



Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 8 November 2016 at 7.00 pm

Boardrooms 7&8 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,
Wembley HA9 0FJ

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

Kelcher (Chair)

Davidson (Vice-Chair)

Aden

S Choudhary

Ezeajughi

Miller

M Patel

Tatler

Substitute Members

Labour Councillors:

Chan, Harrison, McLeish and Naheerathan

Brent Conservative Councillors:

Warren and Shaw

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The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members.

Item	Page
1 Declarations of interests	
Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant disclosable pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interests in the items on this agenda.	
2 Deputations (if any)	
3 Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 10
4 Matters arising (if any)	
5 Income Generation	11 - 24
The report provides an update on the progress made towards delivering the Civic Enterprise Strategy. This includes details on activity undertaken to address the savings targets and how business plans can add value to improving outcomes for the borough as well as meeting financial targets.	
6 Update on the Community Access Strategy	25 - 42
The Community Access Strategy sets out Brent's vision for transforming the way in which residents are able to access information, advice and services. This report provides Scrutiny Members with a summary of the Community Access Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 15 October 2014 and the progress that has been made in implementing this.	
7 Devolution of Business Rates Task Group	Report to follow
8 Annual Complaints Report 2015/2016	43 - 82
This report provides an overview of complaints received by the Council during the period April 2015 to March 2016. High level data for the past 3 years has been included where available for the purpose of comparison. Departmental/service area analysis has been provided for the 2015 – 2016 operational year (based on the current structure).	

9 Programme of Work/Forward Plan

83 - 86

This document lays out the programme of work/forward plan for the remainder of the municipal year.

10 Any other urgent business

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 64.

11 Date of next meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the committee is on

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 10 January 2017



- Please remember to **SWITCH OFF** your mobile phone during the meeting.
- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.

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Brent

MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Tuesday 6 September 2016 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair) and Councillors Aden, S Choudhary, Davidson, Miller, Ezeajughi, M Patel and Tatler

Also Present: Councillors Mashari, Pavey and Southwood

Apologies were received from: Councillors

1. **Declarations of interests**

None

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 July 2016 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following amendment:

The second sentence of Minute 4, Annual work programme 2016-17, be amended to read ' ... Councillor Tatler would be chairing the task group on Child Exploitation.'

3. **Matters arising (if any)**

None

4. **Order of Business**

RESOLVED: that the order of business be amended as set out below.

Item 7, update on the implementation of recommendations from the CCTV Scrutiny Task Group, be considered prior to the remaining items of business.

5. **Update on the implementation of recommendations from the CCTV Scrutiny Task Group**

Councillor Pavey (Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities) introduced the report updating the committee on the progress made against the recommendations of the Scrutiny CCTV Task Group. Members heard that all of the recommendations had either been completed or were in progress. In line with the second recommendation, Councillor Pavey confirmed the council's commitment to maintaining a public network of CCTV cameras in the borough and advised that

proposals were in development to secure major investment in the service enabling costs to be lowered and quality to be enhanced.

Drawing the committee's attention to Appendix 1 to the report, Karina Wane (Head of Community Protection) advised that of the twenty-one recommendations made, eighteen had already been implemented. Work was underway with regard to the remaining recommendations, 7, 9 and 11. Addressing each of these in turn, Karina Wane explained that the Home Office was currently undertaking work in relation to a CCTV benchmarking system. The Brent CCTV service had discussed a benchmarking system with other local authorities but had received an unenthusiastic response due to a lack of overlap of borough priorities and key hotspot areas. The CCTV team did have a list of community and residents groups for the purpose of communicating changes but work would be pursued with the Head of Strategy and Partnerships to develop a council-wide list. The value of using site visits to help maintain the local knowledge of CCTV operators was acknowledged and would be taken forward, though was currently limited by staffing capacity.

Members subsequently discussed the possibility of hosting an open-day to raise awareness of the CCTV service, to provide reassurance to residents and to deter criminal activity. Officers agreed that this would offer public insight into the work of the service and suggested that this could be held in partnership with the police. Karina Wane agreed to explore the practicalities of this proposal and report the outcome of this back to the committee.

The committee discussed possible sources of funding for the service, questioning the contribution of the Football Association and whether greater funds could be obtained from section 106 monies and the Community Infrastructure Levies, particularly in view of the large regeneration projects underway in the borough. Further information was sought regarding potential capital investment and the funding of additional staff hours. It was queried whether upgrading to a more modern system would allow opportunities for income generation. A member noted the high cost of moving CCTV cameras currently and highlighted the importance of addressing this need in the procurement of new equipment. The use of section 106 agreements and the role of the planning service in requiring CCTV installation in developments was queried and the committee sought additional information on work with other CCTV providers in the borough to extend the council's network. A member further queried whether the council had a full list of all CCTV providers in the borough. An assessment of the current performance measurement activity of the service was requested.

In response, Karina Wane explained that proposals had been submitted to the Capital Investment Board and it was hoped that a decision regarding capital investment would be made before the end of the calendar year. If this investment was secured, the current system could be upgraded thereby increasing the potential for income generation and consequently, staffing. The Football Association had historically contributed a capital sum towards the CCTV infrastructure in Wembley via Section 106 monies and so was an unlikely source of further income. A Partner Lunch was planned, to which the FA along with other significant organisations such as the Police, Transport for London and Social Landlords had been invited, to discuss joint working opportunities. Councillor Pavey advised that there was a strong case for Cabinet to give greater recognition to

CCTV as a priority for Section 106 funds when this was next considered. It was acknowledged that many modern developments had a level of CCTV and Karina Wane advised that the service had a good picture of CCTV providers in Brent, particularly Social Landlords. Alvin Wakeman (Control Room Manager) advised that performance measuring activity was conducted and members' guidance on how this could be enhanced would be sought.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the Head of Community Protection explore the viability of a CCTV open day and update the committee on the outcome of this action.
- (ii) that the Head of Community Protection explore the potential for securing additional capital investment for the CCTV service.

6. **The Council's Planning Strategy**

Councillor Mashari (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills) presented a report to the committee on the Council's Planning Strategy. The current strategy was based on the Core Strategy, which had been adopted in 2010 and had been supplemented by the subsequent adoption of other Local Plan documents. The Strategy now required review to account for various developments including the adoption of the Brent 2020 vision, updates to the London Plan and the Old Oak and Park Royal regeneration programmes. In reviewing the current strategy, the council had the opportunity to ensure that the plan addressed Brent's priorities and that opportunities arising out of developments in and around the borough were maximised for Brent residents. A statutory review process would be followed with the new Strategy going live in 2018. Key to the review would be the issues of housing provision and tackling poverty and it would be underpinned by a social structure needs assessment. A proactive approach to acquiring land for housing developments would be explored.

At the invitation of the Chair, Tom Cardis (Head of Policy, Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC)) delivered a presentation to the committee on the Old Oak and Park Royal regeneration advising the OPDC had now been in operation for fifteen months. The consultation activity undertaken in support of the development of a Local Plan for the areas was outlined to the committee and the key emerging issues identified. The timescales for further activity were set out and formal consultation of the Regulation 19 Local Plan would begin in March 2017.

Members questioned the extent to which National Planning policy restricted Brent in shaping its Planning Strategy and sought further information on the role of the Council in delivering affordable housing. Concerns were raised about how affordable housing was defined, the implications for public health priorities of housing developments with inadequate provision for local amenities and services and the effect of large developments such as the South Kilburn development on the local infrastructure, including public transport. Members questioned how the council was working with the OPDC to address issues of sustainability in view of the proposed scale of the developments. With reference to the South Kilburn development, it was queried how the council would support the provision of three-

bedroom properties. A question was raised regarding the potential use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) to acquire sites for development. Noting the modifications to the Development Management Plan policies to protect Public Houses from development, a member sought assurance from officers that this was an appropriate safeguard. An update was requested regarding the potential for securing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from the OPDC in the immediate term for use in the surrounding areas to the development.

Addressing Members' queries, Paul Lewin (Planning Policy & Projects Manager, Planning Transport and Licensing) advised that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) did not prevent the council from pursuing a particular approach, but merely required that appropriate justification and supporting evidence be provided. Brent's approach was consistent with NPPF. It was acknowledged that developers were able to refer to the NPPF to cite issues of viability to reduce the proportion of affordable housing in proposed developments, though the council had successfully taken a stronger stance on this issue. In taking a proactive approach to supporting the provision of housing in the borough, for instance by purchasing a site and making it available to developers, the council could assume some of the risk, allowing a greater proportion of affordable housing to be provided. Councillor Mashari noted that land held by other public sector providers was a potential source of appropriate sites for development. Addressing the potential for using CPOs, Aktar Choudhury (Operational Director, Regeneration) advised that to obtain a CPO it would be necessary to demonstrate that all other options had been exhausted and that there was a proactive policy in place to develop the site. With reference to members concerns regarding the development of public houses, Paul Lewin confirmed that the protective provisions in the Development Management Plan policies were robust. It was agreed that an update on the work being undertaken to identify appropriate sites for development would be provided to the committee.

Paul Lewin confirmed that a closer relationship between the Planning Department and Public Health teams in the council had been created to ensure better understanding of public health pressures and noted that meetings would be held with the Brent Clinical Commissioning Group. Councillor Mashari confirmed that there would be an extensive consultation process and active engagement with members would be sought. Tom Cardis informed members that the OPDC had an environmental strategy addressing issues such as air quality and biodiversity, reflecting the London-wide environmental strategy. Parking was a key element to this strategy and parking controls would be applied. Arrangements were also in place to ensure that limits for pollutants were monitored during construction, with any breaches recorded and appropriate compensation provided.

In discussing the South Kilburn development, Paul Lewin explained that the affordable housing on the site was subsidised by the delivery of private housing. It was acknowledged that there was currently a significant dichotomy between the two and it would be necessary to provide intermediate tenures including three and four bedroom properties. Aktar Choudhury advised that Councillor Butt (Leader of the Council) sat on the OPDC Board and advised there was an for the committee to suggest to the Board via Councillor Butt, projects to be included in the OPDC Plan, such as the provision of three and four bedroom properties. Tom Cardis confirmed that a Community Infrastructure Levy was not currently in place for the Old Oak and Park Royal sites, however limited, unallocated Section 106 monies could be accessed and capital and revenue funding could be applied for. A working group

with officers from the three affected authorities Brent, Hammersmith and Ealing would be convened to consider projects meriting investment in the areas surrounding the sites and consideration would be given to an appropriate mechanism to channel member input. Councillor Mashari confirmed that she would meet with Tom Cardis to further discuss how areas surrounding the OPD site could benefit from the funding available via the unallocated Section 106 monies.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

7. **Brent Road Resurfacing Strategy**

Councillor Southwood (Cabinet Member for Environment) presented a report from the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment on Brent Road Resurfacing. Members' heard that the Brent highways infrastructure was currently valued at £3.89bn and was the asset most visible and frequently used by the public. Despite an increasing maintenance requirement and reductions to local government funding, Brent continued to provide investment and deliver programmes to improve the overall condition of the borough's footways and roads. The Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) had been adopted by the council in 2014 and enshrined a proactive approach to asset repair, ensuring maintenance works took place before assets failed to prevent high street repair costs in the long term. In line with this approach, an asset management tool was being procured which would enable officers to identify the most appropriate time for planned intervention ensuring optimal use of funding and improved communication with residents.

Councillor Southwood highlighted that additional funding of £200k had been provided in the 2015/16 budget to target areas worst affected by potholes and a further £2m in the current 2016/17 budget had been made available to accelerate road repairs. Members had been extensively involved in identifying priorities for action and a decision had been taken by Cabinet to use asphalt surfacing on some roads as a more durable and therefore cost effective material.

Members raised a concern about damage caused to public roads and pavements as a result of building works and in the case of commercial buildings, deliveries and other routine activities. It was queried whether the use of deposits or licences could address the cost implications of repairing this damage. Similar concerns were raised regarding damage caused to highways by Transport for London (TfL) buses and how this was accounted for in the service's budget. Noting that investment was concentrated on A class roads, it was queried what action would be taken to maintain the other categories of highway. The committee questioned the quality and timeliness of repairs being carried out by the contractors and sought details of the department's oversight arrangements. Members discussed the importance of good communication with and feedback to Brent's residents and it was queried whether the publicising of the additional £2m funding had raised expectations beyond what could reasonably be delivered. Members further suggested that the automatic and formulaic responses provided by the current system should be tested on real people to enable improvements to be made. Clarity was sought regarding the relative merits of the different materials used for repair.

Councillor Southwood confirmed that the council had previously paid for repairs to pavements damaged by building works but that the number of staff pursuing enforcement action was now in the process of being increased. Members' suggestions regarding the use of deposits or licensing would be explored as part of the planned Service Review. Tony Kennedy (Head of Highways and Infrastructure) advised that Transport for London provided the council with a principle road budget to repair A class roads and liaised with the council to identify areas requiring attention. Where damages had clearly been caused by buses, the council would seek funds from TfL for the required works. The council was also currently able to make use of TfL grants for maintenance ranging between £100k and £200k, though such grants might not be sustained in future TfL budgets. It was explained that when identifying priorities for road repair, a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating was applied based on the condition of the road. Those roads with higher levels of use and therefore with a greater risk of accident were awarded a greater priority. The Asset Management Plan, which was published on the council's website detailed how the council aimed to achieve the greatest benefit for the funding available. Broadly, whilst targeting those roads with a Red status, approximately thirty per cent of repairs were preventative and sought to bring Amber status roads back to a green rating.

Tony Kennedy explained that the planned programme of repairs was agreed with Cabinet at the start of the year. Site visits were undertaken with the contractor prior to repair, works were monitored during implementation and a final check would be carried out before issuing a completed certificate and permitting payment. For reactive repairs, a sum of money was agreed with the contractor based on a risk assessment. When a site for repair was identified, the contractor was required to take a photograph and categorise the fault. If the fault was categorised correctly a defect notice would be issued. The contractor would then be required to undertake repair works within the relevant timescales and take another photograph of the completed repair. Payment for the work would not be issued without provision of the photographic evidence. Monthly meetings were held with the contractors to identify any mis-categorisations and the standard of repair was evaluated via the photographs provided. A sample of the reactive repairs carried out was also audited by council officers. Faults categorised as medium would be visited to determine whether a repair was necessary. Councillor Southwood advised that there was sufficient funding to repair approximately seventy-eight per cent of faults categorised as medium. Performance data was reviewed monthly and it was agreed that this data set covering a period of six months would be provided to the committee.

Addressing members queries regarding communication with residents, Tony Kennedy advised that a draft Frequently Asked Questions document for highways maintenance was being developed with the Communications team. The automated responses produced when a defect was reported had also recently been updated to ensure more timely updates were provided. It was agreed that these would be tested with residents.

Tony Kennedy advised that asphalt was more durable than paving slabs and allowed for easier maintenance as it was easy to reseal. Noting members' concerns about the works carried out on Wembley High Road, Tony Kennedy explained that these had been completed by a different contractor prior to the existing

arrangements. Insufficient time had been allowed for works to settle and this had led to various defects.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Cabinet consider the possibility of requiring a deposit be provided where building works were being undertaken to address any repairs to the public highway caused as a result of those works.
- (ii) That Cabinet consider the possibility of issuing a license or the use of a similar mechanism to address damages to the public highway caused by the routine activities of those occupying commercial buildings, such as deliveries.

8. **Progress report on the recommendations of the Scrutiny Fly-Tipping Task Group**

Councillor Southwood (Cabinet member for Environment) presented a progress report on the recommendations of the Fly-Tipping Scrutiny Task Group which had been formed in 2015 in response to concerns regarding increased levels of illegal rubbish dumping (IRD) in the borough. The purpose of the task group was to analyse and consider the borough's knowledge, behaviour and understanding of IRD, to review local policies and processes, and to put forward recommendations to bring about improvements to the service. The review was reported to Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2015, and made twenty-six specific recommendations, principally concerned with reducing the levels of fly-tipping in Brent and ensuring clean and safe environments for Brent residents; and as a result, a reduction in clean-up and enforcement costs. The committee's attention was drawn to Appendix 1 to the report which set out the progress achieved against each of the task group's recommendations. Councillor Southwood noted that the pilot with Kingdom Security which aimed to provide dedicated teams of uniformed officers in the borough able to issue fines for littering, was going well. The need to increase work with landlords was recognised and the Service Review which was due to be undertaken over the coming weeks would seek to address the currently unsustainable Bulky Waste Service.

The committee acknowledged that an email received from a member of the public in attendance at the meeting set out concerns about incidences of illegal rubbish dumping in Harlesden and it was agreed that Councillor Southwood would provide a detailed response to be shared with the committee.

In the subsequent discussion the committee sought the views of Councillor Southwood regarding the role of community champions in the context of the "Love Where You Live" campaign and emphasised the importance of a good coverage of this activity across the borough. It was queried whether the council was engaging with residents across a broad range of social media platforms. The value of a council-wide list of community and resident groups, previously discussed in relation to the task group recommendations for the CCTV service, was again highlighted. It was questioned what was being done to reach residents who had difficulties with written or spoken English and whether relevant community groups were being engaged. Members noted the importance of involving ward councillors in discussions with local community groups. The committee raised queries regarding

enforcement activity and communicating this to residents. With reference to street inspections further information was sought about what constituted a 'pass rate' and how the borough compared with other London Boroughs.

Councillor Southwood advised that she would liaise with the Communications team regarding the use of a broader range of social media platforms. Feedback on the role of community champions from residents identified that a group or community approach was preferred. Further work was still required to develop the initiative but initial responses had been positive. This would be further explored in the planned Service Review, particularly with regard to ward member involvement and extending coverage across the borough. Robert Anderton (Head of Environmental Improvement) explained that the department sought to ensure that all of its literature was conveyed in pictorial terms as well as a number of different languages and was working with the contractor, Veolia, to identify where it would be appropriate to target literature at specific communities. Via monthly contract monitoring, Veolia provided information to the council about their communications and outreach activity. Chris Whyte (Operational Director Environmental Services) noted that the remit of this activity was limited to the services they provided but acknowledged that work could be undertaken to ensure that this activity formed part of a broader spectrum of education provided by the council. Councillor Southwood added that similar actions could be pursued with West London Waste to combine efforts.

Robert Anderton further explained that the council had a small but dedicated enforcement team and that robust action was carried out; however the scale of the challenge in Brent was significant. The level of resources for enforcement would be considered in the Service Review. There was a nationally set standard for the 'pass rate' for a street and details of this would be provided to the committee. Chris Whyte advised that nationally, the top five boroughs with the greatest levels of fly-tipping were located in London. Robert Anderton added that the London Environmental Directors Network had commissioned a pan-London group to look specifically at the issue of Illegal Rubbish Dumping, to share best practice and lobby the government for more support on this issue.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

9. **Proposed Scope for Scrutiny Task Group on The Devolution of Business Rates in Brent**

Pascoe Sawyers (Head of Strategy and Partnerships) outlined the report to the committee detailing the proposed scope for the Scrutiny task group on the Devolution of Business Rates in Brent. The task group would explore both Brent and the government's current business rates policies and processes with a view to ensuring Brent council is in the best possible place to respond to the government's changes to the Devolution of Business rates policy. The committee's attention was drawn to appendices A and B to the report which detailed the proposed scope, terms of reference and time scale for the task group.

RESOLVED:

that the scope, terms of reference and timescale for the task group on the Devolution of Business Rates in Brent be agreed as detailed in appendices A and B to the report from the Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships.

10. **Any other urgent business**

None.

11. **Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of the committee was scheduled for 8 November 2016.

The meeting closed at 9.57 pm

M KELCHER
Chair

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Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

8 November 2016

Report from the Strategic Director Resources

For Information

Report for Scrutiny on Civic Enterprise (Income Generation)

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 In June 2016, Cabinet approved the Civic Enterprise Strategy. This report provides an update on the work that has been carried out to deliver the Strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The report is for comment.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The report provides an update on the progress made towards delivering the Civic Enterprise Strategy. This includes details on activity undertaken to address the savings targets and how business plans can add value to improving outcomes for the borough as well as meeting financial targets.
- 3.2 This is the first Civic Enterprise Strategy that the Council has adopted, and requires a 'cultural' shift to enable Members and staff to think more innovatively about opportunities to generate income.

Introduction

- 3.3 Given the pace and scale of the financial cuts the Council is facing, if we want to protect the services residents care about the most, such as care for the elderly and vulnerable, giving young people a good start in life, maintaining regular bin collections and well-kept parks and roads, then we need to create new income streams and find ways to save money.
- 3.4 Civic enterprise is a broad term intended to cover those activities where the council can either generate better returns on its existing assets, for example through better marketing, advertising on assets and sponsorship or increasing usage, more

equitable contributions from partners and, where appropriate, reviewing charging regimes for paid for services that more realistically reflect the true economic cost of providing the service and/or the market.

- 3.5 The objectives of the Strategy are to:
- Motivate, develop and support the organisation to create an enterprise approach to services
 - Take ideas and turn them into reality to create a tangible contribution to the strategic target of £5.7m to be achieved by 2018/19
 - Create sustainable services that will last into the future
- 3.6 The Budget and Council Tax 2016/17 report to Cabinet on 8 February 2016 agreed that the Civic Enterprise project is to deliver an overall target of £5.7m up to 2018/19. The profile of these is £3.5m in 2017/18 and £2.2m in 2018/19. Profile details are included in Appendix 1.
- 3.7 There are five inter-related themes to deliver the Civic Enterprise Strategy to raise money to replace grants or drive down costs. These are;
- Income Generation,
 - Maximising income from existing fees and charges,
 - Examining the value from trading services,
 - Better collection of debts,
 - Developing a shared services strategy
- 3.8 Fostering a civic enterprise culture across the Council is a theme underpinning all of the above.
- 3.9 A Civic Enterprise Board has been established to regularly review and monitor delivery of the above themes to ensure work stays on track to meet the savings target. The Chair of the Board is also a member of the Brent 2020 Programme Board to ensure that all Civic Enterprise activities are aligned to those of Brent 2020.

Progress to date

- 3.10 Significant progress has been made from the inception in January 2016. Extensive consultation and engagement with staff took place in April 2016, which resulted in over 400 income generating ideas being put forward. The ideas were filtered, organised, assessed and discussed with Operational and Strategic Directors in the respective areas to decide whether to take them forward. Evaluation was based on the potential revenue, the level of risk associated, ease of implementation and the social value. A number of ideas were de-prioritised. The main reasons for this were duplication, low financial return, high risk, small market size and scale of effort needed.

3.11 As a result of the assessment and market analysis activity, a number of business plans have been developed. The ideas that have been developed into business plans meet three key criteria:

- Social Value
- Potential to generate income
- Sustainability

3.12 All of which result in better outcomes for residents and the borough. Whilst the work of Civic Enterprise aims to achieve the savings target a fundamental objective is to ensure that outcomes contribute towards the Brent 2020 priorities.

3.13 Business plans have been developed for six ideas. These are:

1. Energy
2. Trading with Schools
3. Consultancy Services
4. Weddings
5. Making best use of assets
6. Investment in Businesses

Energy

3.14 A team has been established and staff have been tasked with determining cost savings and income generating opportunities for the council. There are a number of opportunities which can be considered and options appraisal work is underway. Any initiative implemented must enable the Council to;

- Generate income
- Reduce cost of energy for council buildings
- Reduce carbon emissions in the Borough
- Provide the local community with better value energy services

3.15 A quick win to generate income is to sell Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) to housing associations, Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) and residents.

Trading with Schools

3.16 As part of income generating activity and adding value to Brent schools we are working closely with schools to develop a new product portfolio based on their needs and requirements. This project will enable us to contribute to raising educational standards in Brent and generate income at the same time.

- 3.17 We have visited a number of schools and are in the process of developing new flexible services for them.
- 3.18 Whilst there is great potential to generate income from improving our sales proposition, offering quality services can lead to raised educational standards. By providing schools with quality advice on issues such as HR and budgeting we can help them to plan better and make more informed decision based on data and projections ultimately achieving better outcomes for children in the borough.

Consultancy Services

- 3.19 This was a re-occurring idea generated at the staff workshops in April 2016. Market analysis has indicated a potential opportunity to sell the services of the Research and Business Intelligence unit initially. We have already received interest from Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham Councils for these services. These local authorities require extra support with some projects they are about to undertake. There is scope to sell our services to a target market of other local authorities, NHS Trusts and other central government organisations.

Weddings

- 3.20 The Events Team have generated just over £118k from weddings in the past 6 months. We are building up a good reputation with our clients and we believe there is scope to offer something different especially those who would like more choice and flexibility. Currently there are no competitors in West London offering weddings in parks. The City of London have said they are considering using Queens Park to offer this service or something similar but have not yet applied for a licence.
- 3.21 We also seek to offer wedding planning packages including registration fees. On average we have 8 marriages per Saturday at Brent Council Registry Office. We also have the opportunity to exploit our relationship with Barnet Council as we have a shared Registration and Nationality Service with them.
- 3.22 This will require a very strong marketing strategy to drive this, and we have started to promote the venture. The Events Team recently had a stall at the National Wedding show and positive feedback was received on the proposition. Increasing the uptake of weddings will enable the Council to utilise the Civic Centre building and other assets, especially parks in a way never used before.

Making Best Use of Other Assets

- 3.23 We aim to use our facilities in the Civic Centre on Event Days to generate income for the Council. This could be from holding corporate hospitality to having market stalls in the foyer. There is also an opportunity to partner with Quintain to have markets on their land on some kind of profit share basis. We would seek to charge stall holders a fee and there is an option to receive a percentage of any income generated.
- 3.24 For example, the Civic Enterprise Team are currently implementing ways to generate income at the Council's annual fireworks celebration, to be held on 6 November 2016. The event is moving from Roundwood Park to the Wembley Park area and the event is expecting up to 25k people to attend. We will be holding a Christmas

market in the Civic Centre, with stall holders selling food, drink and crafts in the Grand Hall and Boardrooms. There will also be cultural and children's activities.

- 3.25 We are also exploring the potential to hold large scale events in parks aiming for audiences at a minimum level of 2000 people. Brent have a lot of beautiful parks and the most appropriate park to the type of event would be chosen. For example Roundwood and Gladstone parks have capacity to hold events and good transportation links. Income would be generated from selling of tickets, sponsorship of goods, advertising and stall holder fees. Corporate hospitality packages would also be offered to appeal to different markets and offer differential pricing.
- 3.26 These events should also attract visitors from outside of Brent enabling us to showcase our vibrant mix of cultures and enhance our promotion of community cohesion. Should we be able to generate income from initiatives such as green gyms and exercise classes in parks we will also help to deliver improved health outcomes by keeping residents fit, healthy and active. This will contribute towards lowering the pressure on demand-led budgets. A key priority for Brent 2020.

Investment in Businesses

- 3.27 This idea is for the Council to provide financial investment to support Small, Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The model proposed provides a safe way to receive return on investment and seek to develop one of Brent 2020 priorities for business growth. This initiative supports the economy and employment opportunities in Brent by lending SMEs finance through a crowdfunding organisation on a fixed interest rate (currently at 7.2%) return to Brent Council. The model provides a guaranteed return which covers the risk of bad debt. An approximate fee of 3% is incurred annually to the Council with the model. Initially the proposal is to have up to £200k available for business to apply for an amount. A benefit of this initiative is that the Council would receive a better rate of interest than a saving account but also by supporting business growth we can support regeneration of the borough by seeking to increase employment opportunities thereby helping to reduce the number of businesses failing, reducing unemployment rates and a reliance on benefits.
- 3.28 Each of the six business plans will have financial targets to achieve as well performance measures. Market analysis carried out as part of validating ideas has indicated that these propositions will generate a sizeable income for the Council, especially compared to some other local authorities.
- 3.29 Historically there have been pockets of income generating activity across the Council, e.g. Event and Conferences and some areas in Regeneration and Environment, without any strategic co-ordination. As a result of the Civic Enterprise Strategy, we are in the early stages of having a more joined-up strategic offer. Our approach is now very much in line with other local authorities as we have a portfolio of investments, we are utilising assets and resources better and we are enabling staff to be more creative and innovative to come up with new ideas to work more efficiently to generate income or save money.

Achievements

- 3.30 Aside from the development of robust business plans, other income generating activity has resulted in a 10-year contract being signed with Arqiva to place wireless cells on lampposts, this will bring in over £260k and £80k has already been received.
- 3.31 A procurement exercise is currently underway for tenderers to buy space on council assets and planning approval is being sought to enable seven new sites around the borough to also be offered for advertising space. The current contact with JC Decaux will shortly expire and so renegotiation discussions are underway to secure a mutually beneficial agreement.
- 3.32 In October 2016 Cabinet approved the implementation of an-house bailiff service, the debt recovery project is on track to achieve £1m in 2017/18.
- 3.33 As part of preparing the business plans, engagement was carried out with schools and they have shown keen interest to resume the purchase of services from the Council. New flexible services are being developed for schools. To aid the regeneration of the borough we will be supporting SMEs to survive and expand, creating job opportunities and supply chain benefits as well as providing a high rate of return, currently 7.2%, on the Council's investment.
- 3.34 The Civic Enterprise Team are building on opportunities arising from Wembley Park event days by organising income generating initiatives. For example, at the Council's annual fireworks celebration, to be held on 6 November 2016 there will be a Christmas market in the Civic Centre.
- 3.35 The majority of Council departments have achieved their targets for this year so any additional income generated can be used to offset the targets for 2017/18.

Benchmarking with other local authorities

- 3.36 Any type of linear benchmarking may be misleading unless the service provided is very much the same at each local authority. This therefore presents difficulties when collating comparable data on income generating activity between local authorities. However a recent survey by Localis¹ found that entrepreneurial activities currently make up 6% of council budgets. Key findings of the study are that:
- 94% of councils currently share a service with another council
 - 91% use assets such as land in an entrepreneurial manner
 - More than half of councils (58%) own a trading company (forecasts are that by 2020 all councils will have a trading vehicle)
 - 57% of councils operate a joint venture with the private sector
 - 38% invest money in private sector enterprises
 - Over a third of councils are using entrepreneurial methods in areas such as waste (46%), leisure and tourism (38%), IT/back office (38%) and housing (36%)

¹ Commercial Councils - The rise of entrepreneurialism in local government 2015. The survey had 150 respondents from local government stakeholders across the country.

3.37 There were no areas where the majority of councils could not see the case for greater entrepreneurialism. Across the board, between two-thirds and four-fifths of councils do or would provide energy (73%), facilities (75%), IT/Back Office (73%), legal services (67%), and waste commercially (77%).

3.38 The main areas of profitability for local authorities are:

- Generating income through council assets
- Generating income by trading services
- Digital Services
- Attracting investment

3.39 Future boom areas are expected to be:

- Legal services (24% of authorities currently, 43% considering)
- Facilities (25% of authorities currently, 50% considering)
- Waste (46% of authorities currently, 31% considering)

3.40 For Brent Council this means that the business plans that have been developed are in line with income generating activities of other local authorities. The civic enterprise way of working was started in Brent Council in January 2016. In comparison, many local authorities have been operating in this way since 2009.

3.41 Further examples of case studies are included in Appendix 2.

The way forward

3.42 The Civic Enterprise Team will continue to encourage innovation and develop an entrepreneurial culture. Staff engagement and participation will continue to be a key objective. This will be done by supporting staff to think and deliver differently as well as ensuring service areas are guided and supported to develop and take new income generating ideas to market.

3.43 Opportunities for joint ventures and partnership development will also be sought to bring in additional income. Sharing ownership of joint ventures with public or private sector partners, offers both shared risks and rewards, whilst also combining expertise and capacity.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 While this paper in and of itself has no direct financial impact, the savings are necessary to balance the Council's budget. There are £3.45m of Civic Enterprise Savings due to be delivered in 2017/18 and a further £2.197m that relate to 2018/19.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 As the report is for comment there are no legal implications of the update provided.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 None

Background Papers

1. Budget and Council Tax 2016/17 report to Cabinet on 8 February 2016
2. Budget Proposals to 2017/18 and Medium Term Outlook report to Cabinet on 14 December 2015
3. Civic Enterprise Strategy report to Cabinet on 27 June 2016

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Appendix 1

Civic Enterprise income Targets

Ref	Unit/Service	Description	Item	2017/18 £'000s	2018/19 £'000s
CE002	Cross Department	Income Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising and sponsorship income of £300k. • Wireless equipment on assets income of £210k. • Fees and charges income of £1.99m. 	1,250	1,250
CE005	Finance	Better collection of debts and arrears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better collection of debts and arrears income £1m. 	1,000	0
Total				2,250	1,250

Civic Enterprise Departmental Targets

Ref	Unit/Service	Description	Item	2017/18 £'000s	2018/19 £'000s
CE001	Support Planning & Reablement	Additional Continuing Health Care (CHC) Funding <i>(now managed within CWB department)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCG funding care packages rather than the council. The CCG should fund this care as they have the necessary skills to meet these needs. 	400	400
CE003	Digital Services	IT Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering ICT services on a commercial basis to other organisations. 	375	375

CE004	Parking & Lighting/ Parking	Eliminate the additional overhead costs of the Serco parking contract (now managed within R&E department)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apportioning ratio of overheads between the three participating boroughs: LB Brent; LB Hounslow; and LB Ealing. 	300	47
CE006	Culture and Property	Civic Centre - Rental Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional income e.g. Library café space, increased income from the basement car park or from further release of office space. 	125	125
Total				1,200	947

Income Generating Activities

Item	Description	Turnover	
		2017/18	2018/19
		£'000s	£'000s
Trading with Schools	Increase income by offering quality services that schools require and to start offering our services to schools in neighbouring boroughs	600	750
Events, festivals and conferences	Large scale concerts and festivals in Brent's parks in spring and summer. Also to attract more large conferences in Civic Centre	500	650
Energy Certificates	This is a strand of the overall Energy Strategy that is being worked on.	17	20
Consultancy Services	Focus on selling services. Initially the Business Research and Intelligence services but the plan is to identify other service areas to sell, in particular some in Regeneration and Environment. The aim is to serve other public sector bodies.	60	70
Finance for SMEs	Potential of lending £200k through crowdfunding on a fixed interest rate of 7.2% to SMEs in Brent. The model would provide a guaranteed return which covers the risk of bad debt. A 3% annual fee is incurred to the council with the model. If successful in year one we can seek to double the initial investment the following year. £250k funding is available through Employment and Skills to contribute to supporting SMEs in Brent that we lend money to. This initiative will provide a better rate of interest to the council than a bank, and it can also create employment opportunities as businesses expand.	14	21
Weddings in parks	There is a lucrative market in weddings. There is a great opportunity to offer weddings in parks and there are no competitors offering this in West London. We will also offer packages including wedding planning services and registration.	339	440

Other assets incl properties, parks (green gym, sports, street markets, markets in Civic Centre on events day, open air cinema etc.)	Better use of our open spaces - parks, streets and Civic Centre. In particular on event days at Wembley Park. Good opportunity for us to provide markets, facilities etc.	50	80
Total		1,580	2,031

Appendix 2

New approaches to Commercialisation- Doing things differently

London Borough of Newham In order to provide value for money and maximum efficiency, Newham are piloting and developing alternative ways of delivering their services. This includes commercialising a range of services as small businesses, based on co-operative principles, which will free up staff to utilise their local knowledge and take even greater ownership over their work to deliver better outcomes for Newham residents.

Nottingham City Council has increased its income by over £10m by taking a more commercial approach to a number of its services. Their approach to commercialisation of public services is not only to save money, but also provide a better service, save jobs and improve morale.

Generating income through council assets

- **Oxford City Council** are making a significant amount of money (£7m) from their assets plus an additional £5m a year profit from developing private rented housing which the council own and run, but is let at higher market rents.
- **Basingstoke and Deane Council** - 30 per cent of their income comes from grants and tax, and 70 per cent from other sources - the reverse of the normal proportion. The council receives £15.5m from their commercial property portfolio (the 5th biggest in the country), and £3.5m from investment income. They have purchased the freehold of the Festival Place shopping centre as it gives them a 5-6 per cent annual return.
- **Guilford Borough Council** invested £25 million capital fund in property.
- **Surrey County Council** set up a property Holding Company in 2014 with three subsidiary Companies generating substantial income for them.

Generating income by trading services

- **Cheshire East Council** recently launching the first two in a series of wholly-owned arm's-length service delivery companies. Waste and street scene services will be operated by Ansa Environmental Services, and bereavement services – including burial, cremation, memorial and bereavement support – will be managed by Orbitas Bereavement Service. Both will be chaired by Councillors.

- In addition, **Staffordshire County Council** and Capita have set up an independent joint venture company called Entrust, to improve education services. This innovative joint venture allows the council to combine the best of the public sector, knowledge and expertise in delivering services to schools, with the commercial acumen of the private sector, so that we can compete robustly in the marketplace and safeguard jobs for the future.
- **Surrey County Council** set up a Company called Surrey Choice providing day services and Community support

Generating income through trading commodities

- **South Holland District Council** has a contract in place for the processing of recyclables which generates an additional £500,000 of income a year.

Digital Services


- The **London Borough of Camden** led a group of 17 Councils across London and Kent in collaboration for the implementation of a wireless concession contract with Arqiva. The scheme has generated substantial additional income for the local authorities.

Attracting investment and marketing the place

- **Birmingham City Council** has set up Business Birmingham, an inward investment programme, in partnership with the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP and Invest Black Country. In 2013/14, the programme's efforts resulted in a 57 per cent rise in foreign investment projects, driven largely by the area's strengths in sectors such as advanced manufacturing and the automotive industry, as well as its backing for fast-growing new industries such as digital media and IT services. Investment by foreign firms generated a record 4,337 new jobs in the area in 2013/14; almost double the number created the previous year. The jobs boost is worth £362 million to the economy.
- The local economy in the Shoreditch district area of London has transformed as a result of a flow of commerce and inward investment into a cluster of creative industries. The **London Borough of Hackney** has played a very strong role as facilitators of this investment, including sending a team of regeneration officers with a delegation of East London's most innovative companies to the South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive 2013 festival in Austin, Texas. The experience demonstrated there is now a clear need for

further engagement with UKTI to connect the local economy with the global platform/ opportunities. This could be achieved through sharing intelligence, contact and networks to help develop a local strategy and common business plan.

- After traditional industries in **Sunderland** went into decline in the late 20th century, the City Council actively sought to identify new growth areas. Automotive and advanced manufacturing were identified, and efforts were made to identify new markets to secure this type of inward investment to replace those jobs that had been lost. This resulted in a large amount of investment from foreign direct investment, e.g., a Nissan car plant. The City Council established a partnership with **Washington District Council** and set up agreements with Harbin, the provincial capital of Heilongjiang Province in North Eastern China. Sunderland City Council has a productive partnership arrangement with UKTI, but it has tended to focus on trade rather than inward investment. Sunderland is keen to grow the partnership with UKTI, particularly around export growth. Sharing information on small to medium local companies' export activity and identifying new local to global opportunities, will help reinforce the national effort.

 <p>Brent</p>	<p>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 8 November 2016</p> <p>Report from the Operational Director Brent Customer Services</p>
<p>For Information</p>	
<p>Update on Community Access Strategy</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Scrutiny Members with a summary of the Community Access Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 15 October 2014 and the progress that has been made in implementing this.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the progress that is being made in implementing the aims of the new Community Access Strategy.
- 2.2 To note that a new Digital Board has been set up to oversee the development of a new Council wide Digital Strategy covering both digital services to residents and internal working arrangements within the Council. The Community Access Strategy will be incorporated into these wider digital plans which support the acceleration of our digital offer and take up.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 A new Community Access Strategy was agreed by Cabinet on 15 October 2014, setting out plans for fundamentally changing the way in which residents' access services and information from Brent. The Community Access Strategy sets out Brent's vision for transforming the way in which residents are able to access information, advice and services. It builds on work already undertaken through the Future of Customer Services project and seeks to create modern and relevant access arrangements that are tailored to meet the needs of differing demographic groups, help us to respond positively to the financial pressures we face and to target our most personalised contact arrangements to those who are most vulnerable and have more complex needs. The strategy is attached as Appendix A.
- 3.2 The Customer Access strategy has been designed to support the wider aims of the Brent Borough plan and corporate strategic objectives. It is one of the

major enablers for the delivery of the Brent 2020 vision and the achievement of key outcomes such as:

- *Preventing demand for public services occurring in the first place.*
- *ensuring early intervention and a more personalised approach to meeting needs*
- *doing more to support resident independence and resilience*
- *integrating services around individuals*
- *building partnerships between local services providers and local services- to find new ways of providing services that are more finely tailored to individual, community and local needs.*

3.3 The key aims of the strategy are to:

- Develop a consistent and excellent experience for our customers whenever and however they make contact with us
- Develop customer access arrangements that are designed to meet the differing needs of our customers and are focused on our customers' needs not our internal service boundaries
- Develop an improved digital offer, better customer confidence in digital access channels and significantly increase take up and use of digital access channels
- Improve the efficiency of customer access arrangements so as to better manage demand, remove duplication and failure and prevent demand arising in the first place

3.4 Underpinning the delivery of the strategy are key design principles which set out the framework within which access arrangements will be reshaped. These are:

- Access arrangements will be designed using customer and performance insight –to ensure that they are effective in meeting customer needs
- They will be easy to access, simple to use and responsive to residents' needs
- They will enable customers to “Tell us once” – allowing information provided to be used many times to meet customers' needs
- Enquiries will be resolved at first point of contact wherever possible
- Residents will be able to expect consistently high standards whichever service they contact- Brent's Customer promise to them.
- Access arrangements will be designed so that, wherever possible, residents can access them digitally.

- 3.5 The demographics in Brent have changed significantly over recent years, with areas of the borough becoming gentrified and large parts of the Borough now populated by those who are well educated, enjoying middle to upper incomes and with good employment skills. There are however pockets of deprivation, particularly in the south of the borough where the demographic breakdown of residents has remained stubbornly static. This is seen particularly in high density social housing where there are high levels of deprivation; inter-generational unemployment and complex needs. The Customer Access strategy reflects the need to target our resources to those with most complex needs by reducing the requirement for more expensive contacts methods for those who are willing and able to self-serve. Central to this aim is the need to ensure that residents are able to self-serve through digital channels such as on line services or mobile applications, to enable them to manage their interactions with the Council and access services without the need to use more traditional channels such as telephone, face to face visits or writing in.
- 3.6 Currently telephone contact is the most widely used channel by our residents with an estimated 1.8 M calls per annum¹. The Community Access Strategy aims to ensure that residents do not have to rely on telephone contact to access services or seek resolution of enquiries. Over the past year over 54,000 residents have created a digital “ My Account “allowing them to access services and transact with the Council using self service facilities which can be easily accessed 24/7. Residents can now actively manage their Council Tax Account, Benefit claim and rent account (BHP) using one user name and password, with plans to incorporate a further 10 services over the next 12 months. This places us in a good position to now consider our approach to channel migration (i.e increasing resident usage of self service and reducing contact via more traditional channels) and the development of a channel shift plan. This is one of the many work strands that will be undertaken through the new Digital Board over the coming months.
- 3.7 We also know that most Brent services have historically been designed to reflect the Departmental boundaries that define our management structures. This means that residents generally have to navigate each service separately, which can be time consuming and inconvenient for them but also inefficient for Brent. The Strategy stated aims are to change the way in which we design services, so that these better meet the needs of differing groups and involve residents in co designing them. The Brent 2020 strategy has incorporated this approach in the recent Outcome Based Reviews that have been undertaken and its aim to better manage demand for services by taking a more holistic approach to delivering better outcomes to resident.
- 3.8 The last report to Scrutiny in March 2015 set out the plans for delivering the strategy during 2015/16. A small project team was created to help deliver across 4 work streams:
- Improving telephony- to ensure that residents experience a consistently good response

¹ There are 97,000calls handled every month through the automated call distribution system, this includes parking 15,000 enquiries managed by Serco. It is estimated that there are a further 54,000 external calls handled outside of the ACD this figure excludes internal calls.

- Channel shift – improving our digital offer to residents so that where they can self-serve, it is easy and convenient to do so
- Modernising face to face contact- so that this supports our changing access arrangements, in particular providing assistance to residents who may need help to self-serve.
- Thematic reviews- to redesign the way in which services, working with partners and the VCS and joining up service delivery so that individual and community needs are better met.

3.9 The key achievements delivered in 2015/16 were as follows:

3.10 Improving telephony

The key aims of this work stream was to:

- improve residents' experience when they telephone us
- reduce the number of published numbers on the web to make it easier to identify the correct number to ring
- centralising the management of call handling where appropriate to enable resources to be better aligned to manage peaks and troughs in demand.
- develop our telephone offer so that it can support residents to use on line self service facilities

3.11 Achievements

- Call answering rates have been increased from an average of 80% to 85% for high volume services using Automated Call Distribution (ACD) We have extended use of ACD technology for those services receiving high volumes of calls, to help facilitate improved management of these calls and this means that circa 60% of all calls are now handled using this technology. Where appropriate this is supported by an improved on line offer to residents , for example HMO licensing calls are now handled using the ACD system and licences can also be applied for on line. Total monthly calls received via Automated Call Distribution are circa 82,000 including switchboard calls. There are an estimated 54,000 external calls that are handled outside the ACD system on a monthly and call answering vary greatly from team to team. Average answer rates for non ACD calls are around 69%.
- A new telephone reporting tool was launched early in 2015/16 to provide managers and staff with clearer visibility of calls being made through individual extensions and facilitate better management of these. The volume of these calls has also reduced as calls have been transferred to ACD technology. Call answer rates for non ACD calls have improved but are still well below the desired target of a 90% answer rate.

- A review of published numbers has been completed and as a result the number of published numbers has reduced from 229 to 72 and further reductions will be achieved as we continue to review telephone contact.

3.12 Channel Shift

The aim of this work stream was to:

- Significantly improve residents experience when they use digital channels to access services and information
- Increase the range of services available through digital channels
- Increase take up and use of digital channels by residents to access services and information and in so doing reduce telephone demand.

3.13 Achievements and progress to date

- Redesigned home page based on feedback from residents, members and staff- to ensure that this signposts key services, updates and information
- Improved search and navigations on Brent web site – so that residents can find what they want quickly and easily without having to navigate through different web pages. Each page of the web site now has 4 tabs “ Report it, Book it, Pay for it and Apply for it “ which enable residents to find these functions quickly and easily without having to navigate our website
- Improved access to our web site from mobile devices to ensure that on line services can be accessed easily from any device
- The new “ My Account “ went live in October 2015 enabling residents to access a range of services using one log in name and password. There is now a comprehensive on line offer available through My Account for Council Tax, Housing Benefits and Rents (BHP) and there are plans in place to incorporate more services in during 2017. Parking, Public Realm and Locata (choice based letting) are due to be available in the first quarter of 2017. A further 7 services will be incorporate between quarter 2 and quarter 4 of 2017/18.

3.14 Modernising Face to face contact arrangements

The key aims were to:

- Significantly increase the availability of self service facilities so that residents who do not have access to the internet or need help to use self-service, can still access on line services with assistance
- Integrate enquiry handling for residents so that wherever possible their enquiries can be resolved by one officer

- Reduce waiting time to be seen by an officer by resolving quick enquiries on the ground floor of the Civic Centre without the need for the resident to take a ticket and wait for an interview booth to become free.
- Develop a more rounded offer for residents that incorporates the Voluntary sector and other key partners such as the Job Centre Plus
- Develop a greater employment focus for residents visiting the Customer Services centre by promoting help and opportunities available via plasma screens, incorporating surgeries for Brent Start (adult education) and promoting information and help available from libraries.

3.15 **Achievements and progress to date**

- The Customer Services Centre at the Civic Centre has been physically reconfigured so as to increase space available on the ground floor to provide more facilities at the first point of entry and to enable the reception to be relocated from the mezzanine floor. The number of self-service computers has increased from 8 to 28 and 3 new information points have been installed providing visitors with signposting, assistance and help.
- A new triage service has been piloted with a team of seven officers from housing, benefits and customer services cross trained to be enabling them to handle a range of enquiries covering housing, council tax, benefits and employment. 50% of enquiries are now being resolved at this first point of contact without the need for the resident to see an officer in a booth. Residents also receiving advice about employment support available to them and more general advice about the help available to them from both Brent and partners such as the CAB, JCP and voluntary sector.
- Plasma screens now display information about employment opportunities and help, including courses available via Brent Start, information and help available from libraries and support available from the employment team.
- Residents can now access help from CAB, Job Centre Plus and Brent Start from the Customer Services Centre.

3.16 **Thematic Reviews**

The key aims were to:

- Review and redesign services to better meet the needs of differing resident groups
- To ensure that planned reviews and projects instigated outside the Community Access strategy, fully incorporate the design principles and aims of the strategy
- To engage residents in the co design of services
- To identify and deliver efficiencies in service delivery arrangements

- To identify opportunities for sharing data between services so that our residents only need to “ Tell us once “ and to develop a more joined up approach to meeting the needs of differing groups of residents.

3.17 Achievements

- A thematic review of care leavers was completed in early 2016 that involved a range of services across the Council who collectively support these young people as they embark on adult life. The main aim of the review was to reduce the time taken to find permanent housing for care leavers and to help them sustain their tenancy once housed. By remodelling the care leaver’s journey, it is possible to reduce the average time taken to house them from an average of 7 months to 2 months with a concurrent reduction to fostering costs of £133K per annum.
- A review of contact for planning, building control and licensing following the decision to decentralise Business Support. First contacts for these services have now been incorporated into the BCS Contact Centre with significantly improved answer rates.
- A review of the Client Affairs Team in Adult Social Care which is responsible for carrying our financial assessments when entitlement to social care is identified. As a result of this review a new improved process is in place that should support more timely assessment of financial contributions and as a consequence more timely billing and collection of this income. The Client Affairs Team has recently transferred to Brent Customer Services who are now bedding in new arrangements in order to improve this service to vulnerable adults and income collection for the Council.

3.18 Improving Residents’ experience

3.19 The most critical aim of the Community Access Strategy is to improve our residents’ experience when they contact us. A range of activities have been undertaken in 2016/17 to help support this aim, these include:

- A baseline survey of resident satisfaction across all key channels. The table below show the results from this and provides a base line from which to measure progress going forward.

	E mail	Telephone	Face to Face
Rated us good for handling of their enquiry	60%	59%	74%
Responded to their enquiry quickly	80%	51%	78%
Found the person who handled their enquiry helpful	66%	79%	88%
Said their enquiry was fully resolved	42%	58%	59%
Checked our website first to try to resolve their enquiry	63%	27%	42%

- The development of a new Customer Promise Score Card that provides a high level view of our performance against the Customer Promise standards published on our web site. This is reported monthly to CMT where actions to improve performance are discussed and agreed.
- A review of the Customer Promise and a re-launch of this in October/ November 2016 as part of the Brent 2020 Forward Together sessions held for staff. . The revised Customer Promise incorporates the feedback form residents, staff and Members and highlights 5 key commitments to our residents

Respect : We will show understanding of the person's situation and needs

Ownership : We will take responsibility for the person's query and aim to resolve it for them

Honesty : If we can't deliver , we will explain why and signpost

Feedback : We will encourage and act on feedback both good and bad

Time : We will provide and honour timescales for actions

The revised Customer Promise sits alongside the standards that already exist for telephone answering, correspondence and email handling and face to face enquiry handling.

3.20 The next stage of the Community Access Strategy

Brent 2020

Since the launch of the Community Access Strategy in 2014 the One Council programme has been replaced with the new Brent 2020 strategy. The Community Access Strategy is identified as one of the key enablers for Brent 2020 alongside the Medium term Financial Strategy, Work Force Strategy and Partnership Engagement.

4.0 Digital Strategy

A new Digital Board has been established as part of Brent 2020 and the delivery of the Community Access Strategy will now be overseen by this board as part of broader plans to accelerate our digital offer and take up.

Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Community Access strategy has delivered annual savings of £1.5M

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 Equality impact assessments have been completed for the overall strategy and for specific work streams within this. There are no adverse impacts identified at this stage because all contact channels remain open to residents and thus the improvements to on line services offer enhancements to our existing offer.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 There are no staffing implications identified at this stage. Full impact assessments will be undertaken to review equalities impacts for proposed staff changes as soon as these are identified.

Background Papers

Community Access Strategy (Appendix A)

Contact Officers

MARGARET READ
Operational Director Brent Customer Services

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Community Access Strategy

1. Introduction and aims of strategy

1.1 This Community Access Strategy sets out Brent's vision for transforming the way in which residents are able to access information, advice and services. It builds on the work already undertaken through the Future of Customer Services project and seeks to create modern and relevant access arrangements that are tailored to meet the needs of differing demographic groups, help us to respond positively to the financial pressures we face and to target our most personalised contact arrangements to those who are most vulnerable and have more complex needs.

1.2 The Community Access strategy has been designed to support the wider aims of the Brent Borough plan and Corporate strategic objectives. This includes aims to

- *prevent demand for public services occurring in the first place.*
- *ensure early intervention and a more personalised approach to meeting needs*
- *doing more to support independence and resilience*
- *integrating services around individuals*
- *exploring the potential of different structures of delivery and governance to establish new and more effective and efficient ways of working.*

1.3 The overall aims of the strategy are to :

- Develop a consistent and excellent experience for our customers whenever and however they make contact with us
- Develop customer access arrangements that are designed to meet the differing needs of our customers , and focused on the customer not internal service boundaries



- Develop an improved digital offer, better customer confidence in digital access channels and significantly increase take up and use of digital access channels
- Improve the efficiency of customer access arrangements so as to better manage demand, remove duplication and failure and prevent demand arising in the first place

1.4 Our current customer access offer is still fragmented and inconsistent. It reflects our internal structural boundaries and is not tailored to meet the differing needs of customer groups. Too often customers are asked to provide information that the Council already holds because we do not widely share data or they have to make separate contact for each service they use, rather than one contact which resolves related enquiries.

1.5 Telephone contact represents the most widely and frequently used method of contact with an estimated 3.2 M calls per annum. Although the number of published telephone numbers has been reduced, customers still have to navigate 89 published numbers and 87 published email addresses. Our telephone answer rates vary significantly from service area to service area and we are not optimising use of technology such as Automated Call Distribution, to better manage this.

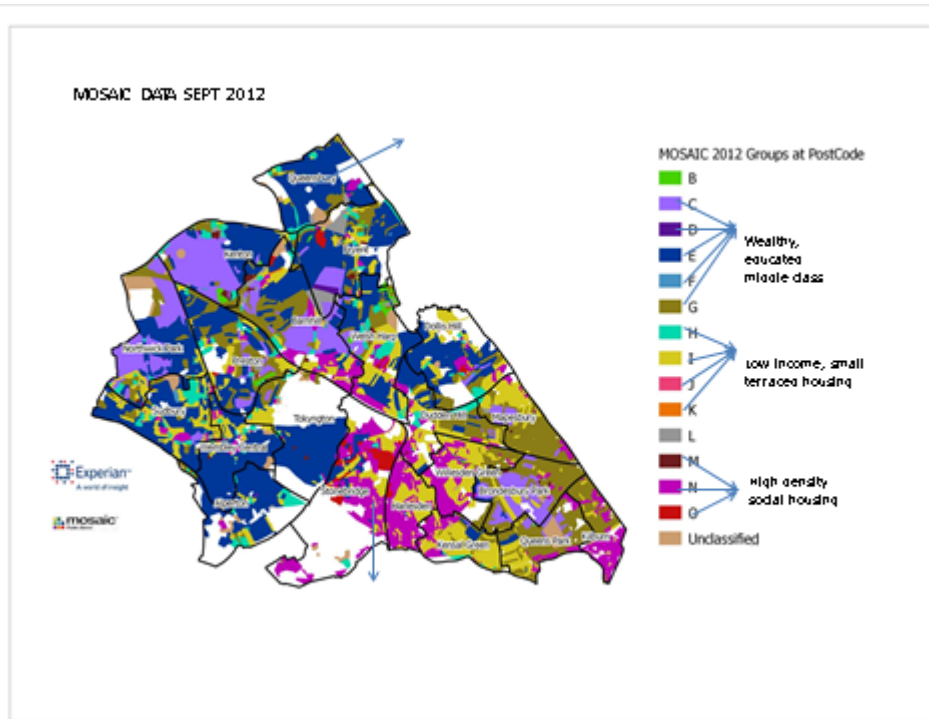
1.6 With an estimated 3.8M visits to our website per year, there are real opportunities to develop our digital offer to better meet the contact needs of our customers. There are however different 20 microsites, 8 separate log in arrangements and feedback from our customers indicates that it can be difficult to search and find the information they are looking for.

2.0 Customer Insight

The demographics in Brent have changed significantly over recent years, with areas of the borough becoming gentrified and large parts of the Borough being populated by those who are well educated, enjoying middle to upper incomes and good employment skills. There are however pockets of deprivation in the south of the borough where the demographic breakdown of residents has remained stubbornly static, typically in high rise social housing with high levels of deprivation, inter generational unemployment and complex needs. The Community Access strategy reflects the need to target our resources to those with most complex needs by reducing the requirement for more expensive contacts methods, from those who are willing and able to self serve. There is more work that needs to be carried out to



better understand the differing needs of customer groups within the borough and to ensure that these inform the design and access arrangements for the services they use.



Mosaic Customer Segments

Group	Group Description
A	Residents of isolated rural communities
B	Residents of small and mid-sized towns with strong local roots
C	Wealthy people living in the most sought after neighbourhoods
D	Successful professionals living in suburban or semi-rural homes
E	Middle income families living in moderate suburban semis
F	Couples with young children in comfortable modern housing
G	Young, well-educated city dwellers
H	Couples and young singles in small modern starter homes
I	Lower income workers in urban terraces in often diverse areas
J	Owner occupiers in older-style housing in ex-industrial areas
K	Residents with sufficient incomes in right-to-buy social houses
L	Active elderly people living in pleasant retirement locations
M	Elderly people reliant on state support
N	Young people renting flats in high density social housing
O	Families in low-rise social housing with high levels of benefit need
Unclassified	Not matched to Mosaic property list

Total Households in Brent





Customer Segmentation

Well Off (54%)	Moderate Means (21%)	Deprived (24%)
Working professionals Well educated Independent	Lower income workers Mix of independent and partial independence	Social housing Furthest from job market Complex needs
Access univers als erivices :Council Tax, Electoral registration, parking, schools admissions	Access univers als erivices and support s erivices (benefits, social care)	Access complex services and universal services
Services lend themselves well to digital access	Services mix of universal and personalised	Services complex and universal
Customer propensity and preference for digital access- likelihood to Self serve very high	Customer propensity for digital access withs uppart- Likelihood to self serve high	More pers onalised s uppart required-likelihood to self serve very low



Demographic make up Brent : 2014

2%	Cafés and Caféholders	Affluent families with growing children living in upmarket housing in city environs
2%	World-Class Wealth	Global high flyers and families of privilege living luxurious lifestyles in London's most exclusive boroughs
15%	Community Elders	Established older households owning city homes in diverse neighbourhoods
1%	Ageing Access	Older residents owning small inner suburban properties with good access to amenities
10%	Metro High-Flyers	Ambitious 20 and 30-somethings renting expensive apartments in highly commutable areas of major cities
9%	Crowded Kaleidoscope	Multi-cultural households with children renting social flats in over-crowded conditions
6%	Inner City Stalwarts	Long-term renters of inner city social flats who have witnessed many changes
20%	Cultural Comfort	Thriving families with good incomes in multi-cultural urban communities
20%	Flexible Workforce	Self-starting young renters ready to move to follow worthwhile incomes from service sector jobs
7%	Uptown Elite	High status households owning elegant homes in accessible inner suburbs where they enjoy city life in comfort

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3.0 Design Principles

The Future of Customer Services project set out a number of high level design principles for customer contact, to create a consistent customer ethos for all services

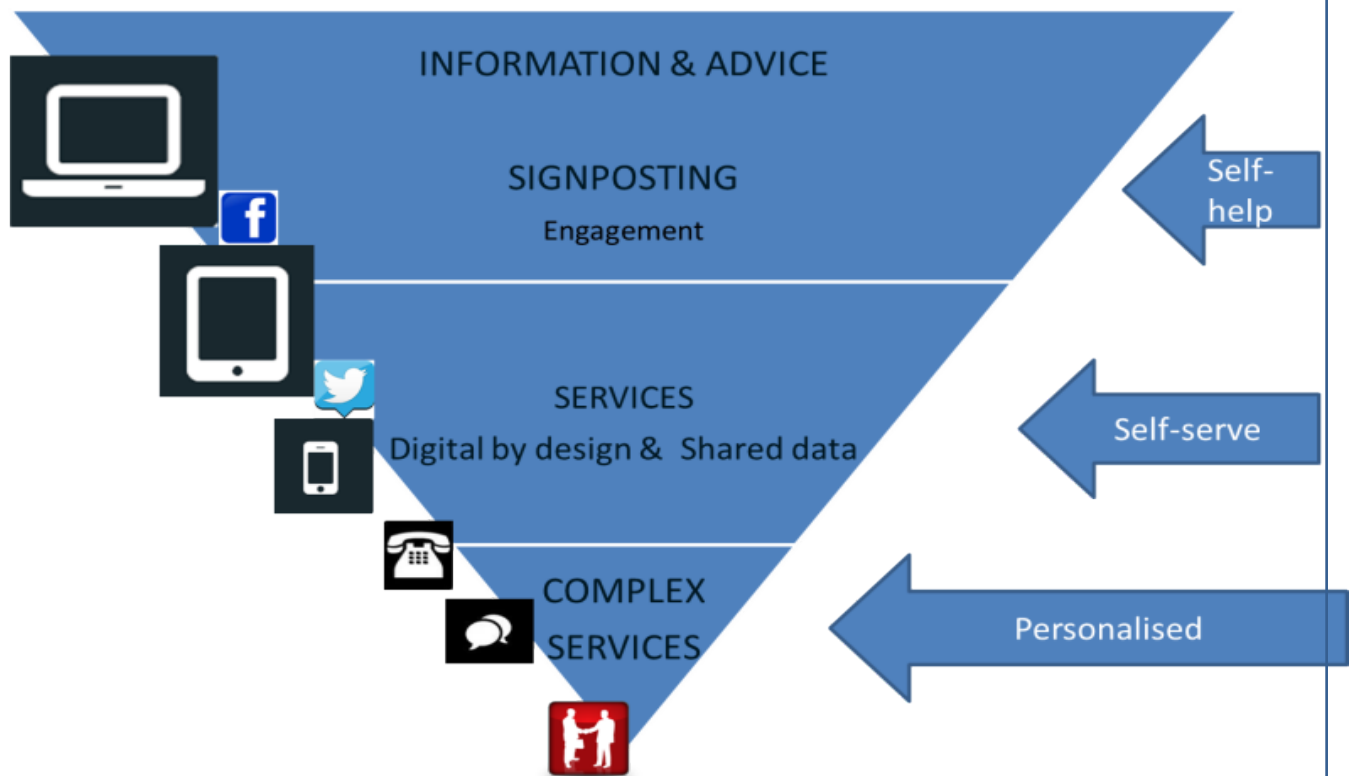


and support the delivery of excellent customer service. These design principles are embedded in the new Community Access Strategy and will underpin the work streams forming part of the overall delivery plan.

The design principles are as follows:

- Customer and performance insight – designed to meet customer needs
- Easy to access & simple to use, responsive
- Tell us once- information provided once used many times
- Enquiries resolved at first point of contact
- Consistent look and feel & standards across all services
- Digital by design

4.0 High level Model



5.0 Community Access Strategy: themes

The delivery of the new Community Access Strategy covers 5 key themes.



-
- Better Customer and Performance Insight
 - Better Customer Experience
 - Better confidence digital channels
 - Better and more consistent service standards
 - Better targeting of resources and value for money

These themes will determine the delivery plans for the strategy.



6.0 Indicative High Level Delivery Plan

High level work streams	Short term 0-3 months	Short to medium term 3-6 months	Medium term 6-12 months	Long term 12 months+
Customer and performance Insight	Demographic and service take up mapping	Demographic and service take up mapping	Redesign based on customer segmentation	Review and improve
Telephone improvement	Short term telephone improvements	Rationalise telephone numbers Review hunt groups and extend use ACD Telephone reporting	Review Extend calls handled by contact centre- implementation of PWC recommendations	Review and improve
Improved face to face customer experience	Improve visitor management at CC	Extend and increase self service take up Cross skilling of staff	Review customer for Willesden library centre	
Improve Customer service standards	Review and relaunch customer promise	Develop standards score cards. Develop customer network of customer champions New induction module	Embed customer standards in Business planning and appraisals	Review and improve performance
Tell us once use many times		Identify potential opportunities for data sharing	Review client index Process review and redesign	Process review and redesign
Improve digital offer		Improve home page and	Customer portal	E mail alerts



and increase channel shift		search facilities Social media strategy	Channel shift	Channel shift Analytics Personalisation
Refocus and prioritise resources		Review and prioritise digital projects (customer related) Cross skilling to support one touch resolution	Cross skilling to support one touch resolution	Redesign roles and structures to support one touch resolution
Develop consistent look and feel for access arrangements	Review and launch standards Review and relaunch web governance	Social media strategy and governance	Review and identify improvements to web microsites	



**Resources and Public Realm
Scrutiny Committee**
8 November 2016

**Report from the Director of
Performance, Policy &
Partnerships**

For information

Wards affected: None

Complaints Annual Report 2015 – 2016

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of complaints received by the Council during the period April 2015 to March 2016. High level data for the past 3 years has been included where available for the purpose of comparison. Departmental/service area analysis has been provided for the 2015 – 2016 operational year (based on the current structure).
- 1.2 Complaints concerning the Adult Social Care and Children and Young People departments come under separate statutory complaint procedures and are therefore provided as separate analysis reports in appendices A and B respectively.
- 1.3 Commentary on Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) complaints performance is provided in the body of this report and separate analysis of BHP complaints is detailed Appendix C.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
 - a) note and consider the Council's performance in managing and resolving complaints.
 - b) note the actions being taken to improve response times to complaints and reduce the number of complaints which escalate to stage 2 (final review).
 - c) note the ongoing measures to improve services as a results of complaints and improve the customer experience.

3.0 Detailed Considerations

Headlines

3.1 The key headlines from the Council's complaints performance are as follows:

Volumes

- Number of new stage 1 complaints received (corporate and statutory) has decreased year on year - 1,812 stage 1 complaints in 2015/16 (106 cases or 6% less than in 2013/14).
- Reduction in new Ombudsman cases from 74 cases in 2013/14 to 63 cases in 2015/16 (15% reduction over 3 years)
- Volume of stage 2 (escalated) cases increased by 16% over the past 3 years from 160 to 186 final review cases.

Nature/Reason for Complaints

- The top two reasons for complaints over the past 3 years were delay/failure to provide a service and inadequate communication with residents and services users.

Outcome of Complaints

- Increased number of cases upheld or partly upheld at the first stage - 623 cases in 2013/14 rising to 677 cases in 2015/16, demonstrating a more willing attitude to acknowledge fault at the initial stages of a complaint.
- More cases being fully upheld at stage 2 (17 upheld cases in 2013/14 compared to 49 upheld cases in 2015/16). There has been a notable increase in the number of BHP cases escalated to stage 2 and subsequently upheld or partly upheld.

Timeliness of Complaints

- Timeliness of stage 1 complaint responses steadily increased from 73% in 2013/14 to 88% of responses in time for 2015/16.
- Stage 2 response timeliness also increased from 61% in 2013/14 to 78% in 2015/16, despite higher volumes of complaints processed.

Compensation

- The number of cases awarded compensation and total amounts paid has been increasing over the past 3 years (2013/14 – 79 cases, c£28k to 2015/16 - 168 cases, c £75k).

Ombudsman Enquiries

- The number of referrals made to the Ombudsman has been increasing however the number of new cases accepted by the Ombudsman has reduced.
- In the vast majority of cases investigated the Ombudsman agreed with the Council's decision at stage 2 and in some instances imposed an increased financial remedy.

Council's Complaint Framework

3.2 The Council's Complaints Framework sets out the stages and timescales for dealing with both corporate and statutory complaints:

Complaint Type	Stages	Timescales (Written Response)
Corporate	2 stages + Ombudsman	Stage 1: 20 working days Stage 2: 30 working days
Adults (Statutory)	1 stage (provision/final) + Ombudsman	Stage 1: 20 working days (extension up to 6 months in complex cases)
Children (Statutory)	3 stages + Ombudsman	Stage 1: 10 working days (extension to 20 working days in complex cases) Stage 2: 25 days (extension to 65 working days in complex cases) Stage 3: 45 working days

3.3 Service areas are responsible for the local management and resolution of all corporate and statutory stage 1 complaints. The corporate Complaints Service team manages final review/stage 2 corporate complaints on behalf of the Chief Executive. Children's statutory complaints are reviewed by an independent investigator and independent person at stage 2 and by an independent panel at stage 3.

3.4 The outcome of a complaint is decided in one of these ways:

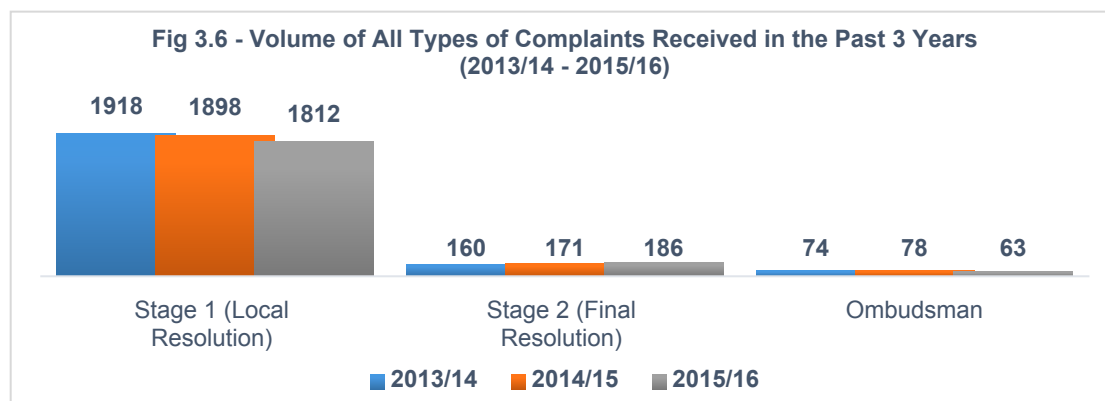
- *"Upheld"* – this is where the Council has accepted responsibility for the matter arising. The complaint response will offer an apology, clarify what happened and the remedy to the problem. We will also identify actions to prevent this from happening again.
- *"Partially Upheld"* – this is where the Council accepts some responsibility for part of the complaint. We will send a complaint response as above also highlighting our reason for not accepting the whole complaint
- *"Not Upheld"* – this means the investigation into the complaint has not found the Council at fault. The complaint response will explain our reasons for this decision

3.5 The Council's performance against the timescales outlined in the framework and other performance measures are detailed in this report. It should be noted that departmental analysis provided for 2015/16 is based on the current departmental/service area structure although the composition of departments has changed over recent years.

Volume of Complaints

Volumes of Complaints – All Stages 3 Year Comparison

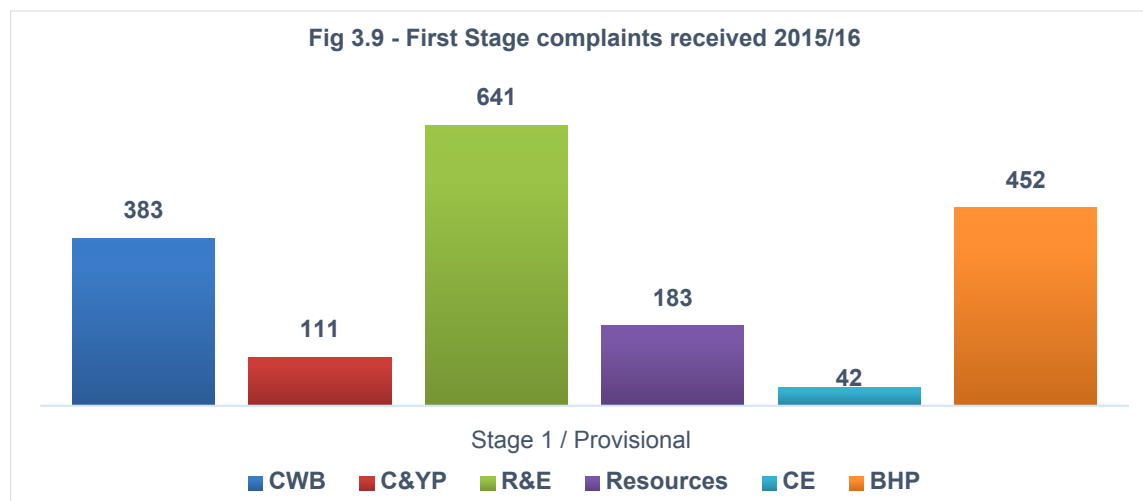
- 3.6 Over the past three years, the number of stage 1 complaints received (corporate and statutory) has decreased year on year. The Council received 1,812 stage 1 complaints in 2015/16 (106 cases or 6% less than in 2013/14). Similarly there has been a reduction in new Ombudsman cases from 74 cases in 2013/14 to 63 cases in 2015/16 (11 fewer cases or 15% less than in 2013/14). Further details on Ombudsman cases are provided later on in this report.



- 3.7 In contrast to stage 1 (local resolution) complaints, the volume of stage 2 (final resolution) complaints has been increasing year on year with 186 stage 2 cases received in 2015/16 (26 cases or 16% more than in 2013/14). This is mainly due to an increased number of cases relating to Brent Housing Partnership (BHP), Planning and Brent Customer Services.
- 3.8 There were three Children stage 3 cases in 2015/16. Previously there were three cases in 2014/15 and one case in 2013/14.

Volume of Stage 1 Complaints – Departmental Overview 2015/16

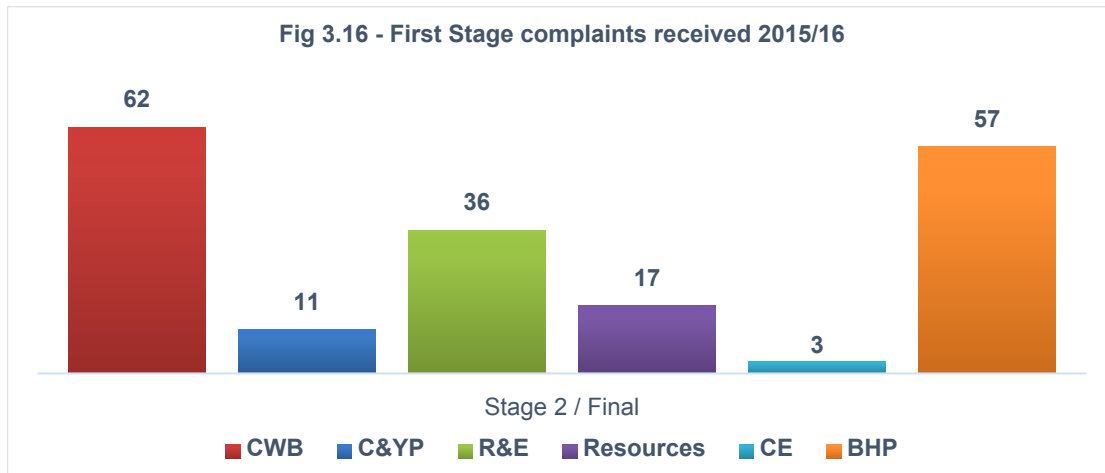
- 3.9 The Council received 1,812 stage 1 complaints in 2015/16 and the departmental breakdown is shown in the chart below:



- 3.10 Regeneration and Environment (R&E) received the largest volume of stage 1 complaints, i.e. 641 cases or 35% of all stage 1 complaints. Complaint volumes overall across the department went down from the 735 first stage complaints received in the previous year (reduction of 94 cases). In 2015/16, Parking, Environmental services and Planning were the departmental service areas with the highest number of complaints. The number of Parking complaints dropped from 271 in 2014/15 to 182 in 2015/16 (33% reduction) as there had been a greater focus on clearly distinguishing between complaints and appeals relating to parking tickets and ensuring the correct process was followed. There was a 32% increase in Environmental services complaints from 2014/15 and these were mainly regarding waste services. These complaints were usually quickly resolved at the first stage with very low escalation rates to the second stage. There were 39 complaints about Planning in 2015/16 with a higher than average escalation rate to stage 2, although a low rate of upheld cases at the second stage.
- 3.11 BHP also had a high number of stage 1 complaints in 2015/16 – 452 cases or 25% of all stage 1 complaints received. A full breakdown is available in Appendix C.
- 3.12 The Community Wellbeing department was the third highest area for complaints in 2015/16. Housing services received 193 complaints (50%) mainly about the housing process, temporary accommodation and customer care. Adult Social Care received 108 complaints (28%) and further detail is provided in Appendix A. Library services accounted for 15% of complaints (58 cases) mainly about customer care.
- 3.13 Of the 183 complaints received by the Resources department, 87 cases (47%) were regarding Benefits services and 56 cases (30%) were regarding Revenue services. There was an increase in Benefits related cases, particularly around the processing of claims for self-employed customers.
- 3.14 Children & Young People department received 111 complaints in 2015/16 and further detail is provided in Appendix B.
- 3.15 The 42 complaints recorded against the Chief Executive's department related to complaints concerning two or more departments being managed centrally the Complaints Service team. These complaints were not about the service areas within the Chief Executive's department.

Volume of Stage 2 Complaints – Departmental Overview 2015/16

3.16 In 2015/16, 186 cases were escalated to Stage 2 and the departmental breakdown is shown in the chart below:

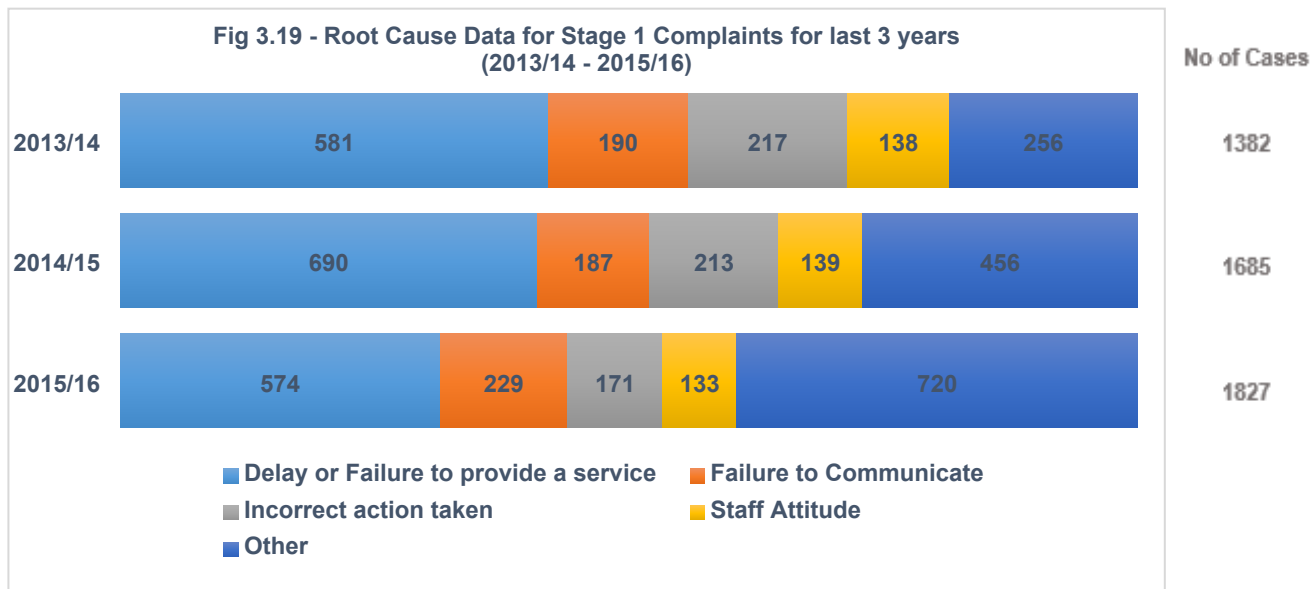


3.17 The Community Wellbeing department generated the highest amount of escalated stage 2 complaints (62 cases or 33% of all stage 2 cases). These final review complaints were in relation to Housing, Adult Social Care and Private Housing Services.

3.18 The yearly increases in stage 2 complaints across the Council can partly be attributed to significant increases in BHP complaints over recent years and is also indicative that stage 1 complaints were not always dealt with fully and appropriately at the initial stage.

Nature / Reasons for Complaints – 3 Year Comparison

3.19 High level analysis on the nature or reasons for complaints is provided below with a caveat on the level of detail provided. The nature/root cause of the complaint is determined and recorded on the iCasework system by the officer responsible for closing the case and the classifications used have been too broad to allow for any further detailed analysis. The Complaints Service team is currently working with departments to improve the classification types and to enable more in depth analysis and reporting.



3.20 The chart above shows that over the past three years delay/failure to provide a service and inadequate communication with residents and services users have been the top two reasons why the Council received complaints.

3.21 There was a noticeable rise in the number of cases being classified as “other” and the work with departments to improve classifications will provide much better insight and clarity in future.

Nature / Reasons for Complaints – High Volume Services in 2015/16

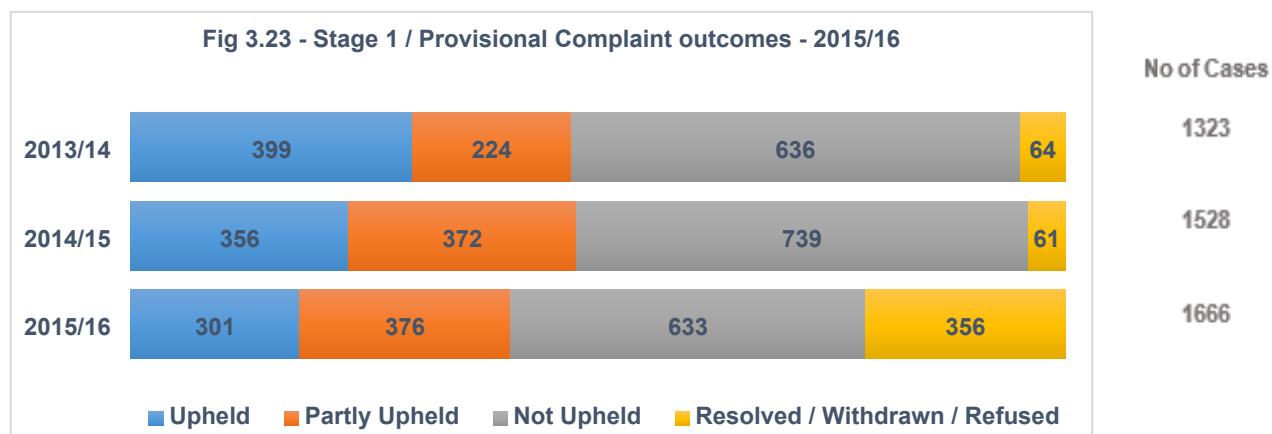
3.22 The top 3 reasons for complaints for high volume service areas across the Council in 2015/16 is summarised in the table below. This information is based on classifications used by the service areas.

Service Area	Top 3 Reasons for Complaints
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications • Assessments • Temporary Accommodation
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking permit applications • On street enforcement • Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's)
Environmental Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor conduct • Non Collection • Street Cleaning
Brent Customer Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits – Over payment • Benefits – Change of circumstances • Council Tax recovery
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Applications • Planning Enforcement • Building Control – Other

Outcome of Complaints

Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes – 3 Year Comparison

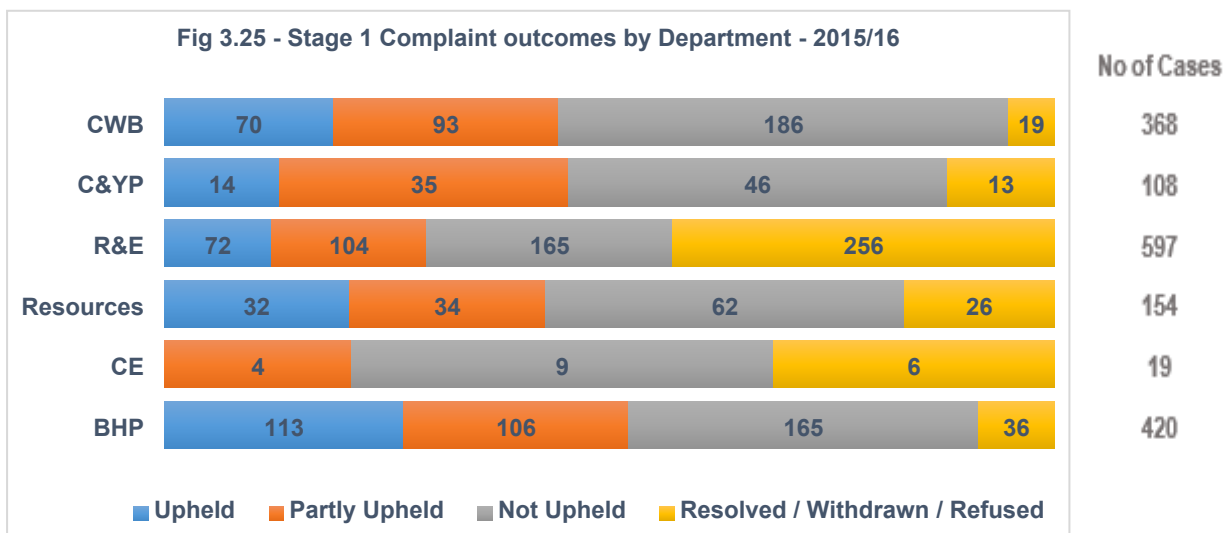
- 3.23 The chart below shows the outcome of stage 1 complaints closed cases over the past three years. As more and more complaints are being completed and closed there has also been an increase in the number of cases upheld or partly upheld at the first stage - 623 cases in 2013/14 rising to 677 cases in 2015/16. This is a reflection that service areas are acknowledging faults and trying to remedy complaints at the first stage.



- 3.24 The 5-fold spike in cases counted as 'resolved/withdrawn/refused' is largely due to an administrative anomaly. The Public Realm service (R&E department) had been incorrectly logging service requests as complaints and then showing them as 'resolved' on the system when it was actually a service request that had been dealt with. Since 2015/16, Public Realm no longer record service requests in this way on the system, although genuine complaints are properly recorded on the iCasework system.

Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes – Departmental Overview 2015/16

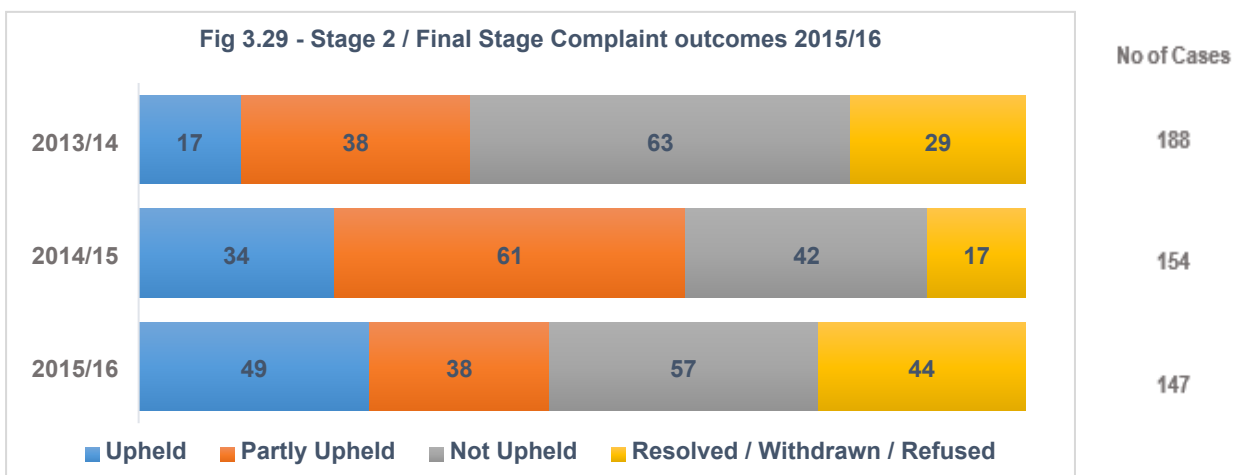
- 3.25 Outcomes of first stage complaints managed within service areas and departments are shown in the chart below. Again, the significant proportion of cases upheld or partly held by departments reflect a more open and transparent attitude to admitting to errors and mistakes on our part.



- 3.26 The R&E Department was able to resolve a large number of environmental services complaints (waste collection, recycling and street cleanliness) satisfactorily at the first stage.
- 3.27 BHP had the highest volume of stage 1 complaints determined as upheld and partly upheld across the Council (51% of 420 BHP stage 1 outcomes).

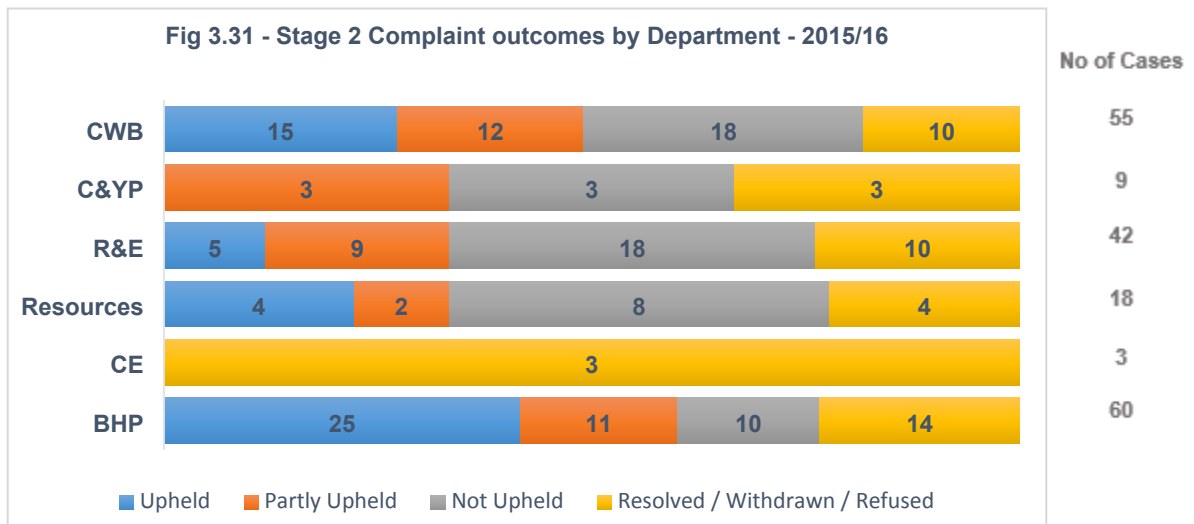
Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes – 3 Year Comparison

- 3.28 There has been a significant increase in the number of cases upheld, and at the other end of the spectrum, significant increases in the number of cases that were resolved/withdraw/refused. The increase is mainly due to a rise in BHP complaints and the subsequent increase in BHP cases upheld. There may also be some correlation to outcomes at the first stage of the complaint over the past three years. The number of fully upheld stage 1 cases has decreased whilst the number of fully upheld cases has increased at the second stage.
- 3.29 The increased number of stage 2 cases resolved/withdrawn/refused reflects a more stringent approach taken by the Complaints Service team in assessing the merits of request for final stage investigations.



Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes - Departmental Overview 2015/16

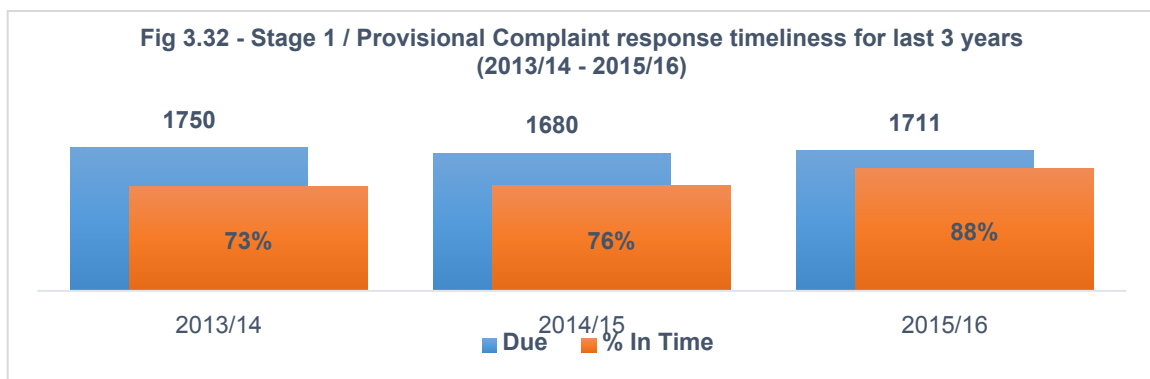
- 3.30 CWB department had 27% of stage 2 investigations upheld in 2015/16. This was largely to do with complaints against Housing and the Clients Affairs team, with the latter attributing to a high volume of upheld decisions.
- 3.31 BHP cases accounted for 32% of all stage 2 cases.



Timeliness of responses

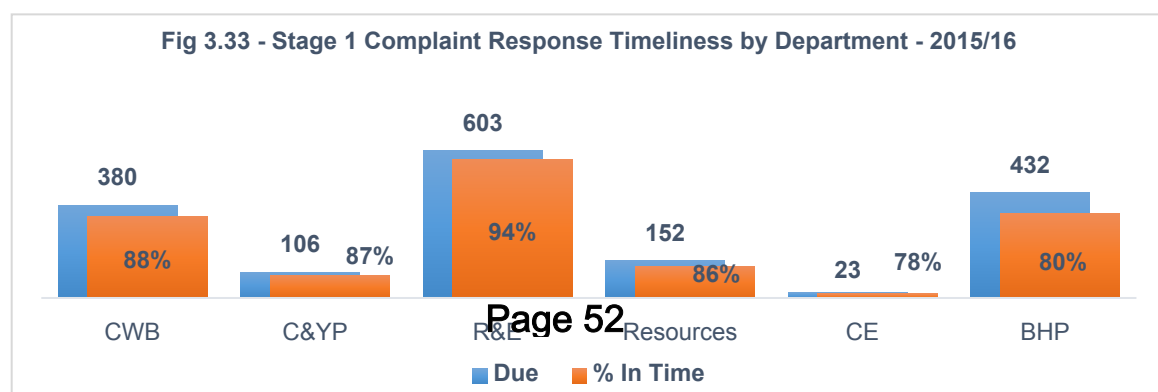
Timeliness of Stage 1 Cases – 3 Year Comparison

3.32 The number of stage 1 cases closed over the last 3 years has broadly remained the same. On a positive note there has been a marked improvement in the timeliness of responses across the Council, from 73% completed on time in 2013/14 to 88% on time in 2015/16. It is important that we continue to ensure that the quality of our responses are good as well as striving towards achieving our Council target of all complaints being responded to in time (100% target).



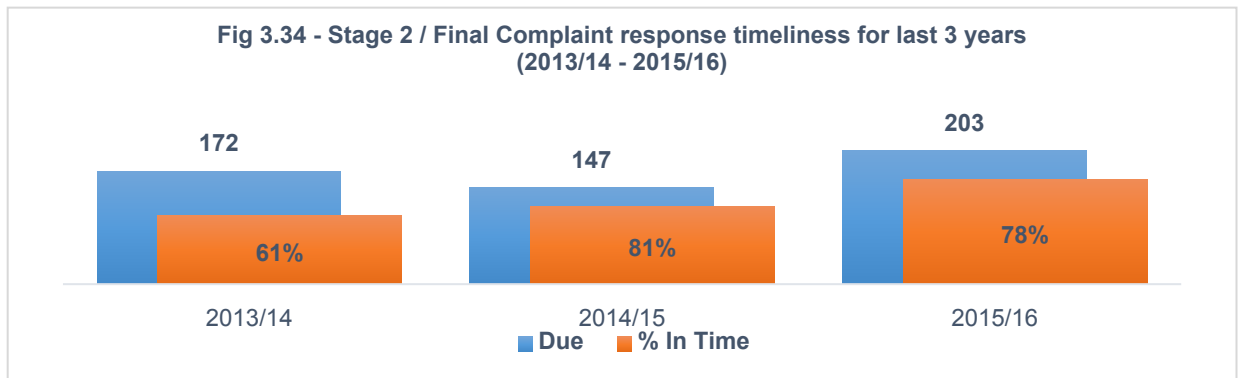
Timeliness of Stage 1 Cases – Departmental Overview 2015/16

3.33 In 2015/16 the Council's performance on timeliness of stage 1 responses peaked at 88%. Regeneration & Environment and Community Wellbeing showed really strong performance in this regards. There has also been a significant improvement in this area in BHP.



Timeliness of Stage 2 Cases – 3 Year Comparison

- 3.34 All Stage 2 cases are managed by the Corporate Complaints Service Team and therefore only a 3-year comparison has been provided as departmental analysis of timeliness would not be relevant here. The volume of new stage 2 cases received and closed has steadily been increasing over the last 3 years and in spite of this there has also been a notable improvement in timelessness of stage 2 responses; i.e. from 61% of cases completed on time in 2013/14 to 78% of cases completed on time in 2015/16.



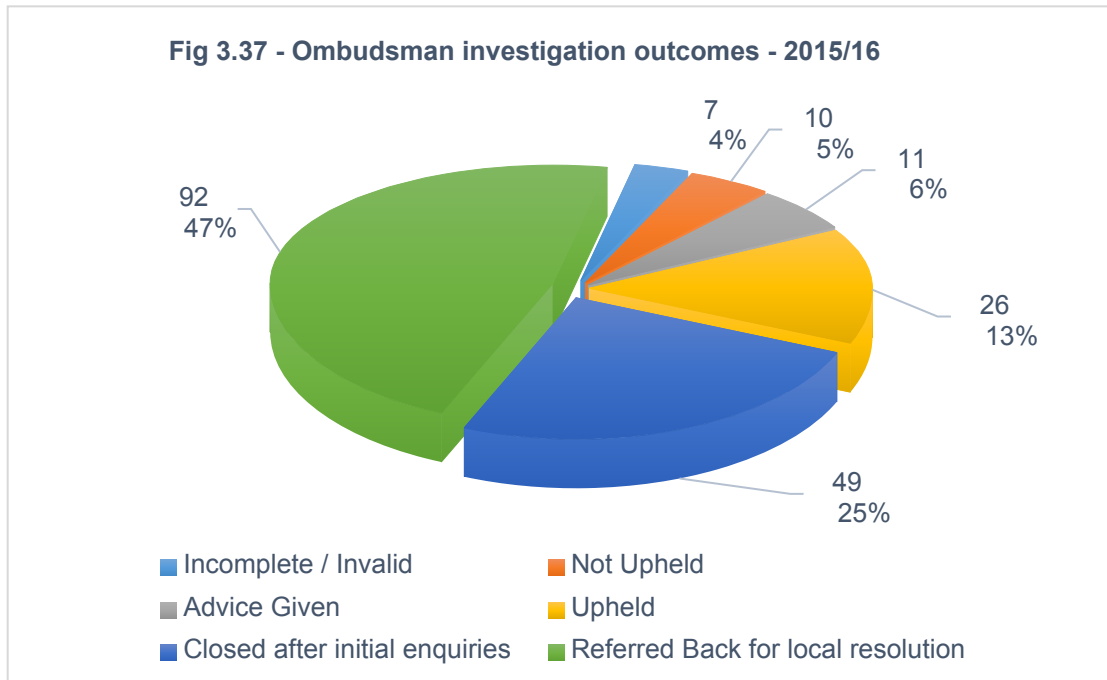
Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

Volume of Ombudsman Cases – Referrals & Accepted Cases

- 3.35 The number of cases referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) against Brent Council has increased from 169 referrals in 2014/15 to 195 referrals. And although the number of referrals has increased, the number of new cases accepted by the LGO has dropped from 74 new accepted cases in 2013/14 to 63 new accepted cases in 2015/16 (a reduction of 15%).
- 3.36 The Housing Ombudsman (HO) deals with housing management/BHP issues and takes a mediation type approach to resolving referrals. There is a sizeable backlog of HO investigations of more than a year. The HO has been in contact with the Council regarding a small number of complaints but has not produced any recent performance reports.

Outcome of Ombudsman Cases (LGO)

3.37 The chart below summarises the outcomes of the Ombudsman cases against the Council in 2015/16:



3.38 Out of the 195 referrals to the LGO, 92 cases (47%) were referred back to the Council to investigate through the complaints process. This normally happens when the customer has contacted the LGO before they had exhausted the Council’s complaints process. Furthermore the LGO closed their investigation after initial enquiries on 49 referrals, which suggests they were satisfied with the Council’s handling of the complaint and found no need to investigate further. LGO advice was also given on 11 cases.

3.39 The LGO investigated and made decisions on 36 cases out of the 195 referrals considered (18% of referrals). Ten cases were not upheld by the Ombudsman meaning that the LGO either agreed with the Council’s decision or did not find any injustice.

3.40 The LGO ‘upheld’ 26 cases of the 195 original referrals (13% of all referrals). However is should be noted that the LGO takes a different approach to classifying their cases and decisions as shown below:

LGO Classifications	No of Cases	%
The Council upheld the complaint and the LGO decision confirmed this	2	8%
The Council upheld the complaint. The LGO upheld the complaint because the Council’s complaint recommendations were not implemented	3	12%
The Council upheld the complaint and the LGO decision confirmed this. The LGO recommended an enhanced remedy	2	8%

LGO Classifications	No of Cases	%
The Council did NOT uphold the complaint but the LGO did	4	15%
The Council did NOT uphold the complaint and the LGO decision confirmed this	4	15%
The Council did NOT uphold the complaint and the LGO decision confirmed this. The LGO recommended a remedy	3	12%
The Council failed to engage with complainant / LGO to remedy the issue	3	12%
The LGO decided to investigate without giving the Council the opportunity to do so	5	18%
Total	26	

3.41 Interestingly in 14 out of the 26 cases investigated, the LGO did not challenge the Council's decision at stage 2. There were also 5 other cases which the LGO investigated without giving the Council the opportunity to do so first.

Learning Points from LGO Cases

3.42 There were 3 cases upheld by the Ombudsman where service areas had been advised to engage with the complainant in the first instance to resolve the complaint to avoid further escalations. However our failure to follow this advice resulted in the LGO taking on the cases rather than the cases going through our complaints process.

- The first case was in Passenger Transport where a passenger suffered a seizure whilst being transported by the Council. There was no process in place to manage this and as a result the customer suffered. Following on from the LGO's findings, the Council has since put measures in place to deal with a similar situation in the future.
- The other two cases were in Housing and the service area was advised to carry out reviews of outcomes. By the LGO stepping in on behalf of the complainant, further corrective actions were recommended to improve communications and several changes were made to processes and procedures to ensure similar incidents did not occur.

Compensation

3.43 The number of cases awarded compensation and the total amount of compensation awarded has been increasing over the past three years. There may be several reasons why this is happening. First of all it is important to recognise that the Council has undergone significant changes in our workforce and how we operate in very turbulent times for local government. There has still been a commitment to delivering excellent customer services during these times however mistakes and errors have been made. Culturally there is greater willingness and openness to recognise our failings and weaknesses as an organisation and to remedy this.

Complaint Stage	2013/14 Compensation		2014/15 Compensation		2015/16 Compensation	
	Cases	£	Cases	£	Cases	£
Stage 1 / Provisional	31	£12,747	61	£38,726	90	£40,363
Stage 2 / Final	46	£14,394	67	£39,274	66	£28,592
LGO	2	£375	4	£600	12	£5,560
Total	79	£27,516	132	£79,050	168	£74,515
Average Compensation paid	£348		£599		£443	

3.44 In 2015/16, BHP accounted for 55% of compensation cases (92 out of 168 cases) and 41% of all compensation paid (£30,551 out of £74,515).

Compliments

3.45 There were 23 compliments captured on the iCasework database for the period 2015/16. The majority of the feedback was in relation to services provided by Culture and teams within BHP. It is probably true to say that there has been an under-recording of compliments or positive feedback on the iCasework system. It is most likely that positive feedback has been sent directly to officers or teams and not recorded on the system. From now on, staff will be reminded to do so and compliments will be included in our complaints performance reporting. Below are a few anonymised examples of compliments received in 2015/16.

Department / Service	Compliment
R & E / Cemeteries	<i>Thank you so much for meeting us and finding the gravestone, x. I'm very impressed that someone had taken the trouble to place it back on the correct grave and with the service you all provide there at Brent.</i>
CWB / Accommodation Services	<i>Brent Council, this is NOT a complaint. I just want to say that i have looked at your latest locata freesheet today (edition 431) and i just had to commend and applaud the amount of properties advertised. I am very impressed and happy because so many people will be getting the home they so desperately need. Brent Council....you have done a very good job and well done! Trust me you will make over 100 people/families ecstatic in just one week. Keep up the good work and well done again!!</i>
CWB / Culture	<i>I've just visited the library at Willesden and I must say, it is very impressive. It is a nice and pleasant place to study. I will be back.</i>

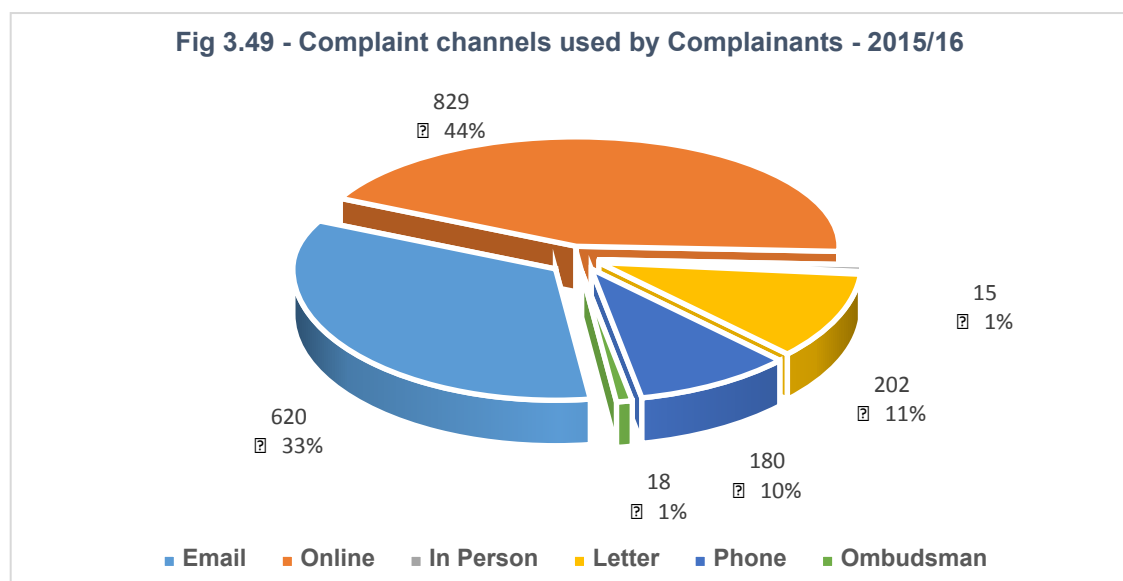
Department / Service	Compliment
BHP / Customer Response Team	<i>Dear Sir/Madam, I would like to report that the leak was fixed by a plumber from Wates and he told me that the cause of the leak was the washing machine as I expected. I would like to take this opportunity to thank x, x and x from BHP for their swift action in solving the leak problem. And also a big thank you to my good Cllr. X and Mr. x.</i>
BHP / Property Services	<i>Hi. Just wanted to say a big thank you to x. She was the only person that was able to help me! Had a leak in my house since Saturday afternoon and no one done anything. Once again thank you for your help x, we need more people like you!</i>

Improving Complaint Performance

- 3.46 This report and appendices include several examples of learning points from corporate, statutory and ombudsman complaints. Some of the key themes for improvement were procedures, joined up services, communication and customer care. Ultimately we need to keep working on embedding the lessons learned and service improvements within the organisation to prevent mistakes from being repeated and improving the customer experience. This is not an easy challenge but there is strong leadership and commitment across the organisation to improve our performance.
- 3.47 A number of measures have been put in place over the past 12 months to raise our performance across the Council and this is having a positive impact on current performance. These measures include:
- Regular weekly monitoring of performance by Chief Executive, CMT and managers
 - Monthly monitoring of corrective actions identified from complaints
 - Closer working between corporate complaints teams and service area managers to review the complaints and introduce service improvements.
 - Support and advice to BHP to improve complaints performance.
 - Improved use of the iCasework system to monitor and analyse complaints performance.
- 3.48 BHP's performance on complaints has been an area of particular concern and special focus for improving performance. The main concerns regarding performance were that:
- BHP related complaints accounted for the highest percentage of cases upheld or partly upheld at both stages of the complaints process.
 - BHP also accounted for the highest amount of compensation paid.
- 3.49 Alongside the wider review of BHP performance, a number of other measures have been put in place to address specific concerns about complaint performance. These are outlined in Appendix C.

Complaint Channels

- 3.50 In general, complainants are using electronic channels (email and online) to lodge complaints and are moving away from the use of letter and telephone.



4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Instead, the details provided on compensation payments reflect the monetary impact of when we do not get things right first time as an organisation and the need to improve the customer experience and minimise the financial penalties incurred by the Council.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Complaints concerning the Adult Social Care and Children and Young People Department come under separate statutory complaint procedures. It is a legal requirement to produce annual reports for these areas and these are include appendices A and B with reference to the statutory frameworks for management these statutory complaints

6.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 6.1 None

7.0 Diversity Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 A report on equality and diversity related complaints received by Brent Council was presented to the Equalities Committee in January 2016. The reported covered both corporate and statutory complaints for April to September 2015. The report provided analysis of voluntarily disclosed diversity data from complainants as well as any potential diversity related complaint matters. Based on the findings there was no evidence of discriminatory practices or trends.

8.0 Background Papers

Appendix A – ASC Complaints Annual Report 2015/16

Appendix B – CYP Complaints Annual Report 2015/16

Appendix C – BHP Complaints Annual Report 2015/16

Contact Officer

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DIRECTOR, PERFORMANCE, POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS

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Annual Complaints Report 2015 – 2016
Appendix A – Adult Social Care Complaints

Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee – 08 November 2016

Summary

1. This report provides an overview of complaints made about Adult Social Care (ASC) during 2015 – 2016 as required under The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, the Health and Social Care (Community Health & Standards Act 2003 and the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006

Statutory Complaints Process

2. The Department of Health defines a complaint as, “an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a council’s adult social care provision which requires a response”
3. Anyone who has received a service; is currently receiving a service or is seeking a service from us can make a complaint. This includes anyone affected by decisions we make about social care, including a service provided by an external provider acting on behalf of the Council. In such a case they can complain directly to the provider or to us. External providers are required to have their own complaints procedures and must comply with them. They are also required to share this information on complaints and outcomes with the Council.
4. There is only one stage in this process. All complaints made to the Council are logged and acknowledged. The Council will try to resolve the complaint as soon as possible, and no later than within 20 working days. If delays are expected, the complainant is consulted and informed appropriately. All responses, whether or not the timescale has been agreed with the complainant, must be made within six months of receiving the complaint. In exceptional circumstances, an investigation may take longer and this will be discussed with the complainant.
5. All complaints are signed off by the Head of Service and complainants are given the opportunity to have their complaint reviewed by the Director of Adult Social Care. In some cases, some complaints may need to be passed on to the Safeguarding Leads as appropriate, where the complaints process may be suspended, in order to allow the safeguarding process to be completed. In cases where the complaint is across several organisations, one organisation will act as the lead and co-ordinate a joint response to the complainant. The final complaint response must set out the Council’s standard paragraph advising their right to approach the LGO should the complainant remain dissatisfied.

Headlines

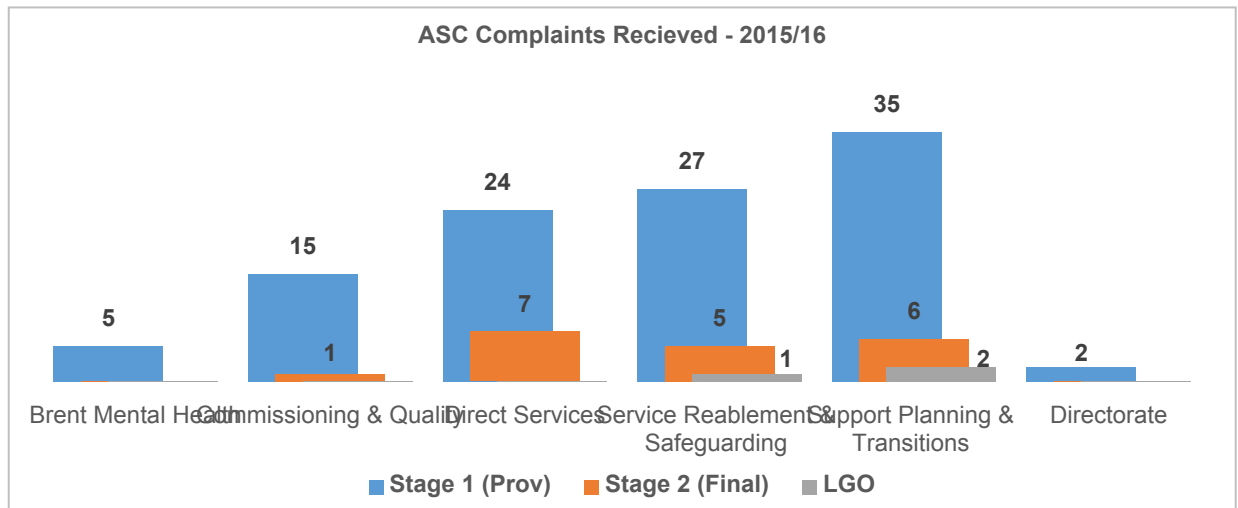
6. The main headlines from ASC complaints performance are:
 - 108 stage 1 complaints received in 2015/16 (8% reduction from the previous year).
 - Highest volume service areas for stage 1 complaints - Support Planning & Transitions (32%), Reablement & Safeguarding (25%) and Direct Services (22%)
 - 65% of stage 1 cases were upheld or partly upheld
 - 78% of stage 1 complaints were responded on time, significantly improved performance from previous years
 - £7,759 paid in compensation.

ASC Service Users

7. There are approximately 3,000 service users in ASC and approximately 3.5% of these customers or someone acting on their behalf raised a complaint about a service that they received in 2015-16.

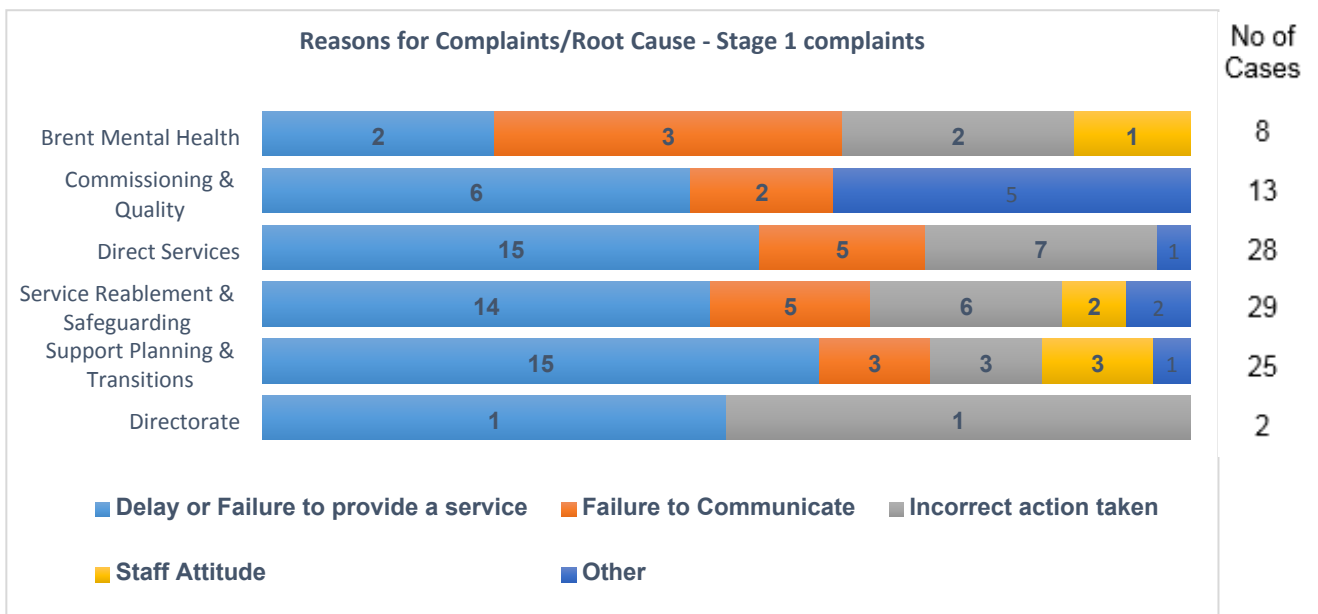
Complaints Received

8. ASC received 74 Statutory Complaints and 34 Corporate Complaints a total of 108 complaints in this year. This is a reduction of 8% (118) on complaints received in the preceding year 2014-15.
 - Support Planning and Transitions team: received 32% of the complaints made to ASC. This team deal with the more complex support cases and annual reviews and have to manage the realistic expectations of the families and service users. The complaints received by the team mainly consist of disagreements with the care package the service user has been assessed to receive. Also disagreement that the service user is able to reside at home rather than being placed in a care home at the request of families.
 - Home Care Providers: ASC have approximately 1,700 care packages with Home Care providers, complaints received about homecare packages account for 1%. The majority of concerns received are reported direct to the home care provider and resolved.
 - Client Affairs Team: accounted for 22% of complaints for ASC. The complaints centred on Appointee/Deputyship, Billing and Financial Assessments.
9. The chart below shows the number of complaints received at Stage 1/Provisional, Stage 2 /Final and Ombudsman for 2015/16.



10. The Council reviewed 19 complaints following dissatisfaction with the Provisional Response. This is an escalation rate of 17%. The Complaint Service team is working with Adult Social Care to improve the quality of investigation and provisional responses.

11. Nature / Reasons for Complaints



12. Complaints about delay or failure to provide a service accounted for half of the complaints received. Failure to communicate and incorrect action were 17% and 18% respectively. Staff attitude accounted for 6%

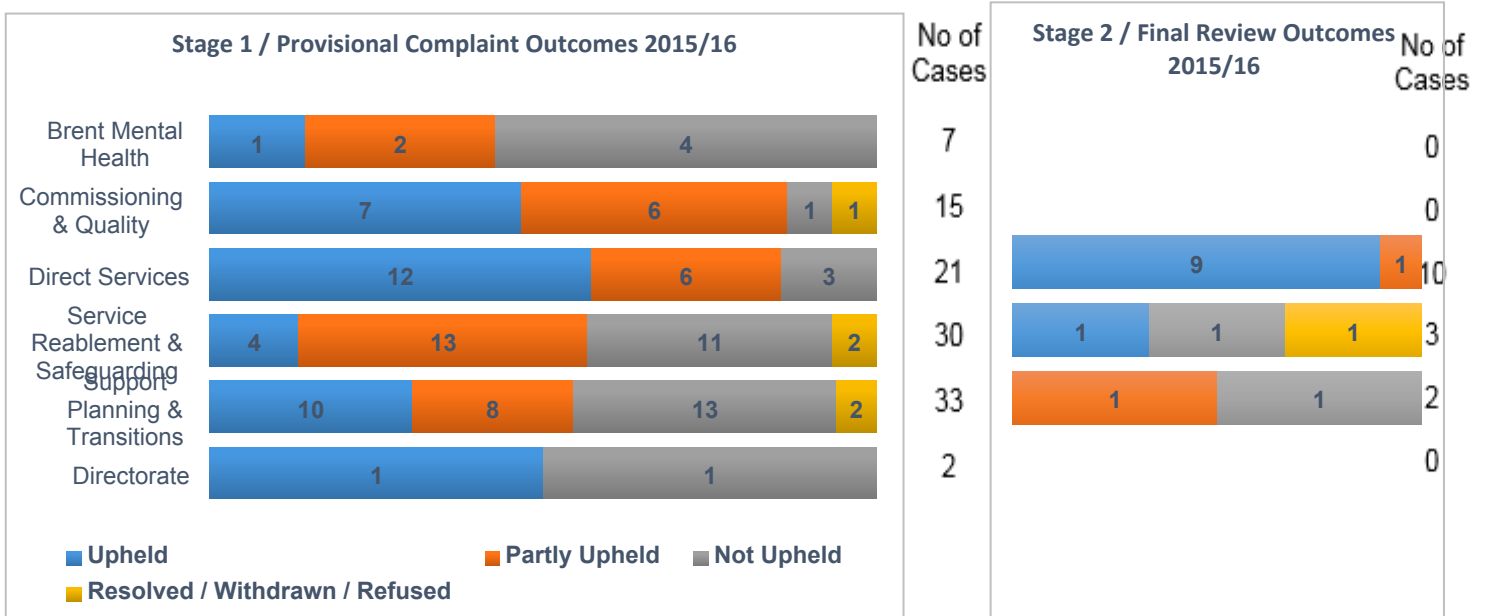
13. It should be noted that complaints about staff attitude usually arise when social workers and service users have not been in agreement about actions taken or a decision that has been made. Complaints of this nature are not usually upheld and service users may then feel that the Council did not meet their expectations.

14. Other examples of the types of issues that lead to complaints are listed below:-

- Delay/failure to provide a service – concerns raised about delays with care needs assessment.
- Poor communication - a number of complaints were received regarding telephone calls not being answered and failure to respond to messages.
- Incorrect action taken – when advising a client of their financial assessment the team had backdated the assessment to the incorrect date.

Complaint Outcomes

15. The chart below shows the outcome of complaints at stage 1 and final review.



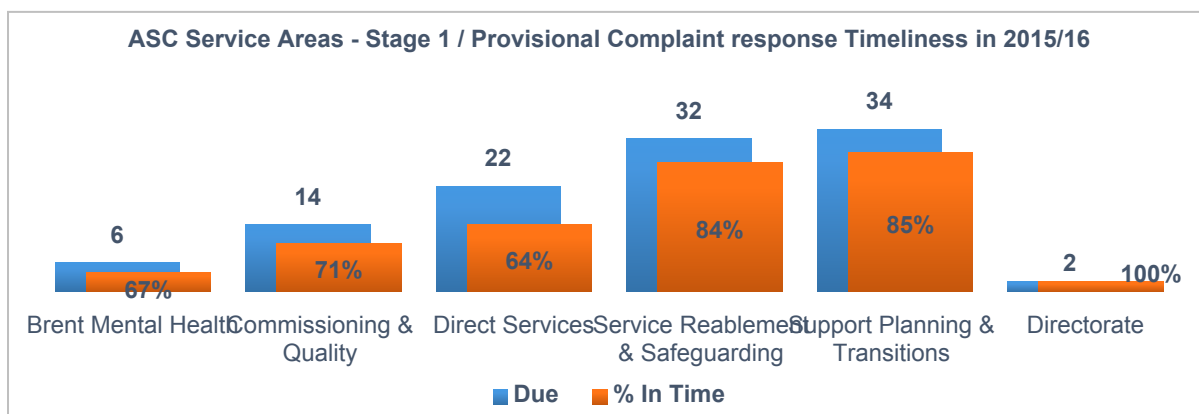
16. Complaints at the provisional/stage 1 shows that some fault by the Council (upheld or partly held) was found in 65% of cases. This shows an openness and transparency within ASC to acknowledge faults and resolve the concerns of the service user.

17. Apart from the Client Affairs Team, the remainder of ASC services only had 2 complaints in the year overturned at Final Review, which compares well with the rest of the Council.

18. Client Affairs Team had 21 complaints closed during the year of which fault was found in 86% of cases. Just under 50% of the complaints were reviewed at the final stage, as the complainants were dissatisfied with the responses they received in the Provisional Response. In every case considered at the final response/stage 2 level, the Council was found to be at fault and the complaint was upheld. Clearly there had been some problems with the quality of the complaints investigation of the first stage and the Complaint Service team has been working with ASC management team to improve this situation. Improvement began to show in the final quarter of 2015/16 as a result of this intervention.

Timeliness of Responses

19. The chart below shows stage 1 complaint response times across the various ASC service areas in 2015/16:



20. ASC responded to 78% of all complaints within timescales, this was an improvement of 21% on the preceding year and there is continued focus within the department to strive for the 100% Council target.

Compensation

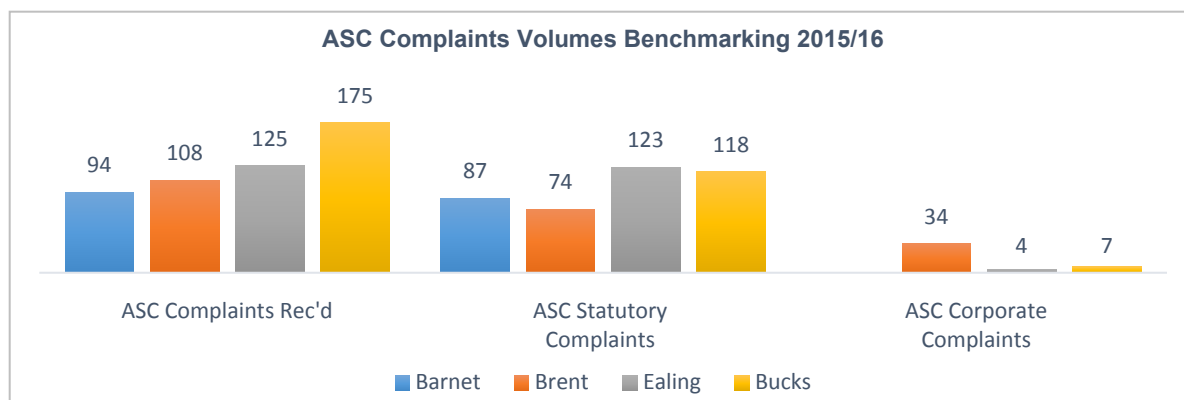
21. ASC paid out £7,759 in compensation in 2015/16 of which one case received compensation at stage 1. Four cases were paid compensation at final review, three cases were from the Client Affairs Team and one case from Support Planning. The LGO also awarded compensation in two cases. This suggests that consideration of remedies including compensation need to be considered at the earliest stage.

Local Government Ombudsman Decisions in 2015/16

22. The Local Government Ombudsman received 21 referrals for ASC throughout the year. Five referrals were closed after initial enquiries, 13 were referred back to the Council's own complaint procedure and 3 cases were upheld as follows:
- Case 1: the Council had failed to assess the family's needs appropriately and in a timely manner. The Council agreed to carry out new assessment and pay compensation
 - Case 2: the Council had failed to assess a client's needs properly or adequately or address the carer's needs. The Council agreed to apologise, pay compensation and investigate ways to engage with the service user
 - Case 3: the Council failed to arrange sufficient provision in the care plan. The Council agreed to implement a 15 minute increase in the care package and pay compensation

Benchmarking

23. Brent belongs to the North West London Social Care Complaint managers group. The Council has benchmarked complaints received against our central and west London neighbours and our performance compares favourably.



Customer Feedback and Engagement

24. The majority of customer contact with the Complaint Service team is reactive in that we respond to direct contact from customers and their representatives when they have a problem with a service. We have attended some providers and community organisations meeting to introduce ourselves and provide advice on the complaint processes. Through our initial contact we have managed to resolve a number of complaints at the point of contact e.g. finding early resolutions to invoicing/billing queries that could have turned into more formal complaints.

Compliments

25. Customers and their representatives are encouraged to tell the Council if they are happy with their care or to highlight good service. People can send feedback to the Complaint Service team or ASC directly. In 2015/16 the Complaint Service Team received 11 compliments about Adult Social Care an increase on the previous year. Two examples follow:-

- ***From a family of a service user who passed away*** “we would all as a family like to thank you & the department for all the help & support that we received from yourselves. Words cannot express how grateful we are.”
- ***From a relative*** “I can only repeat what I have said before. I shall be grateful to you for your very professional and dedicated attention and the enormous amount of help and assistance that you have given to him to attempt to ensure that he receives the support he needs”

Learning From Complaints

26. Learning from complaints provides opportunities for services to be improved and shaped by customer experience. ASC managers are encouraged not only to respond to complaints fully but to identify learning points that can help improve services. Here are some examples of how customer feedback changed and improved service delivery:

Customer Feedback - 'You Said'	Service Area Changes - 'We Did'
You told us that the invoice charges were wrong and had not agreed to the increased charges. You have not received a reply to your telephone calls	We found that we had backdated the increase in charges without sufficient notification. We agreed to remove these charges. We have reviewed the way we have dealt with telephone calls and issued reminders to staff on answering the telephone
You have told us that our invoices concerning homecare charges do not reflect your periods in hospital	We agreed that our information concerning absences and cancelations of homecare packages do not automatically update the invoices. We agreed to review how we capture this information and update the invoices we provide for Homecare services
That the exclusion of a service user with challenging behaviour from the Day Centre had not been handled correctly and that there was no appeal process in place	Following consultation with the family's involved we have put in place a Challenging Behaviour Protocol and Termination of Placement Protocol. All staff have been trained on communicating recording and implementation of plans. We have also implemented a Procedure for an appeals panel to hear such exclusion appeals

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Annual Complaints Report 2015 – 2016
Appendix B – Children & Young People Complaints

Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee – 08 November 2016

Summary

1. This report provides an overview of complaints activity across the Children & Young People department in 2015-16.

Statutory Complaints Process

2. There are two types of complaint process followed by Children & Young People (C&YP). The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 for all complaints relating to actions taken under the Children Act (statutory complaints) and the Council's Complaint Process for all other complaints.
3. *The Children's Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 has three stages:*
 - Stage 1: Local Resolution – responded by the Head of Service for the team complained about
 - Stage 2: Independent Investigation – complaint is investigated by an "Independent Investigator" a person external to the service usually independent of the Council. We have to appoint an "Independent Person" who is independent of the Council
 - Stage 3: Review Panel – the complaint investigation is reviewed by a panel of three Independent People appointed by the Council
4. *Council's Corporate Complaints*
 - Stage 1: responded to by the Head of Service
 - Stage 2: Review / Investigation by the Complaints Service team on behalf of the Chief Executive

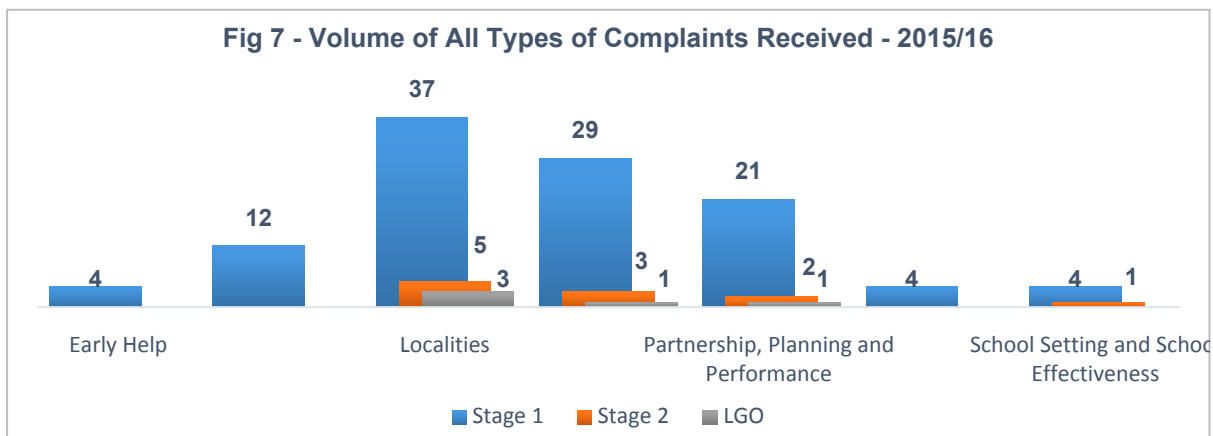
Headlines

5. The main headlines from CYP complaints performance are:
 - Stage 1 complaint numbers decreased for the fourth year in succession
 - 49 statutory stage 1 complaints and 62 corporate complaints
 - Low 10% escalation rate to stage 2
 - Main reasons for complaints received in 2015/16 were poor communication, delays or failure to provide a service, incorrect action taken and staff attitude
 - 87 % of all complaints within time in 2015/16 (compared with 59% on time in 2014/15)
 - £1,250 compensation in 2015 on two cases.

- There are approximately 4,000 service users in CYP and approximately 3% of these customers or someone acting on their behalf raised a complaint about a service that they received in 2015-16.

Complaints Received

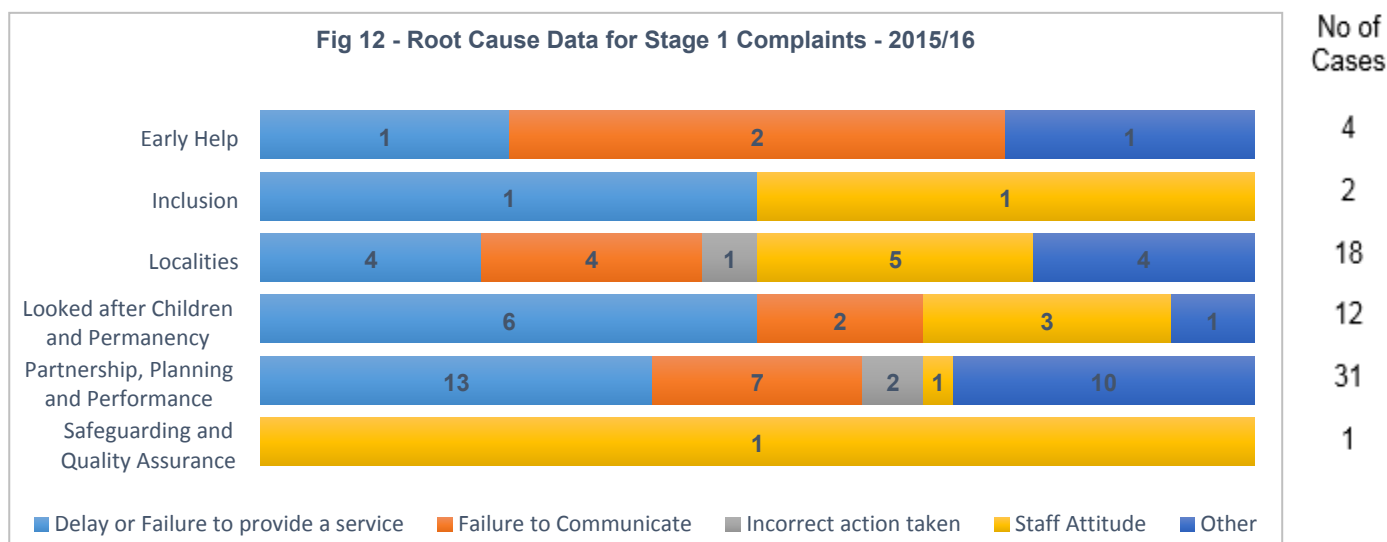
- The chart below shows the number of complaints received at Stage 1, Stage 2 and Local Government Ombudsman for 2015/16.



- A total of 111 stage 1 complaints were received, a decrease of 12 cases or 10% on the previous year. This total consisted of 49 statutory complaints and 62 corporate complaints. The majority of complaints listed under Early Help, inclusion, and Setting and School Effectiveness were corporate complaints with the remaining complaints falling under the Children's statutory complaint procedure.
- Stage 1 complaint numbers reduced for the fourth year in succession indicating the department's ability to resolve issues without the need for a formal complaint investigation
- The Council received eleven stage 2 requests which represents 10% of all cases. This consisted of eight corporate complaints and three statutory complaints
- Under the Children's statutory procedure the complainant has a right for their complaint to be heard by an Independent review panel at stage 3. There were three independent panels during the year (this is not shown in the chart above as the numbers are so low and would be difficult to see to display in the chart above).

Nature / Reasons for Complaints

12. The main reasons for complaints received in 2015/16 were poor communication, delays or failure to provide a service, incorrect action taken and staff attitude. Complaints about delays or a failure to provide the service the customer was expecting accounted for just over a third of the complaints received. Failure to communicate accounted for 21% of complaints and staff attitude for 15%

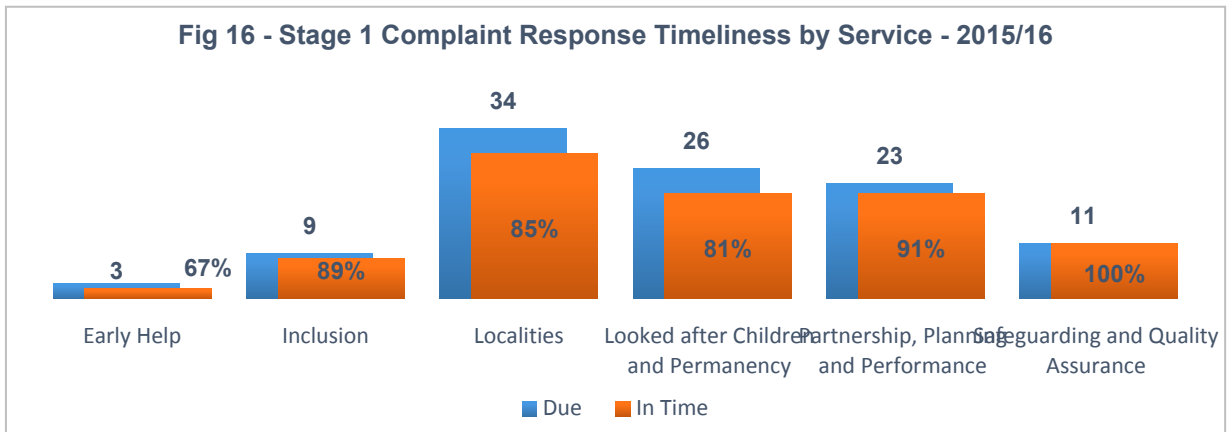


13. Children and Young People's Services intervenes to promote the best interests of children, however families do not always agree with the action that has been taken and as a result may choose to make a complaint about this. Similarly the most common reasons for complaints against staff members are when they disagree with a decision that has been made, or general poor service. There has been an increasing number of complaints received from fathers of children. Most often this has been about fathers who do not live in the family home or are not the primary carer for their children and felt social care services had not communicated with them enough.
14. It is probably true to say that many of the stage 1 complaints reflect the unhappiness of parents and carers about some of the decisions made by staff acting in the best interests of children. And whilst the feelings and views of parents and carers about these decisions are understandable most of these complaints were not upheld.
15. Examples of the types of issues that fall under each of the main reasons for a complaint are listed below:-
- Alleged poor staff attitude - much of the work of Localities staff involves them in taking actions in connection with highly sensitive child protection or child in need issues, which parents or carers may not be in agreement with. These factors undoubtedly have some bearing on the fact that staff attitude is a common theme raised in complaints.
 - Delay in the payment of financial support – a particular complaint concerned a parent of a child with a disability, who complained that her direct payment package had been suspended without notice. The investigation revealed that the payments had been suspended because requested receipts had not been provided and that two warning letters had sent prior to the payments stopping.

- Poor communication - a doctor complained about a social worker who failed to respond to several information requests the doctor had made in connection with a young person who was subject to child protection proceedings.
- Incorrect action taken – a parent complained that a social worker had taken incorrect action in referring them to the Troubled Families programme. The complaint investigation identified that the family situation was such that they should not meet the relevant threshold and should not have been referred. An apology was given, and training delivered to relevant staff to enhance understanding of the programme.

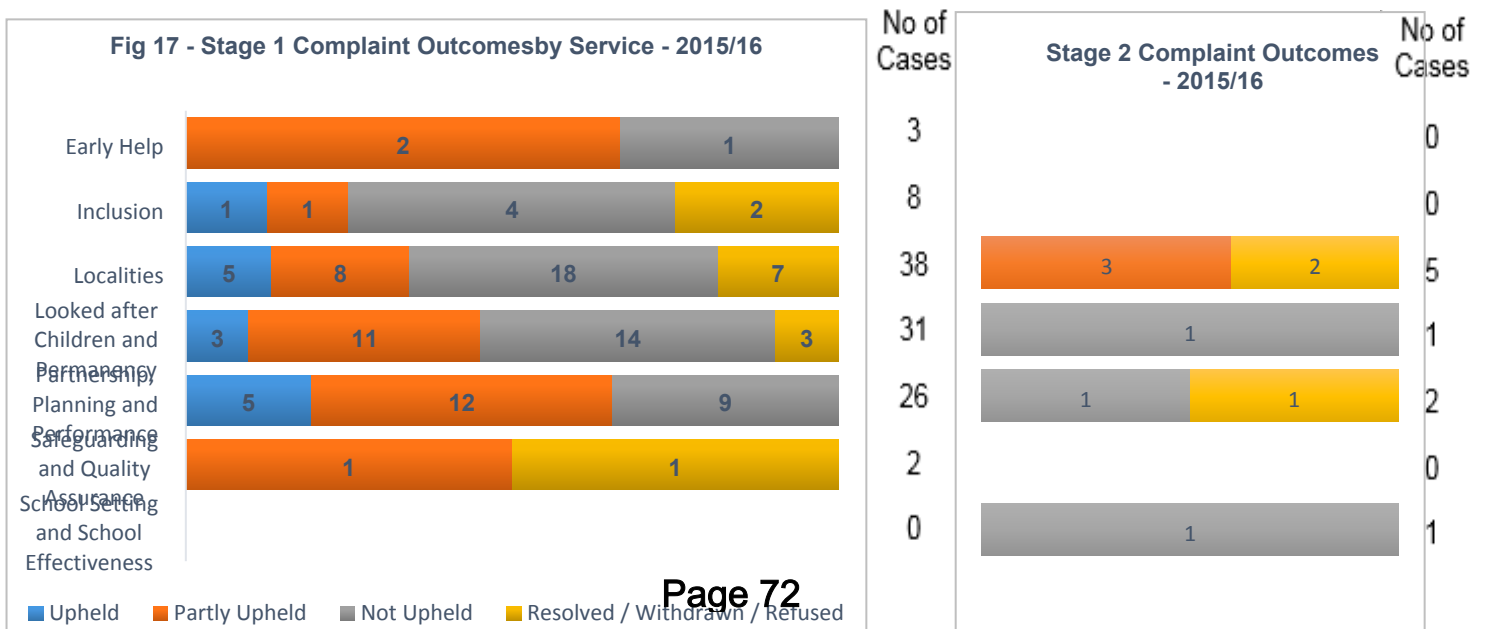
Timeliness of Responses

16. The chart below shows stage 1 complaint response times by service area in 2015/16. C&YP responded to 87% of all complaints within timescales. This was a significant improvement from the previous year’s performance of 59% of complaints responded on time. The department continues to have a strong focus in improving the timeliness and quality of responses.



Complaint Outcomes

17. The chart below shows the outcome of complaints at stage 1 and stage 2



18. 45% of stage 1 complaints were fully or partly upheld demonstrating a willingness by the service areas to admit errors or mistakes and to remedy the situation.
19. The Council carried out three statutory stage 2 investigations during the years and all three resulted in the complaints being partly upheld, one of these escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman
20. There were three Stage 3 independent panels held in 2015/16
 - a) The complaint concerned the way the Council dealt with the process of a child Protection Investigation. The Council had previously admitted fault in the way they had handled the process. The Panel Upheld the complaint and increased the level of compensation
 - b) The complaint concerned the way the Council had dealt with another child protection process with a family. The panel partly upheld the complaint and recommended a meeting with the Operational Director
 - c) The complaint concerned the way that a child and family assessment had been delivered to the family. The Panel did not uphold the complaint and stated the remedy previously offered was suitable

Compensation

21. Children & Young People paid out £1,250 compensation in 2015 on two cases. One complainant was awarded £1,000 by the stage 3 independent panel and £250 was awarded by the Local Government Ombudsman in the second case.

Local Government Ombudsman

22. The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) has received 16 referrals for CYP throughout the year. Three referrals were closed after initial enquiries, five were referred back to the Council's own complaint procedure, two were not upheld and two closed with advice given. Four complaints upheld as follows:
 - Case 1: there was a fault in the way the Council dealt with the process of a Child Protection investigation. The LGO accepted the Council's remedy as agreed at the independent review panel and the LGO upheld the complaint
 - Case 2: The Council delayed paying an adoption allowance but did not misrepresent the amount to be received. The LGO accepted the Council had provided a suitable remedy, but still upheld the complaint
 - Case 3: the complaint concerned respite for a child with disabilities. The LGO accepted that we had mostly remedied the fault but decided to increase the compensation.
 - Case 4: the complaint concerned the handling of the client's personal data. The LGO accepted the Council had provided a suitable remedy, but still upheld the complaint

Learning from Complaints

23. Lessons learned from complaints can help shape and improve our services and the customer experience and there is a commitment in the department for managers and staff to use the learning to improve services.
24. A few examples of how the learning points from complaints helped to improve services are provided below:

Customer Feedback - 'You Said'	Service Area Changes - 'We Did'
You told us about an injury sustained by a member of the family at a short break centre	We agreed to review the effectiveness of supervisory and Information transfer procedures at the centre. Staff received training on Conflict Resolution
You told us about how social care had carried out the child protection assessment of the family	We agreed to review the supervision policy and procedure and Induction arrangements for new staff
You told us about the child in need assessment in regards to requiring assistance for housing	We agreed to review how information and referrals were made between different service teams

Annual Complaints Report 2015 – 2016
Appendix C – BHP Complaints

Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee – 08 November 2016

Summary

1. This report provides an overview of complaints activity across the Brent Housing Partnerships (BHP) service in 2015-16.

Complaint Framework

2. Departments/Service areas are responsible for the local management and resolution of all corporate stage 1 complaints. The corporate Complaints Service team manages final review/stage 2 corporate complaints on behalf of the Chief Executive. In addition, BHP operates a Pre-Stage 1 complaints process which they use to refer some enquiries to their contractors to respond to in the first instance.

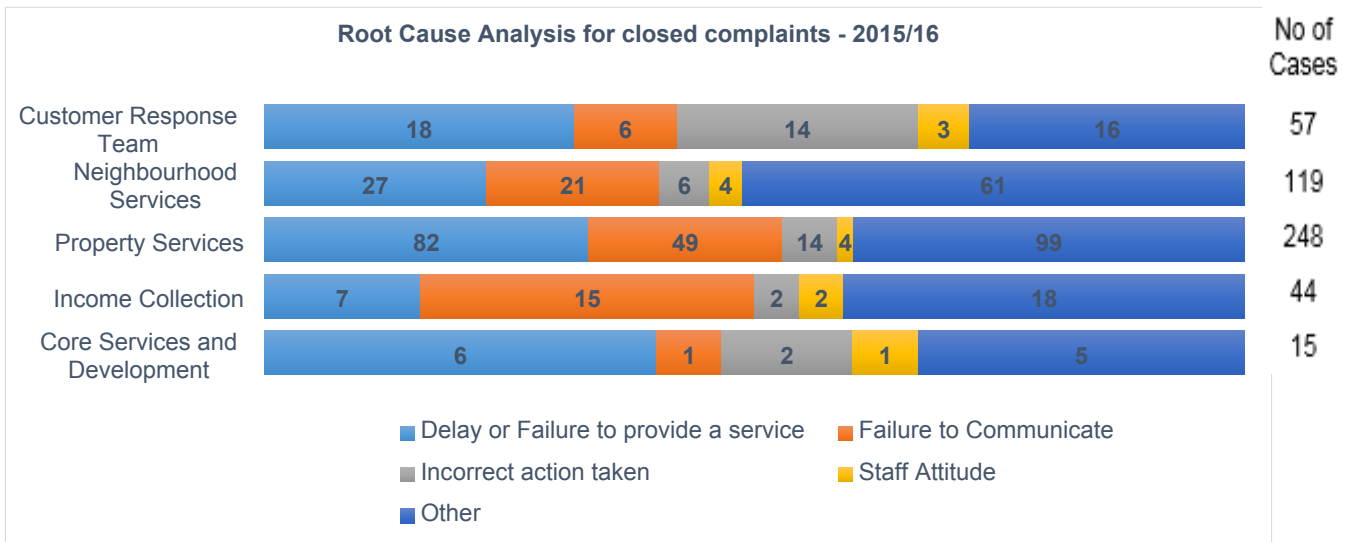
Headlines

3. The main headlines from BHP complaints performance are:
 - BHP received 452 Stage 1 complaints for 2015/16, compared with 377 cases in 2014/15 and 422 cases in 2013/14.
 - BHP also received 57 Stage 2 complaint cases in 2015/16, compared with 52 cases in 2014/15 and 52 cases in 2013/14.
 - BHP's complaint escalation rate of 13% for 2015/16, remains higher than the Council's average of 9% 2015/16.
 - Main reasons for complaints received in 2015/16 were mainly classed as "Other" followed by a failure to provide a service and Failure to communicate.
 - BHP responded to 80% of all first stage complaints within time in 2015/16. This is compared with 56% 2014/15.
 - BHP had 51% of 420 cases Upheld or Partly Upheld of Stage 1 complaints. They had 60% of all Stage 2 complaint investigations upheld / partly upheld.
 - BHP paid out £30,830 compensation in 2015/16 on 74 cases at an average of £416 per case.

Complaints Received

- BHP Property Services, Neighbourhood Services and Customer Services were the areas that received the most complaints. More than half of BHP complaints for 2015/16 were related to Property Services (53% or 239 complaints) and the key themes were delays/poor workmanship with repairs or major works and communication. Neighbourhood Services received 99 complaints (22%) primarily about cleaning of communal areas. 11% of complaints (50 cases) were received in the BHP Customer Services team mainly about inadequate communication. Overall BHP complaints increased by 75 cases (17%) from the previous year. There has been a trend in BHP of increasing stage 1 complaints with higher than average escalation rates to stage 2 and then upheld at the final review stage.
- BHP's 57 escalated cases (31%) were predominately to do with Property Services.

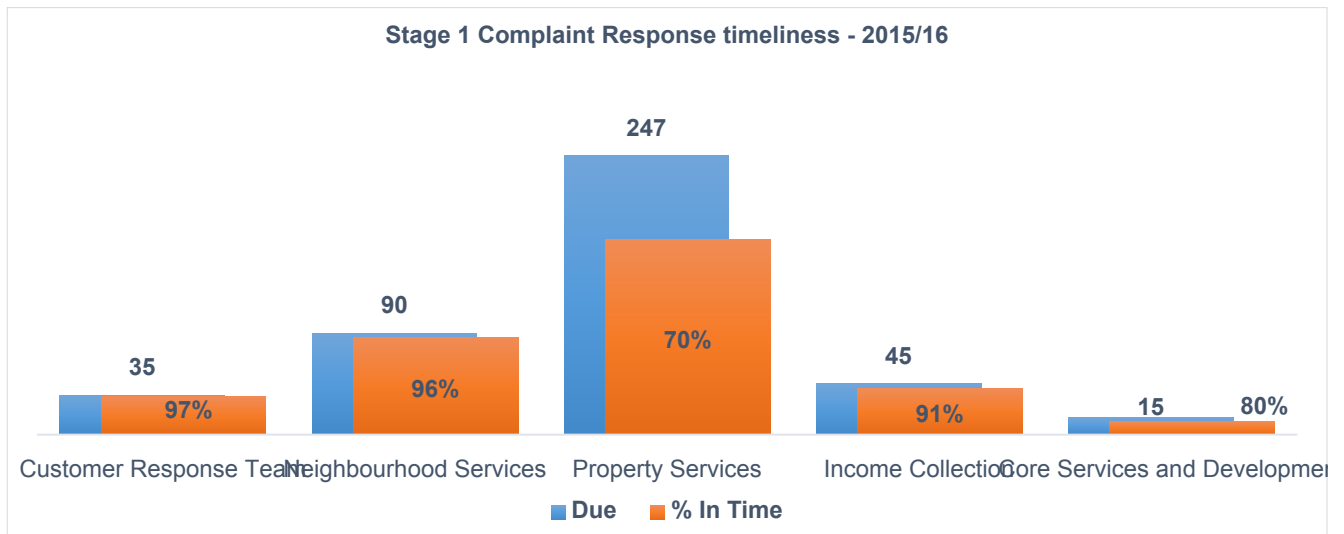
Nature / Reasons for Complaints



6. The main reasons for complaints received in 2015/16 were classed as “other”, delays or failure to provide a service, followed by failure to communicate. Complaints about delays or a failure to provide the service the customer was expecting accounted for approximately a third of the complaints received with 29%. Failure to communicate accounted for 19% of complaints.
7. Examples of the types of issues that fall under each of the main reasons for a complaint are listed below:-
- Alleged poor staff attitude – a particular complaint involved a third party contractor who was sent to carry out repairs on behalf of BHP. The customer was compelled to make the complaint due to poor service and attitude they received from the contractor. The complaint was upheld.
 - Delay in visiting resident – the resident had been trying to contact their housing officer on numerous occasions. When they did finally agree to meet, the resident was required to be present and therefore had to arrange time off work. On the day of the appointment, the housing officer called to cancel at the last minute. The complaint cited poor communication, failure to provide a service and hint of staff attitude. The complaint was upheld.
 - Poor communication - residents came home from holiday to find scaffolding erected to both their neighbours properties on either side. They were posted a poorly worded letter which asked them to sign a party wall agreement. However there was little or no explanation about the work or how long it would take. The residents refused to sign the agreement until such time further details were provided. They went on to complain which was investigated and upheld.
 - Incorrect action taken – resident was refused repairs to their property because they had indicated they were in the process of using the Right to Buy scheme to purchase the residence. However, the customer subsequently withdraw this request, however the flags/indicators that were on the system were not removed and therefore the customer was incorrectly advised that they were not entitled to have repairs carried out by BHP. This complaint was partly upheld.

Timeliness of Responses

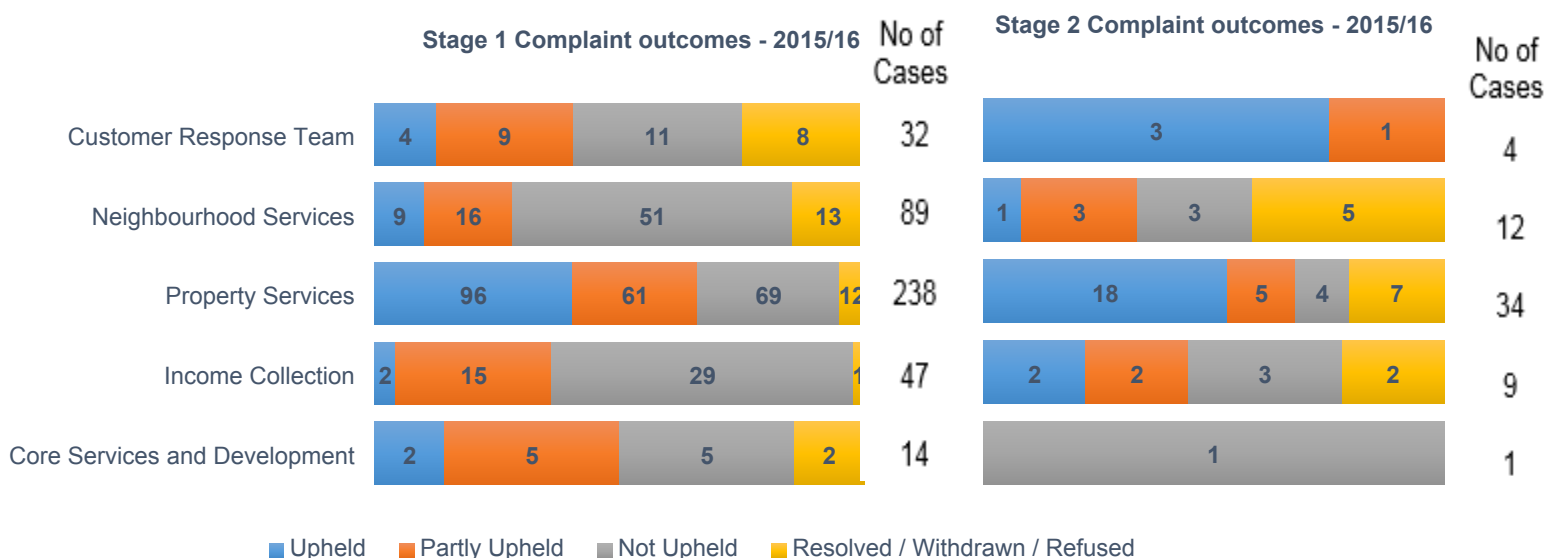
8. BHP's performance in responding to first stage complaints has dramatically improved, especially towards Q4 of 2015/16. It's helped to pick up the overall performance within most services achieving over 90% of first stage complaint responses answered in time.



- Core Services and Development achieved 80% of first stage responses in time, despite volumes being quite low.
- The bulk of complaint responses came from BHP's Property Services with 247 responses, accounting for 57% of all first stage complaints.
- The bulk of cases for Property Services related to repairs. Property Services achieved 70% of complaint responses in time, however part of the reason behind this was down to the service having a backlog of complaints to investigate which affected their ability to carry out investigations in a timely manner.

Complaint Outcomes

9. The chart below shows the outcome of complaints at stage 1 and stage 2



10. The percentage of Upheld first stage complaints of 31%, was higher than any of the areas in the Council that receive comparable volumes of complaints.
- BHP Customer Service's related complaints centred on poor communication and thus resulted in 41% of first stage response being Upheld / Partly upheld.
 - BHP's previous poor performance in dealing with first stage complaints was felt throughout 2015/16 at Stage 2 (which involves reviewing complaints BHP initially dealt with up to a year ago) in terms of increased volumes of escalated complaints. Improvements at the initial stage of complaint handling will therefore take some time to be reflected at the second / final review stage.
 - The majority of decisions related to BHP Property Services (Repairs) complaints in which follow up actions / works orders were not completed or followed through.
 - BHP cases accounted for 32% of all stage 2 cases. Out of the 60 BHP cases investigated at final review, 42% (25 cases) were upheld. When combined with partly upheld decisions, 60% of all BHP stage 2 investigations were upheld in some form

Compensation

11. There has been a significant increase in compensation paid on BHP cases at service specific level. Previously in 2014/15, BHP accounted for 56% of compensation (74 out of 132 cases) and 39% of all compensation paid (£30,830 out of £79,050). BHP paid out an average of £412 compensation per case.

Local Government Ombudsman

12. The Housing Ombudsman (HO) deals with housing management/BHP issues and takes a mediation type approach to resolving referrals. There is a sizeable backlog of HO investigations of more than a year. The HO has been in contact with the Council regarding a small number of complaints but has not produced any recent performance reports.

Learning from Complaints

13. Lessons learned from complaints can help shape and improve our services and the customer experience and there is a commitment in the department for managers and staff to use the learning to improve services.
14. A few examples of how the learning points from complaints helped to improve services are provided below:

Customer Feedback – ‘You Said’	Service Area Changes – ‘We Did’
You told us that following a surveyors inspection our contractors had not returned to complete the works	Working closely with our property services team we are piloting a programme of post inspections on all repair jobs occurring as a result of a complaint. We also carry out follow up calls to customers to test satisfaction with the outcome.
You told us that you found it difficult to contact your housing officer	In order to improve customer access we put in place a system to increase housing officer availability both in person and on the phone
Leaseholders told us that repair issues with roofs were taking too long to resolve	We adapted our Section 20 consultation process to ensure we can be compliant and expeditious in our response. This has seen roof leaks tackled more promptly to the customer’s satisfaction.
Customers expressed dissatisfaction	In order to avoid potential complaints those customers expressing dissatisfaction, when surveyed by BMG, are contacted by the BHP complaints team to see how we can enhance their opinion of the service by seeking to rectify any poor service provision and take this learning back in to the business.

Improving Complaint Performance

15. BHP’s performance on complaints has been an area of particular concern and special focus for improving performance. The main concerns regarding performance were that:
 - BHP related complaints accounted for the highest percentage of cases upheld or partly upheld at both stages of the complaints process.
 - BHP also accounted for the highest amount of compensation paid.

16. Alongside the wider review of BHP performance, a number of other measures have been put in place to address specific concerns about complaint performance. These actions included:
 - BHP reviewing their complaints process which resulted in them forming a dedicated complaints team to act as a central hub for managing complaints.
 - Timeliness of stage 1 responses has improved from 56% on time in 2014/15 to 80% on time in 2015/16.
 - BHP accepted fault in more complaints at the first stage thus leading to an increase in complaints upheld and partly upheld. However, there continued to be a significant rise in the number of complaints escalated to stage 2, prompting questions over the quality of the investigations that were carried out at the first stage, therefore resulting in BHP paying out more compensation and being further monitored.
 - In addition, the Complaints Service Team took part in a BHP led review of their complaints function. The Council were able to provide feedback on areas of concern.

- The Complaints Service Team have started to provide BHP with additional support with systems training, as well as complaints investigation mentoring, in order to improve the quality of first stage complaint responses and improve efficiency. Whilst there were noticeable improvements towards the end of 2016, the Council will continue to work closely with BHP into 2016/17.

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Appendix 1

Resources and Public Realm Committee Draft Forward Plan 2016/17

This committee will cover corporate resources, including customer services, policy, partnerships and performance, community safety, regeneration and environmental services.

Date of Committee	Agenda items	Responsible officers
15 June 2016	Workshop to agree work programme for 2016-17	Peter Gadsdon, Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships
12 July 2016	<p>Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny committee 2016-17 Forward Plan</p> <p>Development Management Policies</p> <p>Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16</p> <p>Strategic overview of the Council's financial position</p> <p>S106/ Community Infrastructure Levy Scrutiny Task group report.</p>	<p>Cllr Kelcher, Chair of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>Peter Gadsdon, Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships.</p> <p>Althea Loderick, Strategic Director of Resources</p> <p>Cllr Farah, Chair of the Scrutiny Task Group</p>
6 September 2016	<p>Brent Road Resurfacing Strategy</p> <p>The Council's Planning Strategy</p> <p>Update on implementation of recommendations from CCTV scrutiny task Group.</p>	<p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p>

	<p>Update on implementation of recommendations from Illegal rubbish dumping task group.</p> <p>Task Group Scope Devolution of Business Rates Task Group</p>	<p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>Cllr Davidson Chair of the Task Group</p>
8 November 2016	<p>Income Generation</p> <p>Update on Community Access Strategy*/Customer Care & Access</p> <p>Devolution of Business Rates Task Group</p> <p>Annual Report on Complaints 2015/16</p>	<p>Althea Loderick, Strategic Director of Resources</p> <p>Althea Loderick, Strategic Director of Resources</p> <p>Cllr Davidson Chair of the Task Group</p> <p>Peter Gadsdon, Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships</p>
10 January 2017	<p>Budget Scrutiny Report</p> <p>Capital programme</p> <p>Brent Council Investment Strategy</p> <p>Brent's High Streets</p>	<p>Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Panel</p> <p>Althea Loderick, Strategic Director of Resources</p> <p>Althea Loderick, Strategic Director of Resources</p> <p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment.</p>
8 March 2017	<p>Unemployment and Work Programme providers*</p>	<p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p>

	<p>Is Brent a “green” Council?/Environmental Sustainability agenda*</p> <p>Prevent</p>	<p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>Peter Gadsdon, Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships</p>
3 May 2017	<p>Annual report of the Safer Brent Partnership</p> <p>Hate Crimes</p> <p>Domestic Violence/Human trafficking</p> <p>Crime and fear of crime locally</p> <p>Stronger Communities - Child Sexual Exploitation and Gangs Task Group.</p>	<p>Chair of Safer Brent Partnership</p> <p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>Amar Dave, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>Cllr Sharma Tatler Chair of the Task Group</p>

*Item carried forward from previous Scrutiny Forward Plan

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