 <b>Brent</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cabinet</b> 23 October 2017</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Report from the Director of Performance, Policy &amp; Partnerships</b></p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards affected: ALL</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Complaints Annual Report 2016 – 2017</b></p>	

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report sets out complaints performance in Brent Council and Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) for the period April 2016 to March 2017. High level data for the previous 2 years has been included where available for the purpose of comparison over a 3-year period.
- 1.2 Complaints concerning the Adult Social Care and Children and Young People departments come under separate statutory complaint procedures and separate analysis reports have been provided in **Appendices A and B** respectively. **Appendix C** summarises departmental performance across the Council in 2016/17. BHP service-level analysis in 2016/17 is summarised in **Appendix D**.
- 1.3 Complaints performance for the Council and for BHP have been analysed and reported across four broad aspects - complaints received, complaint types, outcomes and timeliness. This report also includes improvements and lessons learned from complaints.
- 1.4 The key points from the Council and BHP's performance are as follows:
  - Brent Council:
    - The number of new complaints received is decreasing however more cases are being escalated to the second stage of the complaints process.
    - Service delay/failure was the most common cause for complaint in 2016/17, as in previous years.
    - The Council upheld/partly upheld a smaller proportion of cases at the final review stage in 2016/17 than in previous years.

- As average compensation payments have decreased at the first stage there has been a corresponding increase in compensation awarded at the Ombudsman stage.
- Timeliness of corporate and statutory complaint responses has improved over the past 3 years.
- BHP
  - The volume of first and second stage complaints has increased significantly.
  - Service delay/failure remains the most common cause for complaint in 2016/17, as in previous years.
  - There is a greater willingness to acknowledge fault and the majority of complaints were upheld/partly upheld at the first stage; fewer cases were upheld at the second stage
  - The number of cases awarded compensation has doubled but the average amount of compensation paid has decreased.

1.5 This report makes a number of recommendations to help reduce complaints and improve the management of complaints. These recommendations are also summarised in Section 2 below for Cabinet approval.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Cabinet is asked to note and consider the Council and BHP's performance in managing and resolving complaints.

2.2 Cabinet is asked to review and agree the eight specific recommendations made in this report and note that the Complaints team will:

### *Root cause of complaints*

- a. Work with service area and departmental management teams to review key service delay/failure hotspots and develop improvement plans.
- b. Develop a tailored training plan on communication and staff behaviours to be implemented in priority service areas across the Council.
- c. Support the new Housing Management Service during the redesign of the repairs process by feeding in the lessons learned from complaints.

### *Decision making and outcomes*

- d. Review LGO referrals and identify any future opportunities for early resolution and minimisation of premature LGO referrals.
- e. Review our internal approach to complaint decisions, corrective actions and compensation in light of LGO outcomes in 2016/17.

*Complaint handling and monitoring*

- f. Continue to improve internal processes and working arrangements with service managers to increase the timeliness of Stage 2 responses.
- g. Work closely with the Housing Management Service management team to establish a new and effective complaints process and implement improved working arrangements to manage Stage 2 complaints
- h. Implement a weekly Corrective Actions Tracker for all departments to monitor the timely completion of agreed remedial actions.

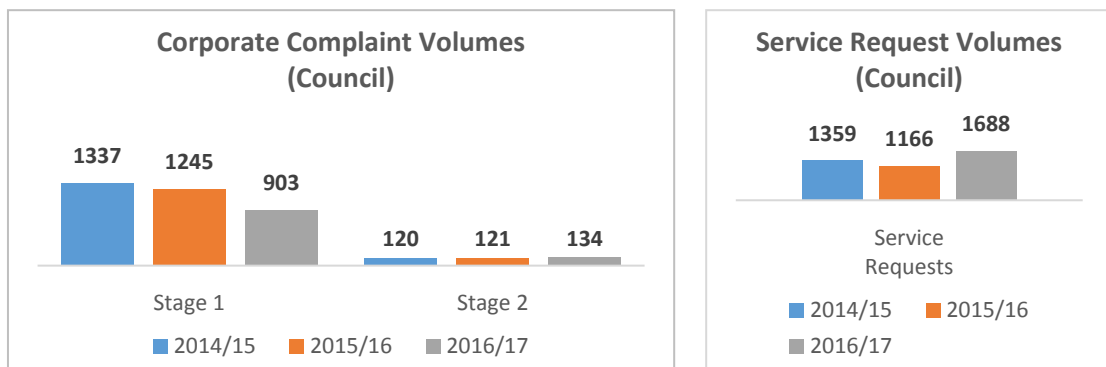
2.3 Cabinet is asked to note that BHP has been reported as a separate organisation for the purposes of this annual report for 2016/17.

### 3.0 Detail

#### ***Council's Complaint Framework***

3.1 The Council operates a 2-stage corporate complaints process, 2-part Adult statutory complaints process and a 3-stage Children's statutory complaints process. The various timescales and decision outcomes are explained in Appendix C.

#### ***Brent Council – Complaints Received***



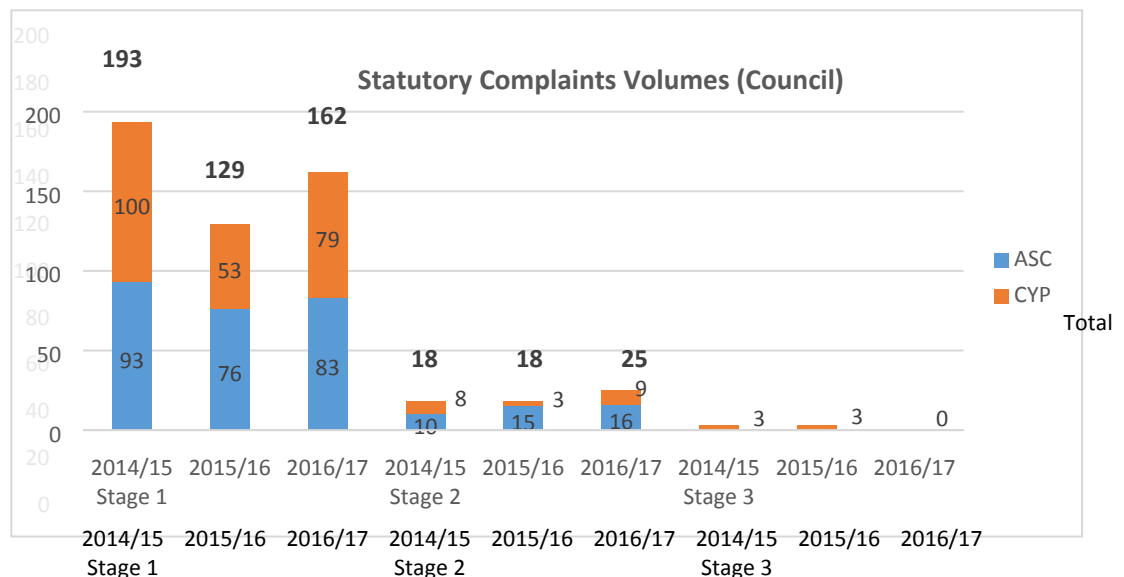
3.2 ***The volume of Stage 1 corporate complaints has fallen by one third over the past 3 years.***

- One of the main reasons identified is that service areas are logging other types of initial customer contact (i.e. pre-complaint queries and follow up requests for services) as service requests, rather than as formal Stage 1 complaints.
- All first stage contact (i.e. Stage 1 complaints and service requests) with the Council has gone down by over 100 cases in the past 3 years.

- The breakdown of the 903 complaints received in 2016/17 by council departments was: 41% - Regeneration & Environment (R&E) department, 28% - Community Wellbeing (CWB) department, 23% - Resources (Res) department, 4% - Children & Young People (CYP) department and 4% - Chief Executive's (CE) department.

3.3 **Although the volume of Stage 1 cases has gone down there has been a 12% increase in the volume of Stage 2 corporate complaints,** and the proportion of cases escalated to Stage 2 has also increased in the past 3 years.

- In 2014/15, 1 in every 11 first stage corporate complaint was escalated to the second stage; this increased to 1 in every 7 corporate complaint being escalated in 2016/17.
- The rise in Stage 2 escalation rates suggests an increased level of unhappiness with the outcome of first stage decisions. This is considered further in the Outcomes section of the report.

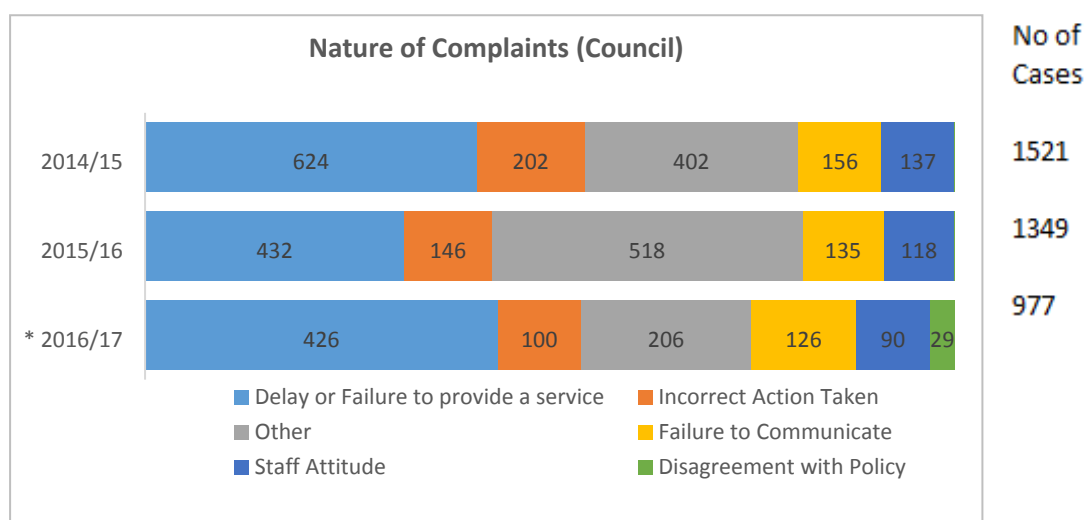


3.4 **Statutory first stage complaints have gone down by 12% and statutory Stage 2 complaints have gone up by 28% over the past 3 years.**

- Escalation rates have almost doubled in the past 3 years, with 1 in every 6 statutory Stage 1 complaints being escalated to the second stage in 2016/17 compared with 1 in every 11 case in 2014/15. As previously suggested with corporate complaints, this may reflect increased dissatisfaction with our statutory Stage 1 decisions.

## Brent Council – Nature of Complaints

- 3.5 The nature or type of complaint is recorded on the iCasework system by officers. The broad categories and sub-classifications were updated part way through 2016 to give us better insight into the root cause of complaints. One of the main changes was that the 'Other' category was removed from the system and the 'Disagreement with Policy' category was added. Additional service-specific sub-classifications have been updated on the system for some areas across the council.



- 3.6 ***'Service delay/failure' remains the most common reason for complaints received*** by the Council, accounting for almost half of all corporate complaints in 2016/17. We upheld/partly upheld almost half of the 426 service delay/failure cases received in 2016/17.
- 3.7 The table below shows the three highest volume service areas for complaints within each department and the root causes identified:

Community Wellbeing Department			
Services	No. of Stage 1 Cases	Stage 1 as % of Dept Total	Root Causes
Housing	128	51%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodation Services – Assessment</li> <li>Poor Communication</li> <li>Staff Conduct</li> </ul>
Culture	66	26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Libraries – Computer Provision</li> <li>Libraries – Other</li> <li>Libraries – Events &amp; Exhibitions</li> </ul>
Private Housing Services	38	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing Advice – Other Service</li> <li>Enforcement – Assessment / Housing</li> <li>Enforcement – Multiple Occupation - Safety</li> </ul>

Regeneration & Environment Department			
Services	No. of Stage 1 Cases	Stage 1 as % of Dept Total	Root Causes
Parking & Lighting	146	39%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PCN Received</li> <li>• Payments / Parking Permits</li> <li>• On Street Enforcement – Not Taking Action</li> </ul>
Environmental Improvement	90	24%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractor Conduct</li> <li>• Non Collection</li> <li>• Management Issues</li> </ul>
Highways & Infrastructure	64	17%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other Highways Issue</li> <li>• Other Pavement Issues</li> <li>• Highways Information and Advice</li> </ul>
Resources Department			
Services	No. of Stage 1 Cases	Stage 1 as % of Dept Total	Root Causes
Benefits & Customer Facing	89	43%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits – Over Payments</li> <li>• Benefits – Change of Circumstances</li> <li>• Benefits – Other Service</li> </ul>
Revenues & Customer Contact Centre	53	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Centre – Officer Behaviour</li> <li>• Council Tax – Recovery</li> <li>• Contact Centre – Enquiry Handling</li> </ul>
BCS Social Care Functions	17	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Service Failure</li> </ul>
Children & Young People Department			
Services	No. of Stage 1 Cases	Stage 1 as % of Dept Total	Root Causes
Inclusion	10	28%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Workers</li> <li>• Contract Issues</li> <li>• Service not provided</li> </ul>
Localities	7	19%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support / Contact</li> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Child Protection</li> </ul>
LAC & Permanency	5	14%	-

- 3.8 The table above shows that there are a variety of issues that have led to service delay or service failures across council departments. Individual service areas need to continue to take responsibility for tackling the fundamental causes of service delay/failure and for improving the customer experience.
- 3.9 The Complaints Service team have attended management and team meetings to discuss the quarterly performance reports and discuss ways of improving both service area operations and complaint handling. Service areas have put in place a number of measures to improve performance such as ongoing staff training on policies, procedures and communication; streamlining processes; and improved contract management. Departmental examples of improvements in response to complaints are provided in Appendices A, B and C.

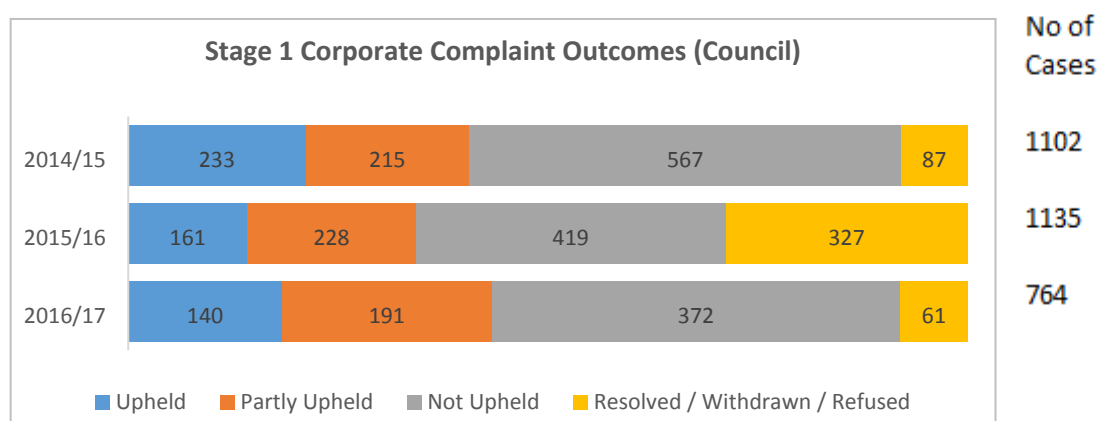
- 3.10 Although service areas have already put some measures in place, it is clear that we need to a continued and greater emphasis on addressing service delay/failure issues across the organisation. Ongoing and fundamental improvements are needed to prevent avoidable errors being repeated and to embed lasting changes that will improve service delivery across the council. This is a challenge for the council with the financial constraints and resourcing pressures facing local government, but nonetheless fundamental improvements must be made.

**Recommendation:** the Complaints Service team should work with service area and departmental management teams to review key service delay/failure hotspots and develop improvement plans.

- 3.11 Staff attitude and failure to communicate are two other significant causes of complaints that also need to be addressed more widely across the council. The importance of learning from complaints and getting the customer service 'basics' right have been shared at staff forums and senior manager meetings by the Chief Executive. Some service areas already provide customer service training for their staff, however there is the need to put in place wider targeted training provision for particular service areas that may need this.

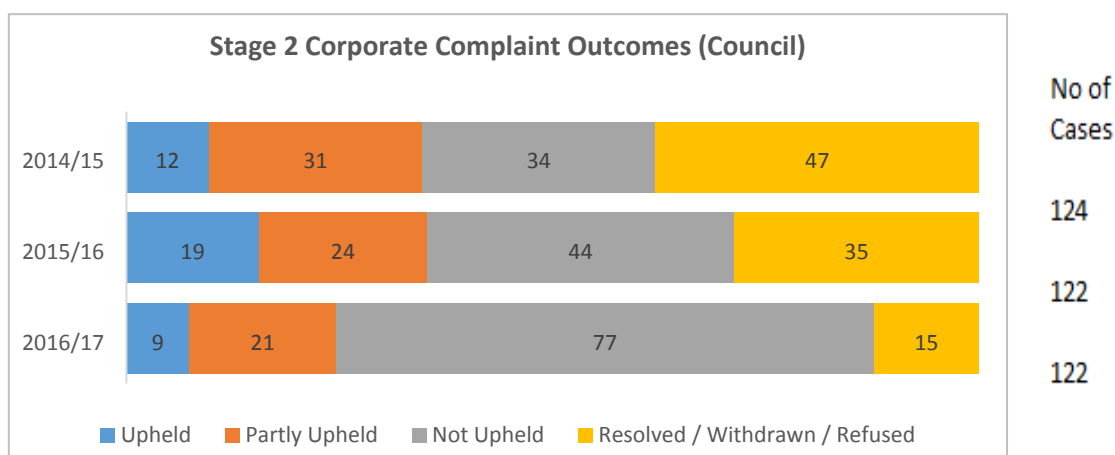
**Recommendation:** the Complaints Service team should develop a tailored training plan on communication and staff behaviours to be implemented for priority service areas across the Council

### **Brent Council – Complaint Outcomes**



- 3.12 ***The proportion of corporate complaint cases upheld/partly upheld at the first stage by the Council has remained broadly the same over the past 3 years:***

- Although complaint volumes are coming down, the Council acknowledged fault in a large proportion of the new complaints we received.
- 41% of cases were upheld/partly in 2014/15 and this has increased slightly to 43% of cases upheld/partly upheld in 2016/17.



**3.13 Whilst upheld/partly upheld rates have been stable at the first stage, this has dropped significantly at the second stage.**

- In 2014/15, 35% of Stage 2 cases were upheld/partly upheld compared with 24% in 2016/17.
- 27% of cases were not upheld in 2014/15 and this has jumped to 63% not upheld in 2016/17.
- Although 1 in every 7 case was escalated to Stage 2 in 2016/17, we upheld/partly upheld fewer cases than in previous years.

3.14 This sharp increase in cases not being upheld at the second stage to a large extent supports the decisions being made at the first stage.

3.15 There were 30 cases upheld/partly upheld at the final review stage in 2016/17 and unfortunately in some of these cases the service areas delayed implementing corrective action or paying compensation. These delays created additional follow up work for the Complaints Service team and on some occasions led to an Ombudsman referral. Closer monitoring of final review corrective actions needs to be put in place particularly as the LGO has signalled that it will take more stringent action against local authorities that do not follow through on agreed corrective actions/complaint remedies.

**Recommendation:** Complaints Service Team should implement a weekly Corrective Actions Tracker for all departments to monitor the timely completion of agreed remedial actions

3.16 Beyond the Council's final review stage, there were still a large number of cases that were escalated to the Ombudsman. We can reasonably assume that this was because of ongoing dissatisfaction or disagreement with the Council's final review decisions. The table below shows the volume of referrals to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) over the past 3 years:

Case Type	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 – 2017
Ombudsman Referrals	169	195	168



3.17 ***There has been a 5% reduction in cases referred to the Ombudsman over the past 3 years.*** Although Ombudsman case volumes have decreased, we recognise and accept that there are still too many cases being referred to the Ombudsman.

- In 2016/17 Brent had the 7<sup>th</sup> highest number of LGO referrals out of the 33 London councils.

3.18 Although the number of cases referred to the LGO was very high, the large majority of cases did not warrant a formal investigation. During 2016/17, the LGO considered or reviewed 161 Brent referrals. ***136 out of 161 LGO referrals were not progressed after initial investigations*** for the following reasons:

- Referred back for local resolution – 84 cases.
- Closed after initial enquiries – 43 cases.
- Advice given – 5 cases.
- Invalid or incomplete – 4 cases.

3.19 More than half of the cases considered by Ombudsman in 2016/17 were sent back to the Council to be resolved locally. (Brent had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of cases referred back for local resolution across all London councils). These cases were essentially submitted prematurely to the Ombudsman and further work is needed to understand how we could resolve more of these cases earlier within the Council without the need for an Ombudsman referral. By doing this we should be able to provide a quicker, more efficient and mutually agreeable resolution to complaints.

***Recommendation:*** the Complaints Service team should review LGO referrals and identify any future opportunities for early resolution and to help minimise premature LGO referrals.

3.20 ***There were fewer LGO cases investigated and upheld against Brent in 2016/17 than in previous years.*** During 2016/17 the LGO fully investigated 25 cases against Brent - 17 cases were upheld and 8 cases were not upheld.

Outcome Type		2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017
No. of Cases Decided	No.	39	36	<b>25</b>
Upheld	No.	22	26	<b>17</b>
	%	58%	72%	<b>68%</b>
Not Upheld	No.	16	10	<b>8</b>
	%	42%	28%	32%

- 3.21 The 17 upheld cases in 2016/17 were categorised under the following services by the LGO:
- Housing – 8 cases.
  - Adult Care Services – 3 cases.
  - Education & Children's Services – 3 cases.
  - Benefits & Tax – 2 cases.
  - Highways & Transport – 1 case.
- 3.22 Further analysis of the 17 LGO upheld decisions showed that:
- 4 cases had been investigated by the LGO that had bypassed the Council's full complaints process and the LGO awarded compensation in 1 of these cases.
  - There were another 4 cases upheld by the LGO that overturned the Council's not upheld decision at final review stage; the LGO awarded compensation in 1 of these cases.
  - Of the remaining 9 cases upheld by the LGO, the Council had already upheld/partly upheld 8 of these complaints and 1 complaint had previously been withdrawn; the LGO awarded compensation in 5 of these 9 cases.
- 3.23 This LGO analysis highlights two further areas for consideration by the Council:
- Firstly, we need to review our first and final review decisions in light of the 17 LGO cases upheld against us (and specifically the 4 cases that contradicted the not upheld decision by the Council)
  - Secondly, we need to reconsider the levels of compensation awarded by the Council, bearing in mind that the LGO increased the financial redress in 5 cases and awarded compensation in 2 cases that we had not awarded compensation. Aligning our decision making and compensation levels more in line with the LGO may reduce the number of LGO decisions upheld against the Council in future. However there is a risk that even if we increase compensation payments in line with LGO thresholds, the LGO may still decide to increase compensation payments even further.

***Recommendations: the Complaints Service team should review our internal approach to complaint decisions, corrective actions and compensation in light of LGO outcomes in 2016/17.***

- 3.24 The Local Government Ombudsman issued a joint report against Brent Council and Ealing Council relating to a BHP tenant's complaint about their need for urgent rehousing due to domestic violence. The report was discussed at the Audit Committee in September 2016. Lessons have been learnt and service changes have been implemented. The LGO has issued two reports against the Council in about the last five years and therefore this is a rare occurrence.

3.25 The table below shows the compensation payments breakdown in 2016-17 and the two previous years, at all stages for corporate and statutory complaints.

Stage	Year	Council Wide		
		No of Cases	Total Compensation	Average per case
Stage 1 / Provisional	2014/15	31	£23,773	£767
	2015/16	31	£15,708	£507
	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>£5,347</b>	<b>£162</b>
Stage 2 / Final	2014/15	39	£24,251	£622
	2015/16	36	£14,193	£394
	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>£22,668</b>	<b>£687</b>
Stage 3	2014/15	1	£500	£500
	2015/16	1	£1,000	£1,000
	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>
Ombudsman	2014/15	7	£1,200	£171
	2015/16	10	£1,510	£151
	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>8*</b>	<b>£6699*</b>	<b>£837</b>
Total	2015/15	78	£49,724	£637
	2015/16	78	£32,411	£416
	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>£32,764</b>	<b>£461</b>

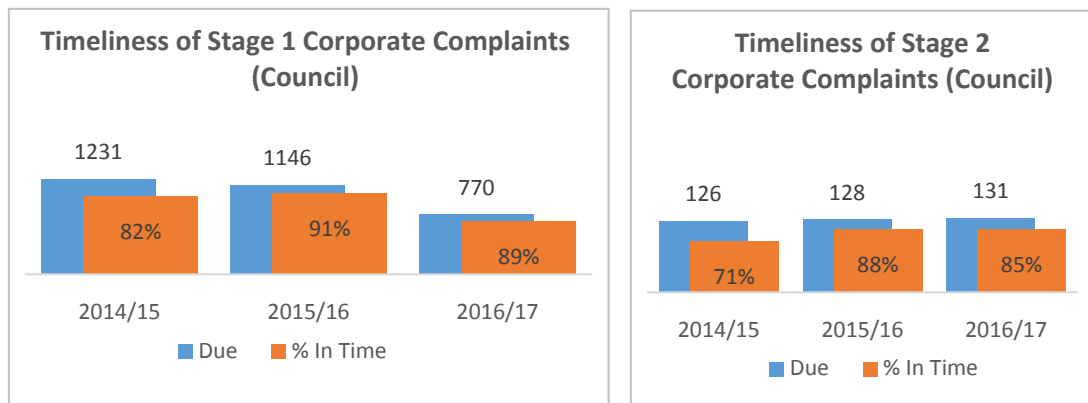
\* Includes one ASC case from 2015/16 with financial redress confirmed in 2016/17

3.26 The total number of cases awarded compensation at different stages of the complaints process over the past 3 years has actually decreased slightly. However the ***average amount of compensation has changed significantly at the first stage and Ombudsman stage.***

- Stage 1 compensation awarded has decreased nearly 5-fold over 3 years, averaging £162 per case in 2016/17.
- LGO compensation has increased nearly 5-fold over 3 years, averaging £917 per case in 2016/17.

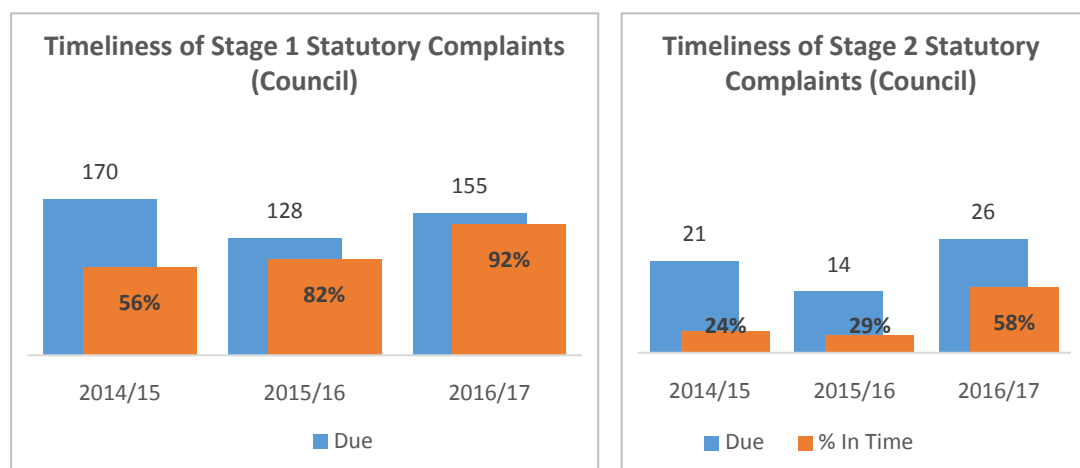
3.27 As previously recommended, we need to reconsider how we can put appropriate remedies in place more quickly and efficiently when we get things wrong to avoid unnecessary escalation or dissatisfaction.

## Brent Council – Timeliness of Complaints



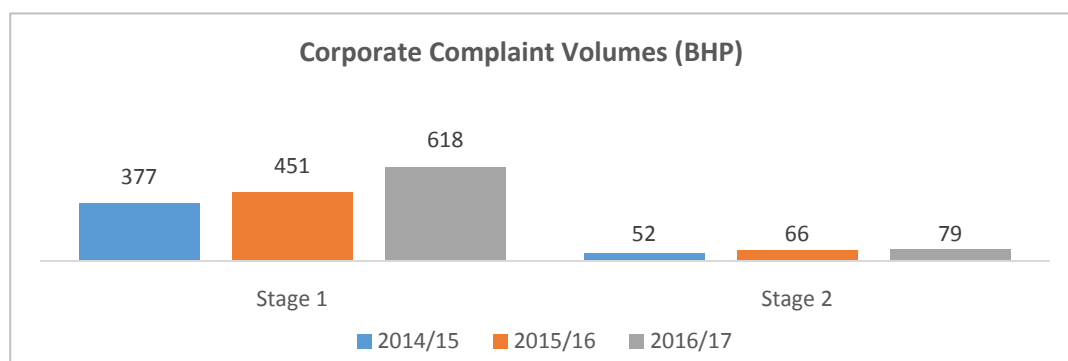
- 3.28 The volume of cases closed has come down in line with the reduction in new cases received over the past 3 years. Service managers have responsibility for managing Stage 1 complaints and with a reduction of 450 cases or so, **timeliness of Stage 1 complaints has improved by 7% points overall in the past 3 years**. Although there was a 2% point dip in timeliness from the 2015/16 peak of 91% completed on time.
- 3.29 Stage 2 corporate complaints are managed by the Complaints Service team on behalf the Chief Executive. The volume of Stage 2 cases for both the Council and BHP has increased by 28% and 52% respectively. The **timeliness of corporate Stage 2 complaint responses for the Council has improved by 14% points over 3 years**, however there was a 3% point drop in timeliness from the peak level of 88% in 2015/16. The Complaints Service team is continuing to review processes, workload and priorities, and is also working with service area managers to speed up the completion of final review complaints.

**Recommendation:** Complaints Service team should continue to improve internal processes and working arrangements with service managers to increase the timeliness of Stage 2 responses.



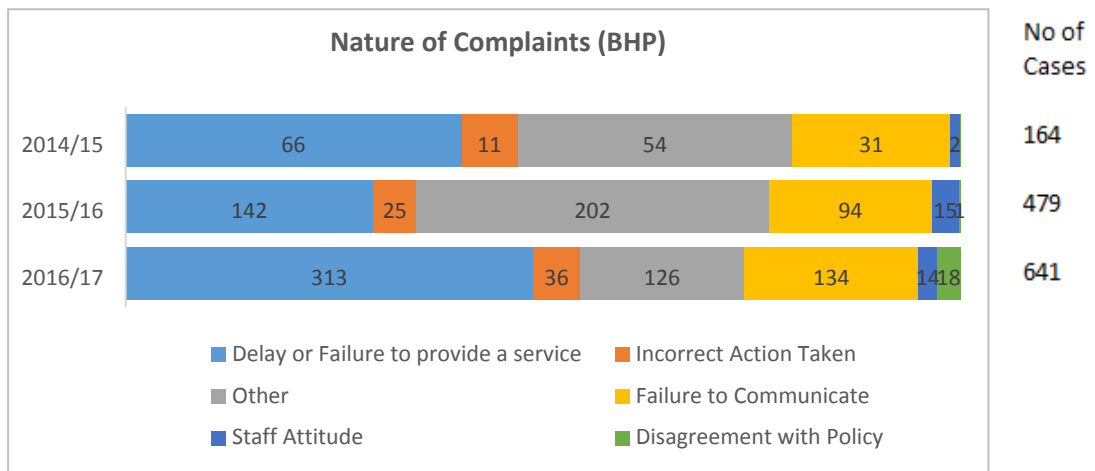
- 3.30 ***There has been a vast improvement in the timeliness of statutory Stage 1 complaints over the past 3 years***, with the Council achieving its best performance of 92% on time in 2016/17.
- 3.31 ***Timeliness of statutory Stage 2 complaints has also increased over the past 3 years and reached 58% in 2016/17***, however this is still considerably below the expected standard for the Council. Statutory Stage 2 complaints are typically very complex and most of the delays have occurred with Children's cases where there is a requirement for independent investigators and independent persons. The Complaints Service team and the CYP department are working together to improve processes and timescales of independent Stage 2 investigations.
- 3.32 Further information on departmental performance in 2016/17 and learning from complaints is provided Appendix C.

#### **BHP – Complaint Received**



- 3.33 ***The volume of Stage 1 BHP complaints has increased by 64% and Stage 2 complaint volumes have increased by 52% over the past 3 years.***
- The increase in first and second stage complaints in BHP reflects service delivery issues over the past 3 years that have been widely acknowledged.
  - Escalation rates have come down slightly over the last 3 years. In 2014/15, 1 in 7 cases were escalated to Stage 2 and in 2016/17 this went down to 1 in every 8 case being escalated.
  - The service breakdown of the 618 new Stage 1 complaints received in 2016/17 was: 57% - Property Services, 21% - Neighbourhood Services, 10% - Customer Response Team, 8% - Income Collection and 4% - Core Services & Development.

### BHP – Nature of Complaints



3.34 ***As with the Council, ‘service delay/failure’ was the most common cause of complaints against BHP in 2016/17 and accounted for 49% of complaints received.***

- Over three-quarters of the 313 complaints caused by service delay/failure in 2016/17 were upheld/partly upheld by BHP.
- The removal of the ‘Other’ category during 2016/17 on the iCasework system has meant that more specific root cause information has been captured on the system during the year.
- Communication failures and incorrect actions were the other two highest causes of complaints and these issues need ongoing attention in BHP.

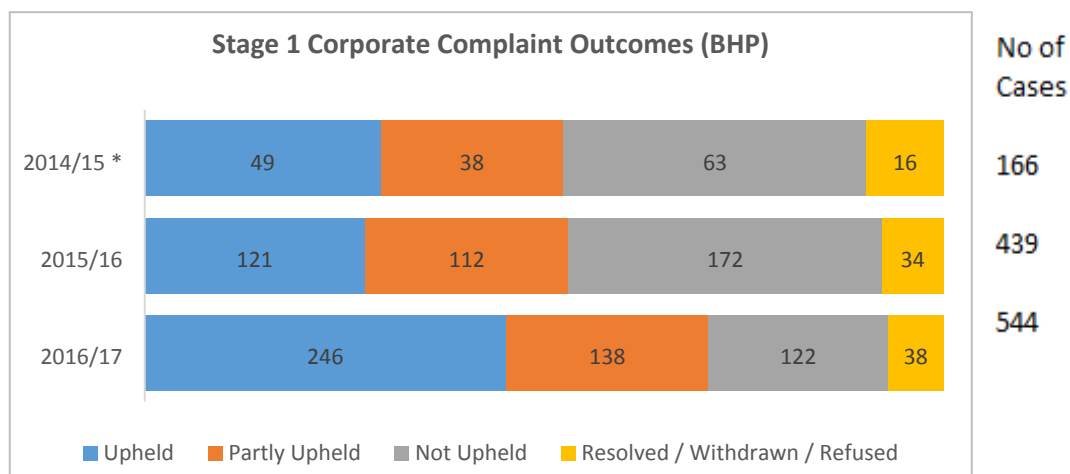
3.35 The table below lists the 3 services that received the most complaints in BHP during 2016/17 and the root causes of these complaints.

Brent Housing Partnership			
Top 3 Services	No of Stage 1 Cases	Stage 1 as % of BHP Total	Root Causes
Property Services	353	57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in job completion</li> <li>• Poor Communication</li> <li>• Service Failure</li> </ul>
Neighbourhood Services	130	21%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor Communication</li> <li>• Harassment</li> <li>• Neighbour Dispute</li> </ul>
Customer Response Team	60	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other</li> <li>• Poor Communication</li> <li>• Service Failure</li> </ul>

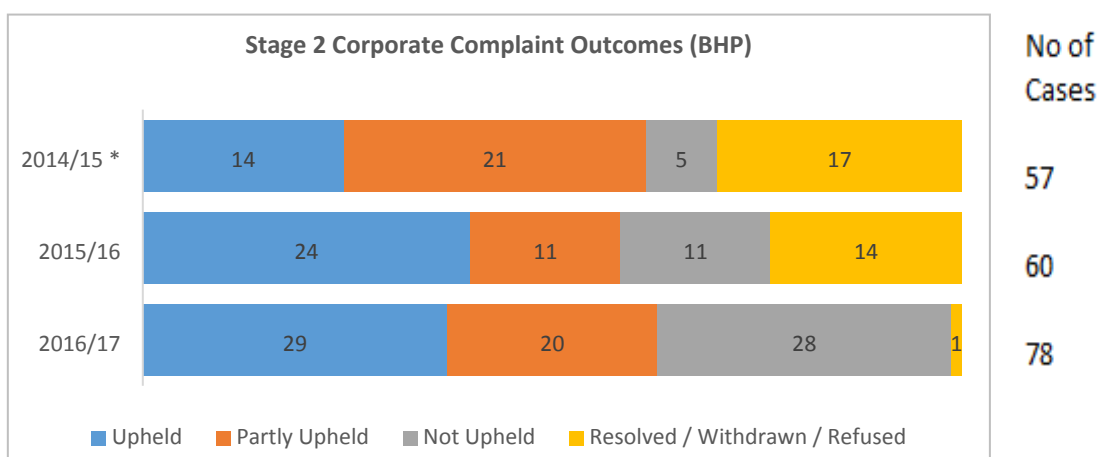
- 3.36 BHP and its contactors carry out over 25,000 repairs each year and most of these repairs are completed satisfactorily. In 2016/17, the bulk of BHP complaints were received by Property Services and there were over 350 cases regarding repairs. A number of these cases were escalated to the second stage and regrettably there were also some delays in implementing the repairs and corrective actions agreed at the final review stage. During the year a case study was carried out the Programme Management Office and Complaints Service team on a small number of cases involving problematic repairs. The learning points essentially confirmed systemic issues and BHP officers were tasked with addressing these issues.
- 3.37 As BHP moves back into the Council as a Housing Management service the redesign of the repairs process with improved accountability is being prioritised within the operational transformation programme.

**Recommendation:** the Complaints Service team should work closely with the Housing Management Service management team to establish a new and effective complaints process and implement improved working arrangements to manage Stage 2 complaints.

### **BHP – Complaint Outcomes**



- 3.38 **More cases are being upheld/partly upheld at the first stage by BHP than in previous years.**
- 71% of cases were upheld/partly upheld in 2016/17 compared with 52% in 2014/15.
  - The increased volume of new complaints and increased proportion of cases upheld/partly upheld reflects a changing culture and greater willingness to accept faults and address mistakes within BHP.



3.39 ***More cases are being upheld outright at the second stage.***

- Upheld cases has increased from 25% in 2014/15 to 37% in 2016/17.

3.40 ***The number of cases not upheld at Stage 2 is also increasing***

- The proportion of cases not upheld has increased from 9% in 2014/15 to 36% 2016/17.
- This suggests that the first stage decisions to predominantly uphold/partly uphold cases were correct.

3.41 The Housing Ombudsman (HO) handles housing management referrals. The HO has not published an annual report on their decisions for quite some time, therefore the data provided below is taken from information recorded on the iCasework system.

3.42 ***There were 12 Housing Ombudsman cases recorded on the iCasework system in 2016/17***, compared with 8 cases on the system in 2015/16 and also in 2014/15.

3.43 ***Seven Housing Ombudsman cases were upheld in 2016/17***, 4 cases were not upheld and 1 case was closed after initial enquiries.

3.44 ***The HO awarded compensation totalling £2,150 in 6 of these cases.***



3.45 The table below shows BHP compensation payments during 2016-17 and the two previous years, at all stages of the complaints process.

Stage	Year	BHP		
		No of Cases	Total Compensation	Average per case
Stage 1	2014/15	31	£6,418	£207
	2015/16	58	£20,395	£352
	2016/17	76	£19,972	£263
Stage 2	2014/15	30	£17,055	£569
	2015/16	32	£9,799	£306
	2016/17	51	£22,716	£445
Ombudsman	2014/15	*N/A	*N/A	*N/A
	2015/16	2	£160	£80
	2016/17	6	£2,150	£358
Total	2015/15	61	£23,473	£385
	2015/16	92	£30,354	£330
	2016/17	133	£44,838	£337

3.46 ***The number of cases awarded compensation at the first stage has more than doubled and average compensation payments have also increased.***

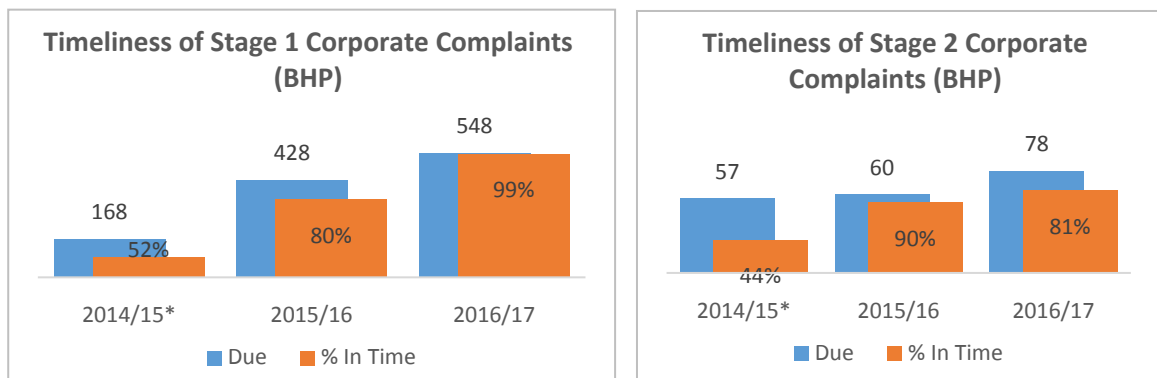
- This is in line with the increased rate of cases upheld/partly upheld at the first stage by BHP.
- The number of cases awarded compensation at Stage 1 has increased by 145% and the average amount of compensation awarded has increased by 27% over the past 3 years.

3.47 ***The number of Stage 2 cases awarded compensation has significantly increased but average compensation payments have decreased.***

- Number of Stage 2 cases awarded compensation has increased by 70% over the last 3 years.
- Average compensation has decreased by 22% over the last 3 years.

3.48 Overall, the total number of all cases award compensation has doubled although the average compensation awarded has dropped by 12% in the past 3 years. This does reflect the increased willingness to accept fault and remedy mistakes.

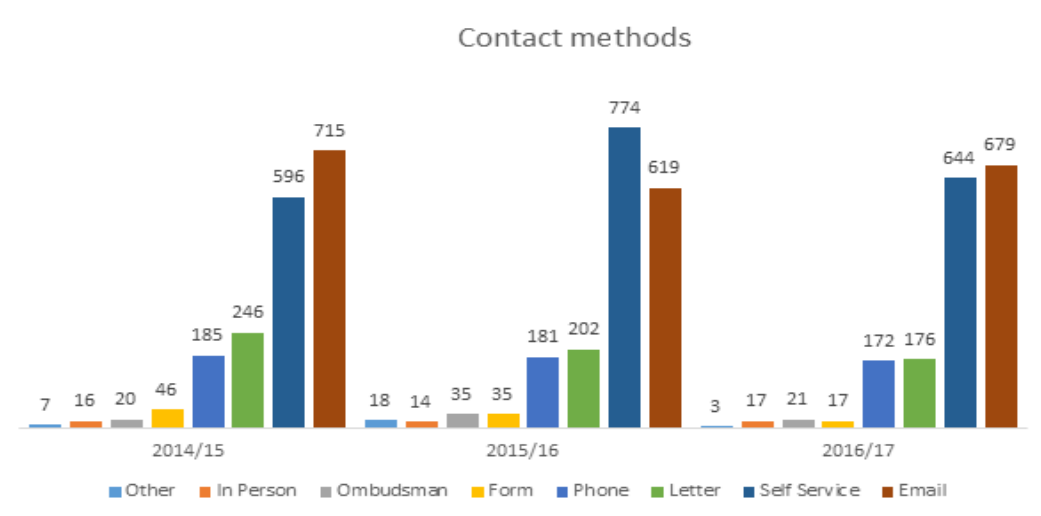
## **BHP – Timeliness of Complaints**



- 3.49 ***Timeliness of Stage 1 cases has improved over the past 3 years***, although the 99% performance figure shown on iCasework in 2016/17 is inaccurate. Over the last few months it has become apparent the some of the cases reported as closed on time in 2016/17 were not closed down correctly. Some of these cases had to be re-opened and the outstanding casework completed before the cases could be closed down properly. This extra work generated a backlog of complaints for the BHP complaints team at the start of 2017/18.
- 3.50 BHP's Stage 2 complaints are managed by the Council's Complaint Service team. ***Stage 2 timeliness has improved over the last 3 years, with a 37% point increase in performance in this area over the past 3 years.*** Performance dropped by 9% points in 2016/17 from the previous year, however it should be noted that there was a large increase in case volumes and there were some delays in getting the information needed from BHP to complete the investigations on time.
- 3.51 During the year the Complaints Service team has provided support to BHP in various ways including providing training, bespoke management reports and general advice and guidance. A member of the Complaints Service team also worked in the BHP complaints team for several months to help with casework. As BHP moves into the Council it is important that the Complaints Service team work closely with the new Housing Management Service to create an effective complaints function within the new service and develop improved ways of working on final review stage complaints (as recommended in paragraph 3.36)
- 3.52 Further information on BHP's performance in 2016/17 and learning from complaints is provided Appendix D.

## Complaint Channels

- 3.53 The chart below shows the different channels used to submit complaints to the Council and BHP. The pattern of complaint channels used by the public has remained fairly stable with online and self-service methods being the most popular ways of submitting a complaint. Planned changes to the website should make it easier in future to contact us online about a complaint, service request or compliment. Other forms of contact such as telephone and letter will still be available, but we would expect to see a greater take up of online channels in future years.



## 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 not getting things right first time as an organisation and the need to improve the customer experience and therefore 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 departments come under separate statutory complaint procedures. It is a legal requirement to produce annual reports for these areas and these are included in appendices A and B with reference to the statutory frameworks for the management of these statutory complaints

## 6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 None.

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

7.1 None

### **Background Papers**

Appendix A – Adults Complaints Annual Report 2016/17

Appendix A – Children’s Annual Complaints 2016/17

Appendix C – Council Departments Complaints Analysis 2016/17

Appendix D – Brent Housing Partnership Complaints Analysis 2016/17

### **Contact Officers**

Irene Bremang, Head of Performance & Improvement

*PETER GADSDON*

Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships

Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0FJ.

020 8937 1400