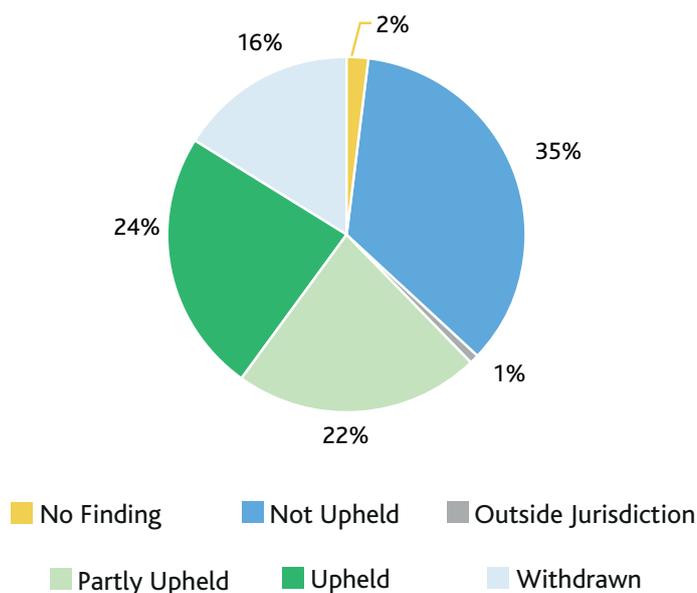
The annual comparison of complaints also illustrates that parking complaints increased. Reading the complaints indicates that that this was partly caused by the parking consultation and proposed changes in charging. Adult Services and Children's Services have also seen slight increases in complaint numbers. Separate reports on Adult Services and Children's services explore their complaints and customer feedback in more detail.

Complaints by Service Area 2017/18



- At the end of 2017/18 1,021 stage 1 complaints were completed or closed. 72 stage 1 complaints remained open. A small proportion of complaints had also progressed to stage 2 or beyond.
- Of the closed stage 1 complaints 24% were upheld (245 complaints), 22% were partly upheld and 35% were not upheld.
- Of the complaints that were upheld, 30% were with Highways & Streetscene, 26% were with Waste & Recycling, and 15% were with Adult Services.

Outcome of Stage 1 Complaints 2017/18



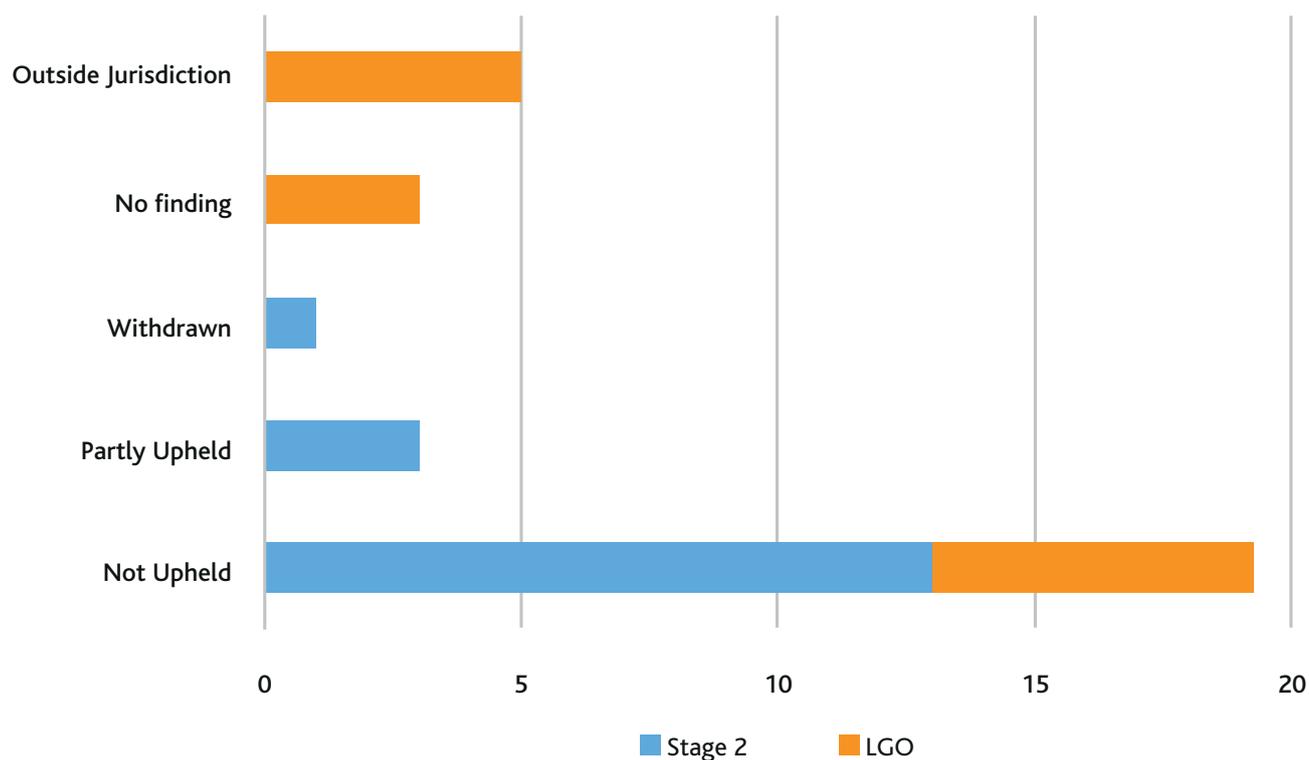
4. Progression of Complaints

Effective stage 1 complaint handling can reduce the number of stage 2 complaints. It is important to understand how many complaints progress beyond stage 1 and this is a measure included within regular performance reporting. During 2017/18 only a small proportion of all the complaints Shropshire Council received progressed beyond stage 1.

During 2017/18 26 of the cases received went on to require further investigation beyond stage 1. There were 26 investigations completed beyond stage 1. The table below shows the number of closed complaints within the year that progressed beyond stage 1 by service area and the chart on the following page highlights the outcome of those complaints. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) initial considerations where the outcome was 'outside jurisdiction' have not been included.

	Stage 2	LGO	Total investigations beyond stage 1
Adult Services		2	2
Adult Services - Provider		1	1
Adult Services - Housing	1		1
Children's Services	3	1	4
Children's Services - Learning & Skills		2	2
Children's Services - Learning & Skills - Schools		1	1
Finance, Governance & Assurance - Revenue and Benefits	1		1
Place - Highways & Streetscene	1	1	2
Place - Parking & Transport	3	1	4
Place - Planning Services	7		7
Public Health - Trading Standards & Licensing	1		1
Total	17	9	26

Outcome of cases stage 2 and beyond 2017/18



The Shropshire annual report from the Local Government Ombudsman and Social Care (LGO) highlighted that 84 complaints and enquiries were made to the LGO from Shropshire during the year (see Appendix 1). Of those, 25 resulted in an investigation outcome: 17 were not upheld and 8 were upheld. The LGO reports Shropshire Council's upheld rate at 32%. Some of the complaints the LGO investigated related to complaints received by Shropshire Council before the start of the financial year (and so not covered within this report).

Appendix 2 highlights findings and recommendations made by the LGO within 2017/18. All recommendations are monitored and actioned by the Shropshire Council service area responsible for the complaint, and in most cases overseen by the service area's Director.

Overall Shropshire Council has performed well. Fewer complaints were upheld by the LGO compared to last year. (In 2016/17 11 cases were upheld and the uphold rate was 48%). Although similar numbers of cases are progressing to the LGO (90 in 2016/17 and 84 in 2017/18) only a small proportion of total complaints are subject to review/stage 2 and/or LGO investigation.

Despite good performance overall there is a recognition that the learning from complaints may help to reduce complaint numbers in future. Learning is explored in more detail later in this report.

5. Annual Comparison 2015/16 and 2017/18

Number of compliments – decreased

In 2015/16 462 compliments were recorded for Shropshire Council. In 2016/17 the Council received 646 compliments, and in the last year (2017/18) 541 compliments. Compliments average at 45 a month with fewer compliments recorded in August and December than in any other months of the year. Overall the numbers of compliments received are fairly steady over the year but quarter 4 saw the greatest number of compliments overall.



Number of complaints - increased

The number of complaints received was 1,119 in 2017/18 compared to 922 in 2016/17 and 874 in 2015/16. Complaints have increased by 21% between 2016/17 and 2017/18 (there was a 28% increase from 2015/16 to 2017/18). A positive consideration is that people feel able to complain but the significant increase does suggest that the consequences of local authority budget reductions may be impacting on customer experience in some circumstances.



Nature of complaints - problems remain similar

The table below highlights that the nature of complaints over the last 3 years follows a very similar pattern and the results hardly vary at all year to year.



Category	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Access to Service or Information	1%	1%	1%
Delay	8%	5%	3%
Failure or Refusal	30%	33%	34%
Policy	1%	0%	0%
Quality	46%	47%	49%
Staff Conduct	13%	14%	13%
Other or not stated	1%	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Days to close - a little longer to resolve complaints

In 2015/16 it took Shropshire Council an average of 17.4 working days to close stage 1 complaints. In 2016/17 this increased to 20.2 working days and in 2017/18 there was similar performance at 20.4 working days. This well within the 30 day corporate timescale we work to for stage 1 complaints. This is good performance considering the increase in complaint numbers overall. In addition there appears to have been an increase in the number of complex complaints cases received.



Similar

Outcome of complaints - Slightly fewer complaints are upheld

In 2016/17 27% of cases were upheld, 25% were partly upheld and 36% were not upheld, (other cases may have been withdrawn, resolved on the spot or resulted in a 'no finding'). In 2017/18 24% of cases were upheld, 22% were partly upheld and 35% were not upheld (the remainder were withdrawn, had no finding or were resolved in other ways). The proportions remain similar over the years and this balance is to be expected. If significant proportions of complaints are upheld this would be a concern and suggest some problems need to be resolved. If very few cases are upheld that could indicate the Council is not willing to accept fault. Quality checking of complaint responses remains in place and enables a balanced approach.



Similar

Complaints Progressing Beyond Stage 1 - similar proportion

In 2016/17 5% of all cases progressed beyond stage 1 and in 2017/18 the proportion was 2.4% (27 cases). Performance remains good with only a small proportion of complaint cases progressing beyond stage 1.



Similar

6. Example Compliments

Shropshire Council received 541 compliments during 2017/18. Many of the compliments highlight recognition for staff members who provided a higher standard of service or care than customers expected to receive.

"I wanted to draw your attention to [name of staff member], who works at the recycling centre at Craven Arms. We have visited the site several times over the last few weeks and on every occasion he has been cheerful, helpful and welcoming. He has helped us to unload items and has made sure we put them in the right place. He provides extra information about what happens to recycled carpet underlay etc. It is a real pleasure to visit the site when [name of staff member] is on duty, and he is a real credit to Shropshire Council." (Waste & Recycling)

"The START Team were super! They were such a great help and so lovely, caring, polite and professional". (START Team (Ludlow), Adult Social Care)

"Thank to your teams of Bin and Recycling workers for managing to take away our waste in Bucknell today. Friday was a 'white out' and we didn't expect an extra response today. Much appreciated! I hope you can pass this on to your staff who are brilliant. Thank you on behalf of all of us here in Bucknell." (Waste & Recycling)

"I contacted your department less than 5 working days ago regarding a Building certificate... from my first contact by email I was then called by [name of staff member] who fully explained the process of having an inspection completed. He then arranged a date and time to visit us and then called 30 minutes before his arrival. He completed the survey and sent me the report on his next working day. thank you for this swift professional manner in dealing with my request." (Planning Services)

"I would like to congratulate you and your team for acting so swiftly with this matter. The good people of Shropshire can be very proud of their Council officers when they respond so quickly to matters of public safety and protection. Once again, many thanks for your excellent work with this." (Licensing and Trading Standards, Public Health)

"I was impressed with the professional and helpful way that [name of staff member] and [name of staff member] both dealt with me when my heating had stopped working. Thank you for sorting this so quickly." (Housing Options, Adult Services)

"I would like to say that your Superintendent Registrar, [name of staff member], went above and beyond the call of duty when dealing with myself (and family) both before my husband's recent death and afterwards. I can only say what a very lovely lady she is and very professional, a credit to you. The service received was excellent." (Registration and Celebratory Services)

"Shropshire Council Housing Out of Hours Service were amazing last night, helping a young homeless person. Thank you." (Housing Options, Adult Services)

"I phoned Customer Services this morning for advice about a Blue Badge application. The lady I spoke to was so very friendly, cheerful and helpful. It made me want to commend her on her excellent customer service manner." (Customer Services)

"Compliment for [name of staff member] Rights of Way Officer: Last Sunday, to my surprise, I found a new footbridge and new metal kissing-gates replacing the rickety stiles. I would like to thank you for your efforts in this matter it looks like Shropshire Council is on the ball." (Outdoor Partnerships)



7. Example Complaints

Shropshire Council received 1,119 complaints during 2017/18. Some example complaints have been included below to highlight the type of feedback Shropshire Council receives. These examples were not all upheld and some related to a lack of understanding of the service Shropshire Council was able to provide. Where necessary wording within complaints has been removed within the examples to ensure anonymity. The next section of this report looks more closely at learning and the actions taken following complaint investigations.

"We are a family of six. One of our wheelie bins was removed during bin collection and has not been replaced, explained etc. We cannot get through on the phone lines due to extensive delays in answering calls." (Waste & Recycling)

"In January we, and a number of other properties, experienced catastrophic flooding, in part due to the illegal culverting of a water course. Your Land Drainage team are investigating the matter but two months on and we are still no closer to a solution". (Planning Services and Highways)

"Your website continually failed, every time I tried to submit my council tax application. I now have absolutely no idea if it has worked or not. Your website is completely unreliable. I couldn't even leave feedback about the above as that button would not work either. My browser refused to load the feedback page telling me the site was not secure. This is not the first time I have had trouble trying to do something online at shropshire.gov.uk recently. But in the past your website has worked fine. What has gone wrong lately?" (Digital Services)

"I couldn't get hold of anyone in Traffic Management (at 09:13am) so I said I would put a message through asking someone to call the customer back. The customer reported that Shropshire Council has been putting messages through for the last 18 months asking for someone to call them back but no one has. She said the only reason that they got a call back 2 weeks ago was because they got their local councillor involved". (Transport and Highways)

"I and many others are astonished at the early closing hours of the park and ride. It means it is impossible to use the feature and enjoy an evening meal, see a film or theatre show, or just browse the shops that hope for business later on. We are told the council owns the park and ride and control the hours. We shudder to think how the town will develop now the shopping centres have been bought by the council. The main multi-storey (also council owned), closes at 7pm which is also very anti-social." (Parking, Public Protection)

"I arranged to meet with [staff member name] at 2pm today ... I amended my Christmas plans in order to attend the meeting. [Staff member name] did not arrive and on speaking to someoneI was informed that she was off work ill - and had been for some time.....why didn't the Adult Social Care administrative system check her appointments and rearrange or cover the meetings accordingly?" (Adult Social Care)

"The customer's complaint is that he feels that the officer who spoke to him was patronising in his manner and the advice that he was provided with, was incorrect information during the conversation." (Welfare Benefits)

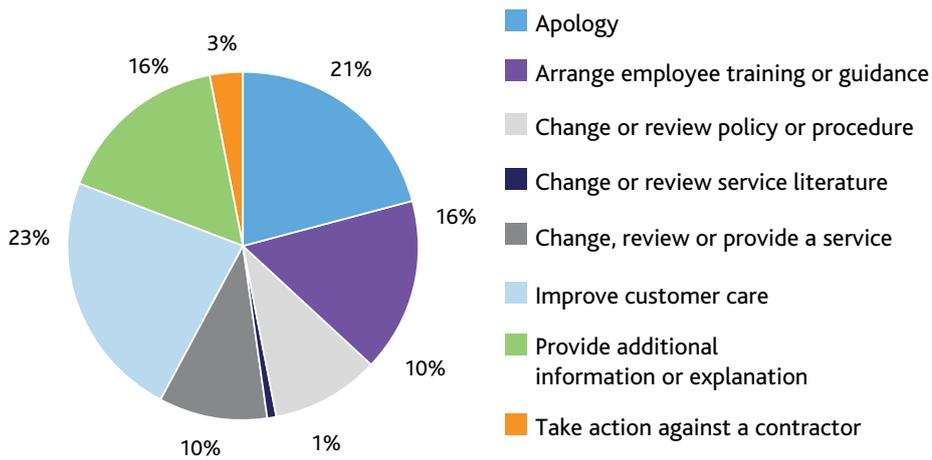
"... [name removed] has not been given a fair opportunity to represent himself and has been given no opportunity to respond to allegations. I fear that the report written by [staff member name] may have a one-sided view point and that unsubstantiated allegations will be used." (Children's Services)



8. Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council recorded learning and or actions against 23% of complaints in 2017/18. 15.4% of complaints had an improvement action recorded and 7.5% had a learning point recorded. Limitations in the system used to record complaints mean that the ability to easily record and report multiple learning and action points is not currently in place but has been identified as a future requirement within Digital Transformation and the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). The charts below highlight the primary action and learning point recorded.

Improvement Actions Recorded 2017/18



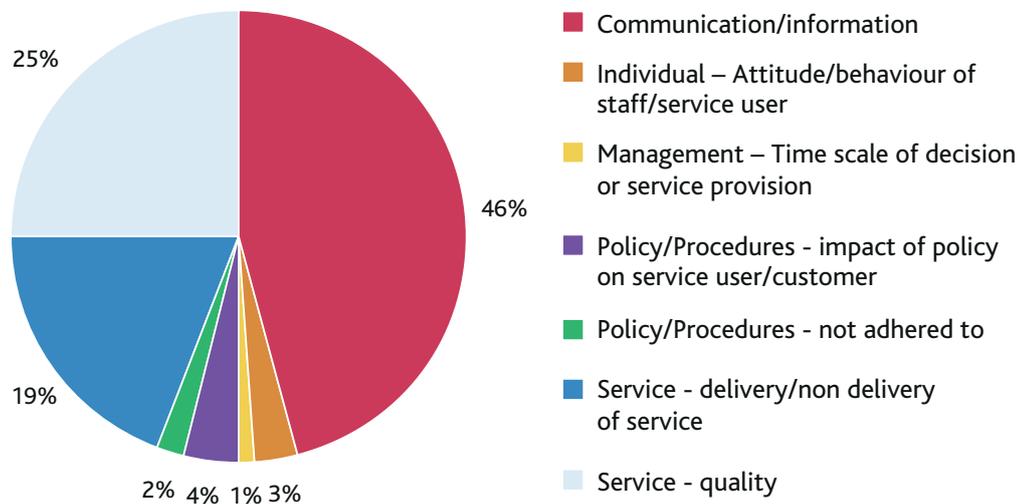
Of the actions that were recorded against complaints closed in 2017/18:

- 22% were to improve customer care
- 21% were to make an apology
- 16% were to provide additional information or explanation
- 16% were to arrange employee training or guidance.

Consideration of the learning points recorded during the year highlights:

- 46% of learning points related to communication/information
- 25% of learning points were in relation to service quality
- 18% of learning points fell into the category of delivery or non-delivery of a service
- Other types of learning points were not seen in any significant numbers.

Learning Points Recorded 2017/18



9. Example Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council works to record, and act on learning from complaints to avoid any mistakes from being repeated and implement improvements where they have been identified. Examples are shown below to highlight the type of action taken in order to minimise the number of complaints received and try to ensure that customers receive a good standard of service. Wording within the examples has been altered slightly for simplicity and to ensure confidentiality.

To respond to the complaint the local Senior Highways Technician visited the area. He arranged for remedial work to be carried out by the contractor. The issue was also discussed at the weekly meeting and progress monitoring was planned.

A letter was sent to the customer with answers to all of the issues raised together with an apology because Shropshire Council did not meet the initial deadline.

Explanation was provided to the customer regarding the delay in removing an object and the process involved. It is accepted that this should have been dealt with in a more expedient manner. It is also accepted the person making the original complaint should have been kept informed. Local staff have been informed of the issue in order to learn from the complaint.

An enquiry was not actioned because it was thought that the council did not own the land referred to. The officer was mistaken about the land ownership. Information has since been provided to all other customer service point staff across the county. An apology was offered.

An apology was provided because the customer did not receive a direct response to the questions asked in emails. Clear correspondence will be issued covering exactly the information required. Information is also needed from the customer and an explanation has been given that if information is not provided Shropshire Council will not be able to progress the case and provide a service.

The system that processes payments was going through an upgrade. A message was displayed to customers to prevent them using the payment pages until Shropshire Council had assurance that the system was functioning correctly. Apologies were given for any inconvenience caused, alongside a full explanation. The complaint will be used to consider whether there is a different way of informing customers for future system upgrades.

A member of staff has phoned and spoken to the customer regarding her concerns about the quality of street cleaning. The officer will inspect the areas that were specifically mentioned and will arrange for remedial work to be carried out.

A customer complained as a result of confusion about appointment times. To ensure that no other customer experiences similar confusion a message was sent to all advisers to confirm that when communicating times of appointments that they should clearly confirm the start and finish time of the appointment. The cause for the confusion was understood and steps taken to avoid the problem from being repeated.

A parking complaint was investigated and it was discovered that there had been a coin jam in the machine. A refund was given with an apology for the inconvenience caused.

It was agreed that it is not acceptable to be unable to leave a message. An instruction has been issued to have an answerphone facility for callers to leave a message should they be unable to speak to the staff members at the time of the call. This will be followed up at the team meeting and at individual supervision sessions. Spot checks will also be made to ensure there is an answerphone facility for callers to the service.

A council officer parked on private land to undertake their duties. This was due to a lack of understanding of parking restrictions and guidelines. Shropshire Council has apologised. All officers within the service have been given more information about appropriate parking to ensure this does not happen again. The customer was thanked for bringing the matter to the Council's attention.

A letter has been issued with apologies for the way in which a member of staff behaved when speaking on the telephone. An explanation as to why this happened was given. The customer was also agitated which contributed to the escalation of the situation.



I didn't really want to make a complaint.
I hoped that if I told the council about my experiences, lessons would be learnt, things would change, and other people wouldn't experience the same situation again.

10. Conclusions

Local data highlights that, overall there were more cases of customer feedback recorded in 2017/18 compared to the last two years. There was an increase in all types of cases of 10% from 2016/17 to 2017/18 and a 21% increase in complaints. The nature of complaints remains similar. Stage 1 complaints handling remains effective with a small proportion of complaints progressing to Stage 2.

A close analysis of complaints by service area (separate and more detailed reports are provided for Children's Services and Adults Services) highlights the main themes for services receiving the greatest number of corporate complaints. Please note that these are reported issues and not necessarily upheld complaints:

- **Highways & Streetscene** – lack of response/communication, lack of action or delays, complaints about potholes, complaints related to grass cutting and concerns about traffic lights, traffic works and obstructions.
- **Waste & Recycling** – repeated missed collections, mess caused by rubbish not contained by bins, not returning bins or recycling containers to properties after emptying, attitude and behaviour of individuals collecting waste.
- **Revenue & Benefits** – delays in service, difficulties contacting the service, customers believing mistakes have been made, challenges setting up payments and complaints about poor customer experience.
- **Planning** – failure to respond to communications, delays/time taken to progress applications and lack of enforcement action taken.

It is difficult to assess how well Shropshire Council is performing overall with a lack of benchmarking data available to compare Shropshire Council with other local authorities. The Local Government Ombudsman has issued the Shropshire Council report included as Appendix 1. Overall the LGO received 84 enquiries from Shropshire in 2017/18, 90 in 2016/17 and 83 in 2015/16. Overall performance in terms of numbers of cases referred is similar across the 3 years. The LGO annual data includes upheld rates as key measures of performance. In 2015/16 Shropshire Council's upheld rate was 50%, in 2016/17 it was 48% and in 2017/18 the upheld rate was 32% suggesting good performance for the last year.



11. Recommendations

1. It is important to include an ongoing recommendation concerning the recording of all formal customer feedback and the implementation of the Council's complaints and representations procedures. Guidance is available for all staff members to refer to. Most members of staff understand the importance of feedback for their own service but it is important to remind staff of the overall value of customer feedback and the learning it can generate for the whole organisation: complaints in one service area can generate learning for a number of services.
2. Communication is an underlying theme for many complaints and for some areas of service complaints appear to be generated because customers are frustrated that they cannot contact the service, have not had a response to an initial enquiry, or have not been kept updated on their case. All service areas, particularly those going through digital transformation, are encouraged to review their customer service standards and processes and identify any opportunities for improvement.
3. Certain types of service and role are likely to generate more complaints than others. However, performance should be regularly monitored and reviewed in order to recognise any changes in complaint volumes and the cause. Where additional complaints are generated as a result of service changes or budget restrictions those should be identified and reported to senior managers for consideration. Additional analysis work has been undertaken for Highways and consideration has been given to managing the increase in case numbers. It is recommended that this approach may also be applied to other areas of service where increases in cases are seen or where performance monitoring highlights concerns.
4. The time taken to respond to stage 1 complaints has remained stable despite increases in case numbers. Average performance remains well within the 30 working day timescale. However, there are cases which extend beyond the expected timescales. If the number of complaints continues to increase there is a danger that Shropshire Council will see average timescales increasing. It is recommended that this continues to be monitored within quarterly reporting (and the more regular reports provided to some service areas). Investigating officers will be reminded of the need to respond within the agreed timescales. If there are identified areas of concern it may be feasible to identify additional investigating officers to support.
5. It is recommended that all complaints investigators record the learning and actions from complaints and, where appropriate, highlight learning and actions within response letters. This focus on learning and action should result in a reduction in complaint numbers.



Recommendations continued...

6. Overall the number of cases handled at stage 2 has not increased significantly. However, it is recommended that this continues to be monitored closely considering the overall increase in complaint numbers. Should the number of stage 2 complaints increase there will be a significant impact due to the time taken to review and manage more complex complaints cases.
7. An ongoing recommendation should be that all staff are supported through the complaints process. The more pressure staff are under the more likely that some mistakes could be made. The emphasis must be placed on making the most of the learning from complaints and preventing future complaints.
8. Toward the end of 2015/16 the LGO issued expectations concerning the way in which local authorities deal with provider complaints. Shropshire Council has made good progress throughout 2017/18 in adopting a more robust approach to the handling of provider complaints (with an emphasis on adult social care). However, it is recognised that this is a long term change and that further work required. It is recommended that during 2018/19 a review is undertaken to consider progress across all service areas and identify any further action required.
9. An ongoing recommendation is for all services to ensure their customers (and the customers of any commissioned services) understand their right to complain to Shropshire Council and how to provide customer feedback (compliments, complaints and comments). Although information is available on the Council's website it is recognised that some people are less likely to access websites and could benefit from verbal or written communications (pdf leaflets are available on the website).
10. A significant focus during 2017/18 has been the development of a new customer feedback system under the Council's Digital Transformation Programme. This work has been a priority in order to overcome many of the challenges the current IT system presents. Further design work will continue into 2018/19 as processes for MP Enquiries, Councillor Enquiries and Persistent and Vexatious Customers are added to the system. It is anticipated that the implementation and refining of the system will remain a significant focus during 2018/19.
11. Due to the work involved in designing a new IT system for formal customer feedback work has been delayed on the planned development of training on the Council's new Learning Management System. This presents an opportunity for more accessible complaints and customer feedback training and will become a focus once the system implementation under the digital transformation process is complete.

Appendix 1

Local Authority Report: Shropshire Council
For the Period Ending: 31/03/2018

For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our website:
<http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/interpreting-local-authority-statistics>

Complaints and enquiries received

Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
21	2	2	19	11	3	1	24	1	84

Decisions made

Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed After Initial Enquiries	Detailed Investigations		Total
				Not Upheld	Upheld	
2	1	34	22	17	8	84
				Uphold Rate	32%	

Notes

Our uphold rate is calculated in relation to the total number of detailed investigations. The number of remedied complaints may not equal the number of upheld complaints. This is because, while we may uphold a complaint because we find fault, we may not always find grounds to say that fault caused injustice that ought to be remedied.

Complaints Remedied

by LGO	Satisfactorily by Authority before LGO Involvement
4	1

Appendix 2

Recommendations to the Council made by the LGO during 2017/18

Department	LGO's Recommendation	Recommendation actioned
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	The complaint related to the Council's role as Chair and Coordinator of a Safety Advisory Group (SAG). The LGO found that there were faults in the way that the Council had carried out its role, but that they did not affect decisions taken by participating agencies and therefore did not cause injustice to the complainants.	No action required
Adult Care Services	This complaint involved a delay in assessing Deprivation of Liberty (DoLs) for someone who had moved care setting. DoLs are setting specific so cannot move with the person. The LGO found no fault with the Council's decisions and that the Council had correctly involved relatives in the best interest decisions. However, they did find that there was fault with the Council's Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards process. The LGO believes that that person was correctly residing in a care home, but that their relatives had suffered distress. The LGO also concluded that the Council had provided a suitable remedy.	No action required
Education & Children's Services	The Council failed to consider a suitable financial remedy for a person after failing to carry out an assessment. The LGO recommended an apology, changes to procedures, training for officers, and payment of £250 as a satisfactory remedy for the injustice caused. The Council were satisfied with the decision by the LGO.	Action completed
Planning & Development	This complaint related the timeliness of responding to a complaint and the way that the Council dealt with alleged breaches of planning control. The LGO found that the delays caused the complainants frustration and that the Council had agreed to apologise, pay £250 and investigate the alleged breaches without delay. The Council will report to the LGO with the outcome of its investigations.	Action complete as far as possible. One seasonal action remaining (due October 2018)
Planning & Development	The Council had not maintained a record of the reasons for its decisions about planning enforcement action, or kept the complainant informed. It had agreed to apologise to the complainant, share this decision with relevant staff, and review its enforcement decisions on this site using sufficient evidence and giving reasons for these.	Action completed

Department	LGO's Recommendation	Recommendation actioned
Adult Care Services	The Council accepted that it did not deal properly with the funding for a nursing home placement. It has therefore offered to backdate its contribution.	Action completed
Education & Children's Services, Legal and Democratic Services	The LGO found that the Education Admissions Appeal Panel's decision was not flawed by fault and could not question the outcome of the appeal. They did find that Council should make sure it clearly records and communicates the reasons for the panel's decision.	Ongoing
Planning & Development	The LGO found that the Council had not implemented a remedy to a previous complaint by delaying investigating planning breaches. However, they did not find significant injustice to the complainant and did not propose a further remedy.	No action required

Customer Feedback Annual Report Shropshire Council 2017/18

For more information concerning Shropshire Council's
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