

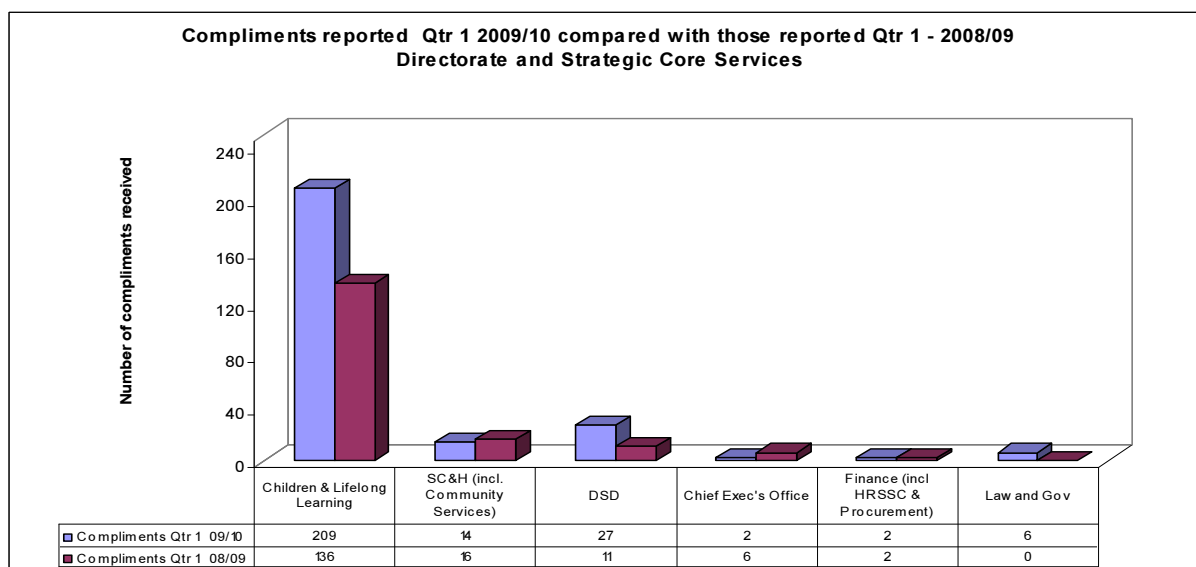
## **Appendix 4 - Customer Feedback Background Report**

### **Quarter 1 2009/10**

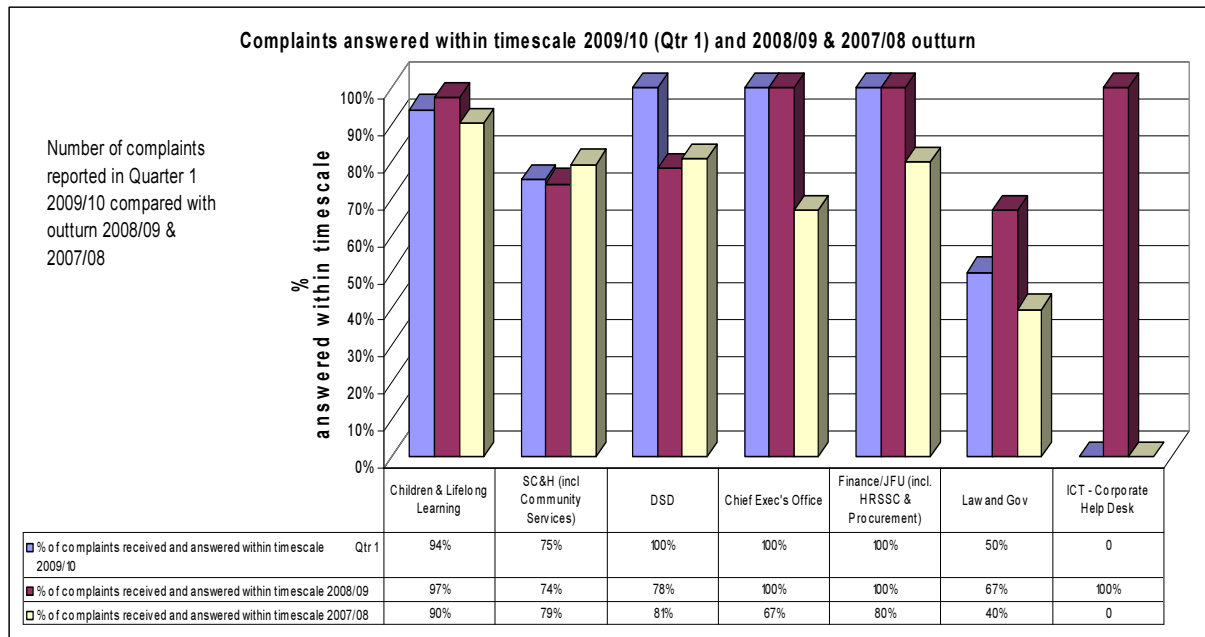
1. This background report offers corporate and statutory customer feedback performance data, detailing the number of compliments and complaints reported in the first quarter of 2009/10 (April to June 2009) enabling quarterly and annual comparisons.
2. We have recorded a total of 260 compliments and 42 complaints under the corporate customer feedback process and 41 compliments under the statutory complaint procedure (SC&H) and 31 compliments recorded under the statutory procedure for C&LL . Complaints recorded under statutory complaint procedures for Social Care and Health (SC&H) and Children & Lifelong Learning (C&LL) services are detailed in the body of this report.
3. We have commenced monitoring all complaints for evidence of avoidable contact – NI 14. We have categorised a total of 7 complaints from the 42 received this period that we believe could have been avoided and offer the outcomes of this analysis in the body of the report. 2 complaints were categorised as avoidable contact under the statutory complaint procedure (SC&H).
4. **In what areas have we improved?**

It is pleasing to note that customer satisfaction continues to rise across most service areas recording a total of 260 compliments under the corporate customer feedback process compared with 171 in the same period 2008/09. 41 compliments were recorded under the SC&H statutory procedure and 31 compliments recorded under the statutory procedure for C&LL – 332 in total.

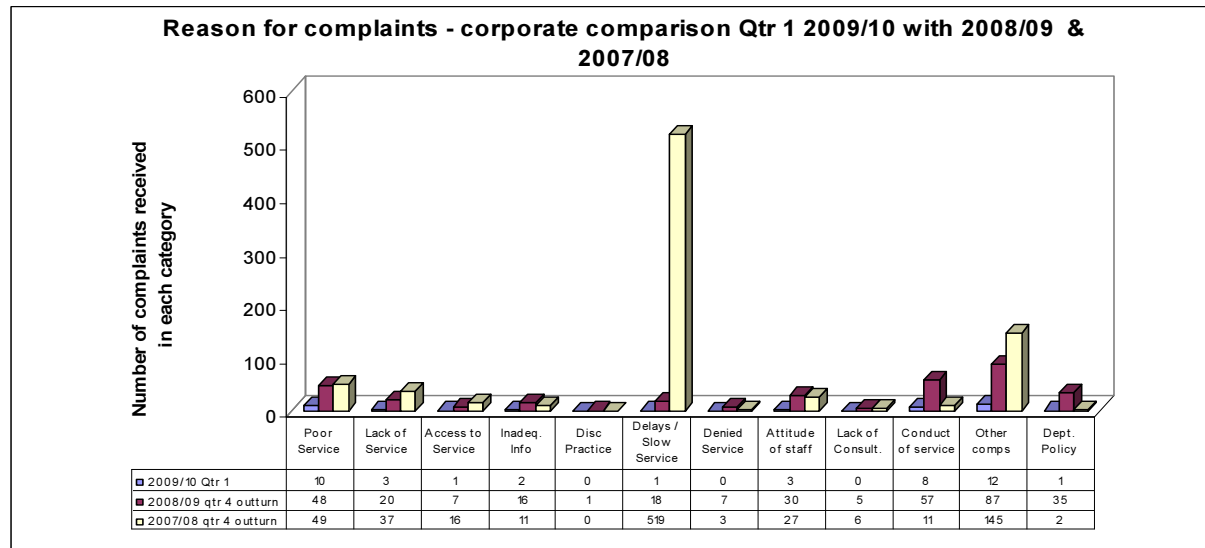
Our approach continues to encourage organisational learning from customer feedback for service improvement purposes.



We continue to monitor closely our performance within timescale at Stage 1 of the customer feedback procedure.



As discussed in quarter 4 out-turn report 2008/09, we continue to show improvement in complaints about delays/slow service, receiving only one in this period. Fewer complaints (29%) are being recorded against the 'other' category to ensure we properly analyse the nature of the complaints, examples of which are offered in this report. 24% of complaints related to poor service and 17% were about conduct of service.



### NI14 – Avoidable Contact 2009/10

Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, we monitor all complaints for incidents of avoidable contact where the customer has had to seek unnecessary clarification, has received poor signposting to services, where there is repeat contact, evidence of progress chasing and premature closure of a previous contact. 7 complaints were categorised as avoidable contact in this period.

Outcomes include:

Following investigation by C&LL the complaints falling within this category were partially upheld. 3 of these complaints were about poor service that customers received. Although the basis for the complaints could not be avoided, if members of staff had offered a better explanation to customers, formal complaints may not have been made. As a result, staff have been reminded of the importance of good customer service and additional training has been planned.

In relation to Registration Services, Community Services all Wedding bookings are now printed in hard copy for verification and calls are logged for official confirmation.

For Waste Management services, the site attendants were made aware that leaflets should have been given out providing correct information regarding the disposal of plasterboard.

**5. In what areas has performance management been challenging?**

<b>Customer Feedback</b>	<b>Compliments reported</b>	<b>Complaints reported</b>	<b>% of complaints answered within timescale</b>	<b>Complaint handling target</b>
Qtr 1 2009/10	260	42	37 (88%)	95%
2008/09	865	331	91%	95%
2007/08	781	826	89%	80%
2006/07	211	124	73%	No target

We recorded 42 complaints this quarter:

- 37 were answered @ Stage 1 (88% within timescale)
- 2 were answered @ Stage 1 (after the timescale)
- 2 remain outstanding
- 1 was dealt with @ Stage 3 (answered outside the timescale) relating to Law & Governance Directorate which was responded to by the Chief Executive's Office

The outstanding complaints are very complex and have been escalated. Their exact nature is confidential as the complainants are linked to ongoing investigations.

One complaint was not dealt with @ Stage 1 but immediately escalated to Stage 3 of the complaint procedure and was answered outside the timescale which has also impacted on our performance this quarter.

## **Outcome:**

The Customer Feedback Officer Working Group met in July 2009; discussing performance monitoring and management of the Customer Feedback process and the good progress made since 2006/07.

We clarified the process for handling complaints which are complex or those which relate to senior officers delivering the service and the need to deal with these at a more senior level but within timescale @ Stage 1<sup>1</sup> (dealt with by an appropriate Director or the Council's Complaint Monitoring Officer) rather than immediately escalating to Stage 2 or Stage 3.

We must also offer an interim response within timescale with an agreed subsequent response date with the complainant if we know we will not meet the timeframe.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, all complaints are being analysed for evidence of avoidable contact – National Indicator 14 to enable us to identify improvements in service delivery and lessen the number of complaints received.

All Customer Feedback Officers will ensure that the data gathered to support the quantitative information will be outcome focused.

35 complaints relating to Council or Directorate Policy, not dealt with under the Corporate Complaint Procedure were dealt with via other procedures and further information about the nature of these complaints is offered in the body of this report.

## **4. Statutory Complaint Procedure – C&LL**

Since April 2009 we are required to report quarterly on complaints that are processed through the Statutory Complaints Procedure. We have a statutory obligation to operate a Complaint and Representation Procedure in line with the Local Authority Act 1970, The Children Act 1989 and the accompanying guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints' 2006.

This process is available for children and young people who are in receipt of a service from the council or a person who has parental responsibility or sufficient interest in the welfare of the child.

31 compliments were recorded under the statutory procedure for C&LL.

A total of 52 complaints have been processed through the procedure. The main area for complaint relates to service:

- 27 complaints regarding poor service
- 6 complaints for access to service
- 4 complaints about delays/slow service
- 2 complaints about conduct of service.
- 1 complaint categorised as other regarding financial issues

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<sup>1</sup> An individual Service Manager who is the subject of a complaint will not be directly involved in the investigation. Any such complaint will be dealt with by an appropriate Senior Manager within the council, similar to Stage 2 of the complaint procedure but answered within 15 working days.

In summary, 6 were upheld, 17 were partially upheld and 15 were not upheld. It is important to note that the monitoring process for statutory complaints allows for more than one area of complaint to be recorded.

We also monitor Corporate Complaints that are about the services provided by Children and Families Services Division and this quarter we have received 2. This is available for people wishing to complain about the services provided by Children and Families Services but who do not meet the criteria for the Statutory Process. As part of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team service development, thorough screening of all complaints received regarding the Children and Families Service has been introduced in order to ensure that representation is processed through the most appropriate procedure. We therefore anticipate that the number of Corporate Complaints for Children and Family Services will increase in the future as issues are diverted to this process.

## **5. Statutory Complaint Procedure – SC&H**

New Complaints Regulations were introduced in February 2009, detailing a single approach for dealing with complaints about NHS and adults social care services in England. The new procedures came into force on 1 April 2009 and see a shift in the previous three stage process to a more flexible approach that aims to provide a single, robust response before consideration by the Local Government Ombudsman. This can be achieved through local or independent investigation.

The Statutory Complaints Procedure exists only for users of social care services or their representative (with their consent). Complainants whom are not eligible to access the statutory process would normally be eligible to access the Corporate Customer Feedback Procedure.

The new approach continues to encourage organisational learning from individual complaints for service improvement purposes.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, 41 compliments were recorded under the statutory complaint procedure for SC&H which are shared with the staff member concerned and their line manager.

- 35 complaints were received and investigated via local resolution.
- 8 complaints were received and are being considered via independent investigation.

A total of 37 complaints were concluded with outcomes during Quarter 1 and this includes 2008/09 carry over (old procedure). Of those concluded, 100 individual areas of complaint were considered:

- 44% related directly to service issues ie. standard of service, delay in receiving services etc;
- 18% related to staff conduct issues
- 17% related to financial issues
- 14% related to information issues - ie. lack of communication, or the quality of information provided etc

- 7% involve representations about policy or procedural issues and external factors

Of the 100 individual areas of complaint considered, the findings were as follows:

- 52% Upheld
- 22% Partially Upheld
- 13% Not Upheld
- 7% Not known and
- 4% Withdrawn

The statutory complaints process records the type of remedies offered to complainants in order to resolve the issues. These can vary significantly. For example, for complaints concluded during Quarter 1 some remedies included:

- 53% of complainants were offered an apology or further explanation
- 11% improved communication/information
- 9% involved a change of worker or decision
- 6% involved a reduction of charges
- 4% involved a reassessment.

**Outcomes include:**

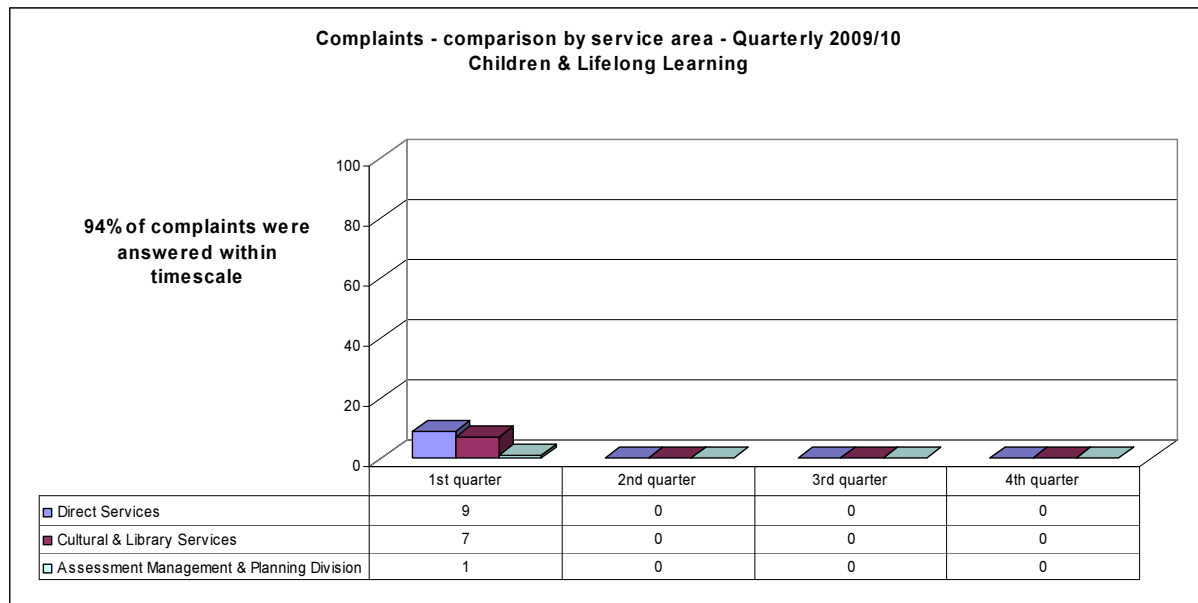
In addition to the above, individual complaints presented further learning opportunities locally for services as follows:

- 63% resulted in the sharing of information with individual staff/team/service or identified further staff development or training needs
- 29% involved the review, development of, or the reinforcement of either a procedural or practice issue
- 8% involved the review, development of, or reinforcement of a local policy issue.

The above demonstrates how customer feedback is able to drive continual improvements in service provision and how staff are positively and proactively responding to complaints.

## **6. Children & Lifelong Learning**

Under Children and Young People and Lifelong Learning - we recorded 209 compliments and 17 corporate complaints in this period; which relate to Culture and Library Services, Asset Management and Planning and Direct Services. 16 were answered within timescale (94%) and 1 answered outside the timescale. 3 complaints were upheld and 7 were partially upheld.



### Outcomes:

Catering Services received a number of complaints which have been categorised as 'other'. The reasons for complaint were as follows:

- Cold food
- Menu not flexible
- Choice of the end of service

Feedback is important as our customers can contribute to our development. Complaints can sometimes highlight a training need as described above or can in instances lead to policy or practice change. Examples of this can be found within the Catering Services. In this quarter, 4 complaints were received regarding the choice of food available at the end of service. As a result, these complaints influenced practice as follows:

- Schools encouraged to introduce class rota system for pupils taking lunch
- Amount of food sent from Production Unit to be increased
- Pre-order system being trialled in Year 1 and Reception classes to avoid confusion over what very young children are choosing to eat

Comments and suggestions received have also resulted in a change of practice within Libraries. Examples of this are:

- A revision of where maps are shelved at Perton Library
- More titles by Peter Robinson ordered
- Reservation charges made clearer on the internet site
- Stock at Great Wyrley re-arranged so there are some categories by genre

### NI 14 Avoidable Contact

During Quarter 1, C&LL received 5 complaints which can be categorised as 'Avoidable Contact'. These relate to complaints regarding Library Information Services. 3 of these complaints were about poor service that customers received.

### **Outcomes include:**

The outcome following investigation deemed the complaints partially upheld. Although the basis for the complaints could not be avoided, if members of staff had offered a better explanation to customers, formal complaints may not have been made. As a result, staff have been reminded of the importance of good customer service and additional training has been planned.

### **Positive feedback:**

It is always pleasing to receive compliments regarding a service we provide. We should appreciate it when a customer takes the time to tell us when we are doing something right or if they are impressed by the customer service we provide. This Quarter we have received 209 compliments about services C&LL provide.

- A member of the public was so impressed by the way staff dealt with a customer who had been taken ill that he wrote to commend their efficient professional, calming approach and the excellent way they dealt with the incident (Library Information Services)
- A written compliment was received from the parent of a child performing in the Staffordshire Pop stars 2009 event. The family were very grateful for the opportunity and platform that his child had been given to fulfil her 'dream' (Staffordshire Performing Arts)
- Compliments were received for the School Choice Advise Service regarding the support and advice given by School Choice Advisers in areas such as preparing and attending admission appeal hearings and also secondary school admissions. This service has been in operation for over 12 months and since its implementation it has consistently received compliments for the service it provides
- 37 compliments were received from members of the public who attended the recent Open Art Exhibition at the Shire Hall.
- Compliments were received from local care homes which were visited by the Mobile Museum, advising how much residents enjoyed the opportunity of using the mobile museum exhibition and activities and the helpfulness of the driver and interpreters
- The Mobile Museum also received thanks from residents at Highfields Court

### **Complaints about Council / Directorate Policy**

As with previous quarters, we have received a high number of complaints which cannot be dealt with by the Corporate Complaints Procedure. These are dealt with via other procedures and a list of these exceptions and the most appropriate way to respond to them can be found in the updated Corporate Complaints Procedure.



Asset Management and Planning received a total of 23, including:

- Child had not been allocated the school of parents choice
- Transport withdrawn as family moved outside catchment area
- Refusal of free transport to child attending non-designated Catholic High school
- Transport removed after establishing that family lived within statutory walking distance
- Use of a particular means tested benefits to determine if a student does not have to pay a contribution towards Post 16 transport
- Denominational transport entitlement
- Withdrawal of public bus service which serves Norton Canes High

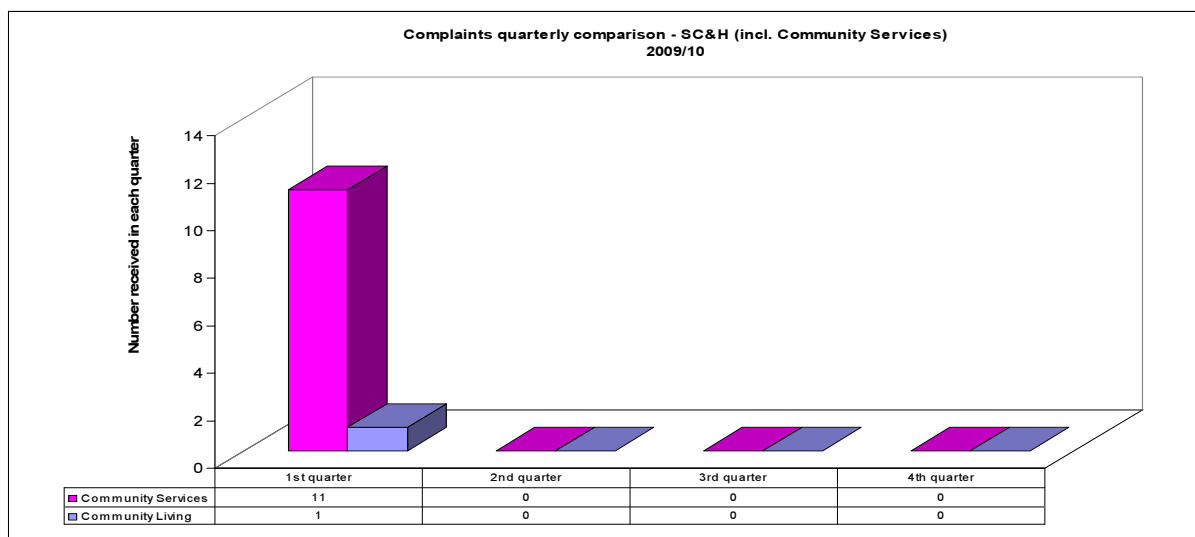
Culture and Libraries also received complaints that could not be addressed under the Corporate Complaints Procedure:

- Other customers' behaviour
- District Council reception services
- Stock
- Fees/charges
- Mobile library not available on a Bank Holiday
- Perton library opening times
- ICT issues

## 7. Social Care and Health

Under Healthier Communities and Older People – we recorded 1 corporate complaint about Community Living services, which was answered within timescale (100%) and upheld.

Under Safer and Stronger Communities - Community Services recorded 14 compliments and 11 corporate complaints, 1 of which was upheld and two were partially upheld. 73% were answered within timescale. Two outstanding complaints are very complex and have been escalated; their exact nature is confidential as the complainants are linked to ongoing investigations.



**Outcomes include:**

In Community Living services, the complaint relates to care staff parking in private car park as opposed to designated parking for service users. The complaint was upheld and the manager of the service visited the complainant to discuss/resolve issues. To prevent reoccurrence of the complaint, staff members have been asked not to use the private car park and alternative parking has been cited for the carers to use. Carers were reminded to be mindful about noise levels when returning to their cars.

The Registration Service received a complaint as a result of a breakdown of normal internal processes and a lack of communication. Procedures have since been reviewed and additional safeguards put in place.

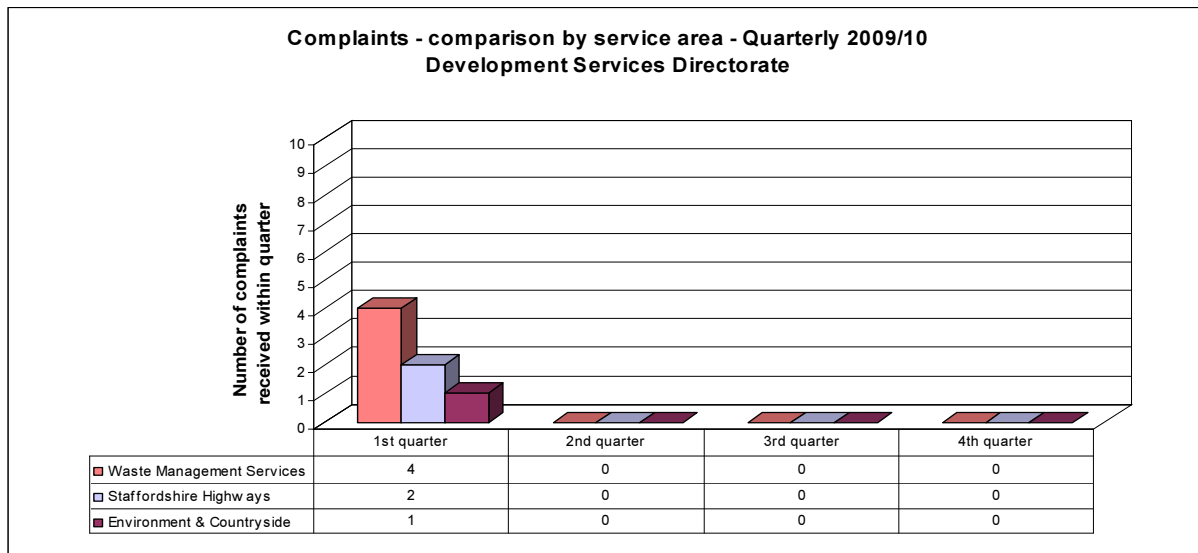
**Positive feedback:**

This quarter, Community Services recorded 14 compliments some examples of which are offered below:

- “I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the Registration Service for the way that matters were handled, in a sensitive and professional manner. I would also like to thank them for all the guidance they gave us.”
- “I really cannot thank enough for your advice and attention. I know it has been a difficult case but I certainly could not have managed without the help of Consumer Advice.”
- “I would like to thank the Fraud & Special Investigations team for their assistance. The joint operation was very successful and the deterrent effect has been evident. Your contribution is much appreciated.”
- “The Scientific Services team received thanks for the report and meeting the deadline, most impressive. Excellent.”
- “The officer from the Farming & Agricultural team who called on us earlier this month we felt was very helpful and informative.”

**8. Development Services Directorate**

Under Economic Development, Enterprise and Sustainability - we recorded 27 compliments, 23 of which relate to Staffordshire Highways activities including messages of thanks for works undertaken and the manner and efficiency of the service delivery. 7 complaints were received 4 of which relate to Waste Management, 2 about Staffordshire Highways works and 1 complaint received by the Environment and Countryside Unit. All complaints were answered within timescale (100%), 4 were partially upheld and 3 were not.



### Outcomes include:

The issues surrounding the attitude of an individual site attendant at Cheadle recycling centre has been passed to Enterprise to investigate and the complainant was advised that the individual's supervisor has spoken to him about his attitude and the way he conducts himself on site. The complainant was also advised that it is now standard procedure to monitor rubble acceptance therefore it is a requirement for all users of this facility to sign a disclaimer form.

Two separate complaints concerning the delays in completing the estate roads at Tilling Drive, Stone covered by a Section 38 Agreement have been the subject of on-going discussions with the developer for some time now to ensure that the road resurfacing and other remedial works are undertaken. The Agreements Manager advised complainants that the road resurfacing should however be complete within 2 months.

### NI 14 – Avoidable Contact

A complainant had attempted to deposit plasterboard at Leycett recycling centre. However, Leycett does not have facilities for disposing of waste such as plasterboard which is categorised as industrial waste and has to be stored in a separate secure container. Unfortunately the site attendant did not provide the leaflet which advises that we will accept limited quantities of plasterboard at the Household Waste Recycling Centres at Leek, Stafford, Cannock, Burton and Bilbrook and compounded the problem by directing the complainant to three other sites which do not accept plasterboard.

### Outcomes include:

An apology was given and an explanation for the restriction of waste that can be accepted. The site attendants were made aware that leaflets should have been given out to provide correct information regarding the disposal of plasterboard.

The Council has provided collection facilities for plasterboard at 5 sites for an initial 12 month period. At the end of this period, when more information is available on the quantity of plasterboard that is being deposited in the containers, the service provision will be reviewed.

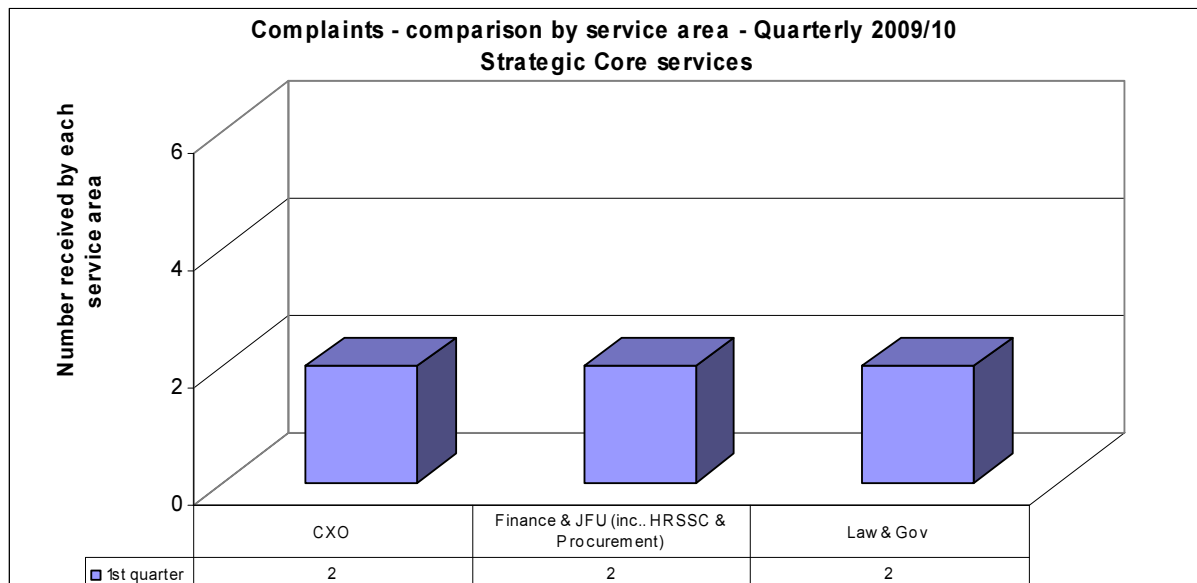
**Positive feedback:**

Some examples of the positive customer feedback received this quarter include:

- Staffordshire Highways, Control Room - “Just to say how much I appreciate your usual commitment to ‘open transparency’ with the public regarding the reporting of potholes and your response to that reporting. The prompt carrying out of such works after members of the public such as myself have phoned to let you know of such is commendable to the highest degree. I have reported numerous pot holes in the past couple of years or so and always found all levels of your dep’t excellent in every way, from the polite and efficient manner of those at the end of the phone right through to the actual carrying out of the work.”
- Waste Management services - “Having used the Lichfield Waste Disposal facilities on numerous occasions over the past 6 weeks, I wish to compliment the staff there for their cheerful and helpful manner. Without having to ask, I have always been offered a helping hand especially when I have had bulky items to lift into the bins”.
- “Having moved to the area over a year ago from North Herts I have been astounded by the helpful service I have encountered at the Stone Recycling Centre and the excellent condition of the site. A complete contrast from my previous experience at other locations”.
- “Stone Household Recycling Centre – “My wife and I were very impressed by how tidy it was and the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff who looked very professional in their clean uniforms ..... The staff deserve to be praised for their running of the Stone site”.
- Planning Development Control unit “... may we take this opportunity to give our recognition to the diligent and professional approach shown by the officers of the County Council and its planning consultees in promptly dealing with and determining the planning application. We had lengthy discussions and site visits with the named officer who was courteous, efficient and very thorough”.

**9. Strategic Core**

Under services which contribute to Corporate Improvement, Strategic Core services recorded a total of 10 compliments, 2 received by the Chief Executive’s Office, 6 by Law and Governance and 2 received by Staffordshire Procurement.



We recorded 6 complaints, 2 concerning the Chief Executive's Office, one under safer and stronger communities related to the joint anti-social behaviour policy in partnership with the police. The complainant raised concern about local anti-social behaviour and we were able to put them in touch with the Community Reassurance Team who is actively working in the area encouraging more positive activities. The divisional manager also extended an invitation to visit the local Youth Centre and hear about the work of the team.

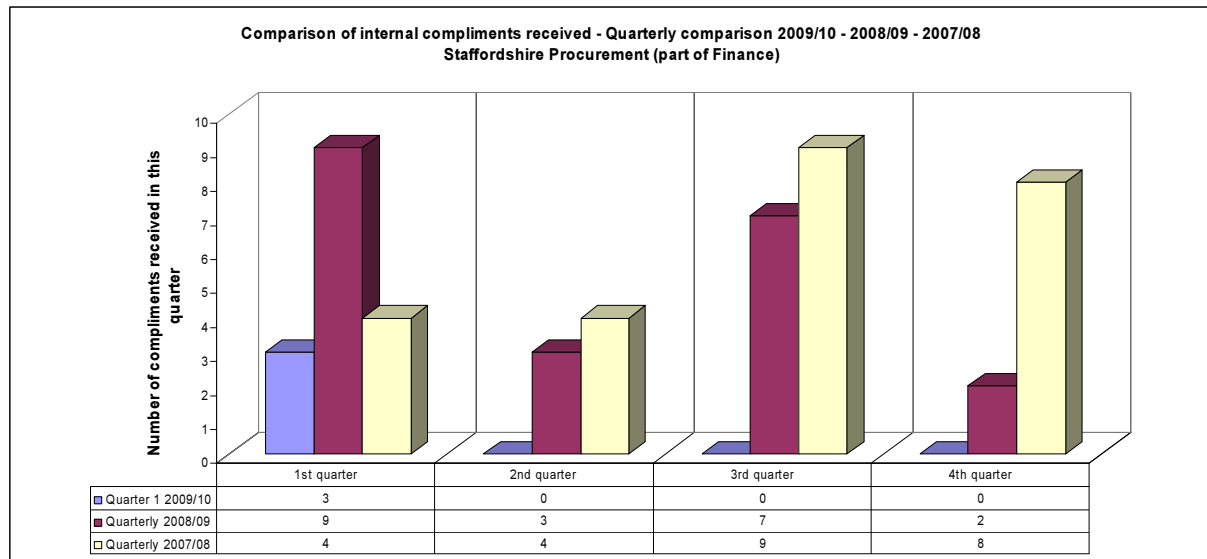
As a result of 2 complaints dealt with by the Income Section, Finance, we strengthened control procedures and reviewed certain guidelines. 2 complaints were received by Law and Governance; one of which was not dealt with at Stage 1 but immediately escalated to Stage 3<sup>1</sup> of the complaint procedure and responded to by the Chief Executive's Office answered outside the timescale. As a result, 5 complaints were answered within timescale (83%).

#### **Positive Feedback includes:**

- Community Engagement in Staffordshire event – feedback from delegate A/HM Home Office Inspector “Thank you for a superb day”
- Survey software to support Citizen's Panel work – feedback from Staffordshire Police “Thank you so much for the ‘worm’ report and a big thank you to the web team also.....It is really good of “...” to take calls if needs be.
- Staffordshire Procurement, Finance Directorate received a compliment from a unsuccessful tenderer; thanking a member of staff for such a detailed debrief which will now help them consider future responses and feedback from a Borough Council contact thanking a member of staff for advice on an EU question.

10. **Internal Customer Feedback – performance monitoring and management offered by some service areas within Strategic Core services:**

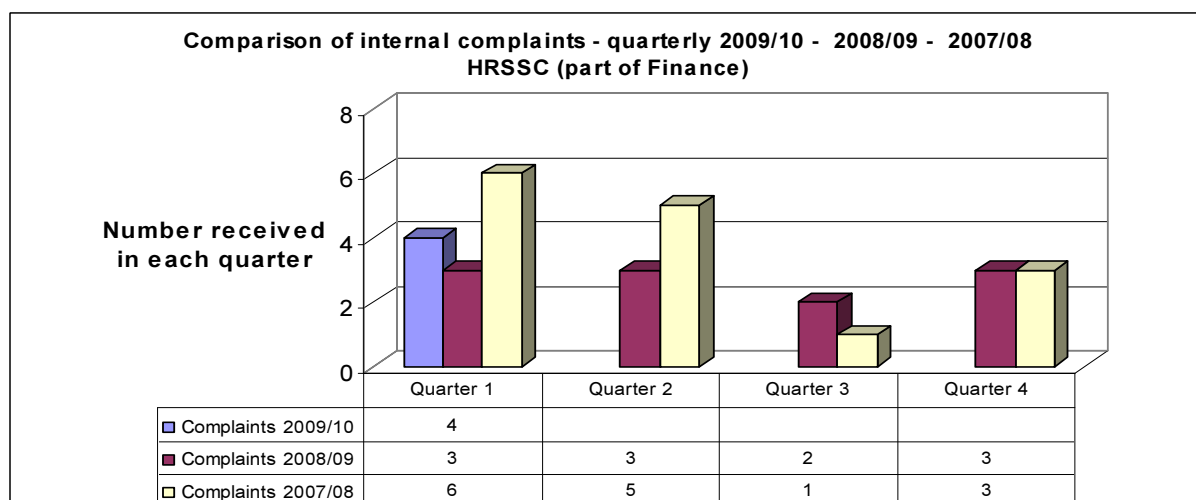
**Finance Directorate: Staffordshire Procurement**



No internal complaints were recorded. 3 internal compliments recorded in quarter 1 include the following positive feedback:

- One compliment relates to putting together a PQQ for an internal customer and producing a “very professional package; advice and guidance which has been very helpful”.
- "You are wonderful" from a bursar of a school for the negotiation received on the cost of the refurbishment of the science labs.

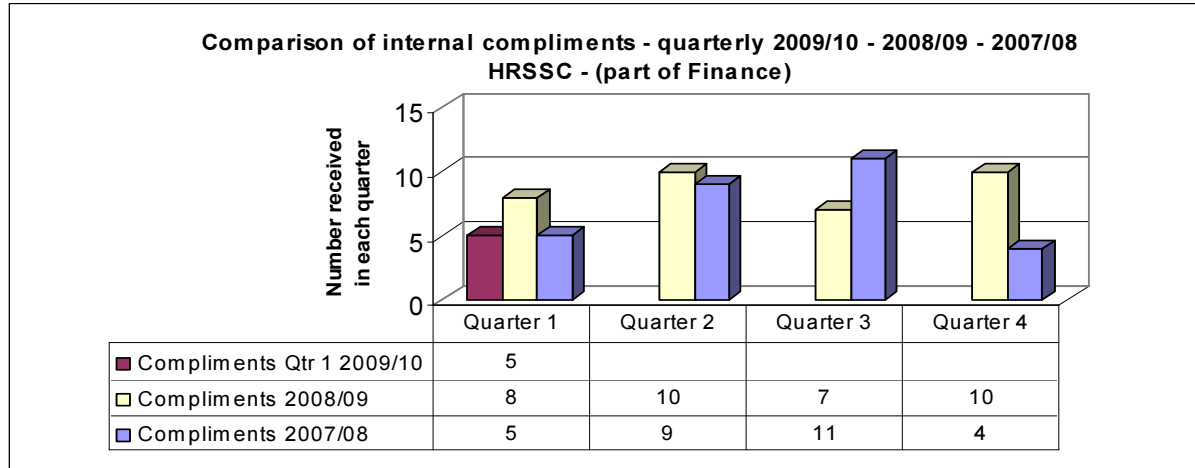
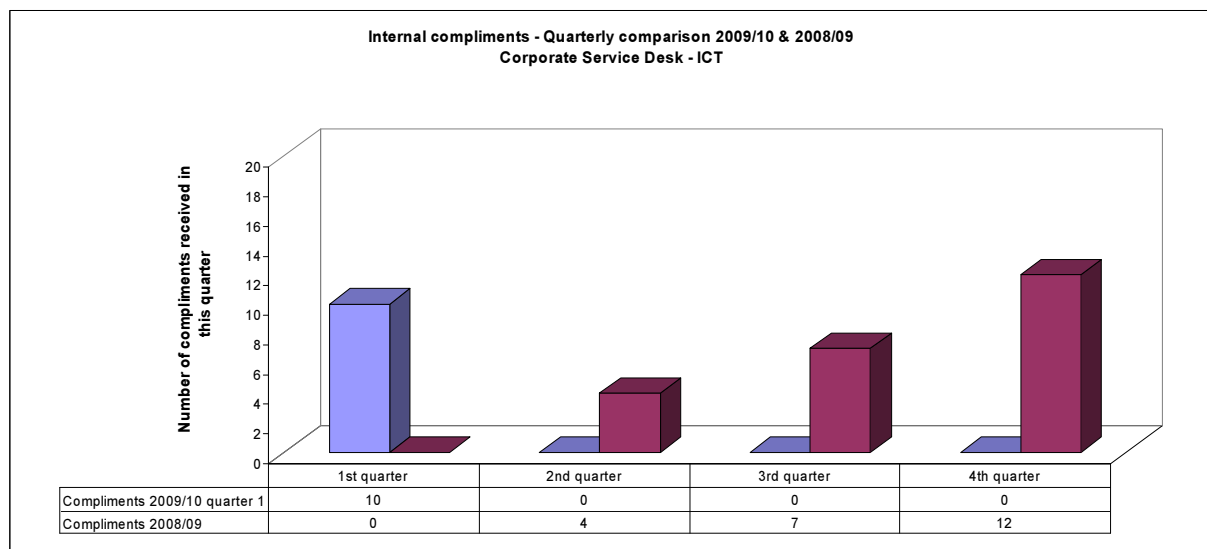
**Finance Directorate: HRSSC**



Due to the nature of the internal complaints handled by HRSSC it is not possible to give case material. All complaints were answered within timescale; categorised as poor service and were upheld.

**Positive feedback includes:**

- A compliment received by the Safer Recruitment Team to extend appreciation of the Officers who support the School and “for information offered at short notice for school inspection.... thanks again for literally saving the day.”

**ICT Corporate Help Desk**

No internal complaints were recorded. 10 internal compliments recorded in quarter 1 include the following positive feedback:

“I just wanted to let you know how impressed I am with the service I received from your staff who acted in a very prompt, professional and efficient manner.”

“Please could you pass on my thanks to the network team who detected that we had issues on our new link. Evidence this afternoon has shown that the fix has had a dramatic effect on our ability to transfer files to Stoke as part of our parking enforcement arrangements.”

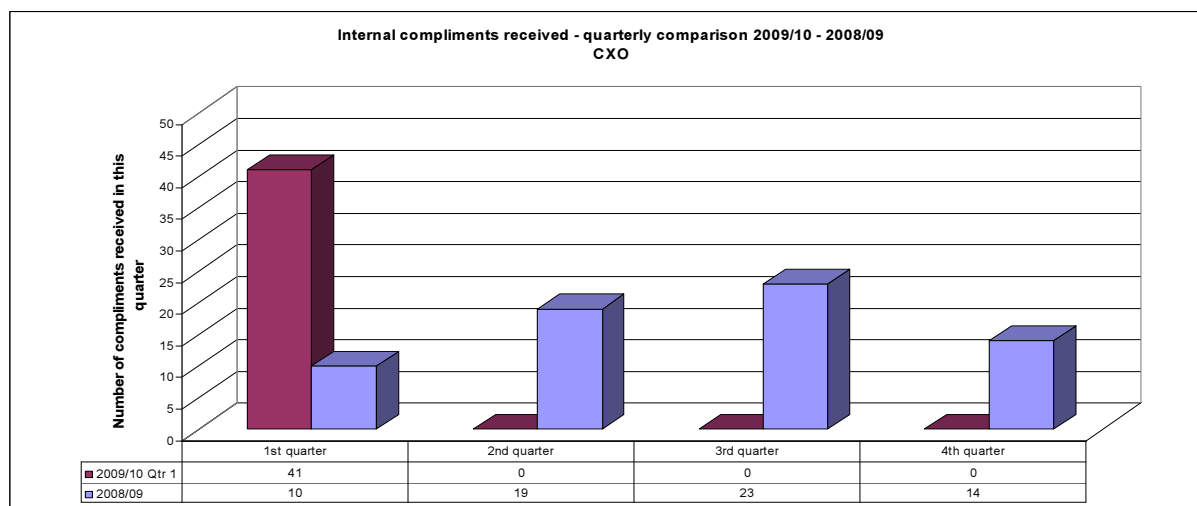
I just thought you should be aware of the support given during the EDT move (and afterwards) – their expertise and advice was appreciated by the whole team and was of great benefit. They all put themselves out providing telephone support when necessary and coming in on the Bank Holiday

weekend when we had so many problems. As their managers you need to be aware of what an exceptional job they did.”

### Chief Executive's Office

No internal complaints were recorded in this period. 41 internal compliments were recorded, 34 of which related to the Shugborough Celebration Day. The ticketed event was the council's way of thanking staff for their hard work in helping the county council achieve its 'good' rating in the 2009 Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

10,000 people from across the county enjoyed free entry to Shugborough's attractions and a vast range of entertainment and activities which was laid on especially. The day was topped off by the fantastic sunny weather - all in all it was a great success.



“Thank you for the opportunity to attend the event. I have worked for SCC for nearly 30 years and it was the best thing that has ever been organised for employees. It is nice to be appreciated and also for us to appreciate that this is a good place to work.

“There was a most wonderful family feel about the day - an inspired way to say thank you.”

“Just a note to say 'Thank you' for a lovely day on Sunday - it was a brilliant day made even better by the wonderful sunshine. It must have taken so much organisation by you and the Team but rest assured it was great.”

“I would just like to say thank you to the organisers for the wonderful day myself/daughter and two grandchildren had, it was so well organised and the weather made it a perfect day for everybody that attended - there was so much to see and do, hence we had two very happy tired children at the end of the day. Again thank you.”

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