

# **CORPORATE COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11 (PERIOD 01.04.10 TO 31.03.11)**

## **Summary**

### **1. Background**

The corporate complaints procedure, logged and monitored through Lagan, continues to work well in resolving customer complaints.

The figures given for the year as a whole reflect the alignment of services within Council Directorates and include Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 unless stated. The comparison figures for previous years reflect the alignment of services at that time.

### **2. Findings**

#### **2.1 Number of complaints received**

We received 479 complaints during the year which equates to 40 per month. This is a 12% decrease in the number of complaints received last year (2009-10) and is the second consecutive decrease noted since the corporate complaints procedure was adopted in May 2005.

The split between Charnwood Borough Council and Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing is as follows: CBC 30% decrease on last year, CNH 24% increase on last year.

#### **2.2 Complaints dealt with at each stage**

The vast majority of complaints (89%) were dealt with at stage 1 which is slightly lower than previous years. The percentage of complaints considered at stages 2 and 3 is slightly higher than last year.

This could indicate that services need to consider the reasons why complainants are dissatisfied with their stage 1 responses and take action to strength those responses and remedies if relevant to the complaint.

#### **2.3 Number of complaints by department**

The department where complaint numbers have increased from last year is Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing.

#### **2.4 Number of complaints by service**

The service types which received the most complaints were Revenues, Development, Environmental services, Green spaces, CNH Income, CNH Repairs & maintenance, CNH Tenancy services. Of these services, CNH Repairs & Maintenance and CNH Tenancy services have both increased their complaint numbers compared to last year.

#### **2.5 Outcome of complaints**

59% of all complaints were fully or partly justified which is a slight increase on last year (55%) and is roughly the same as the year before (60%). This, coupled with the decrease in numbers, indicates that this is an area where the good work undertaken by services is paying off and further work by services should improve this further.

#### **2.6 Outcome of complaints by service**

The percentage of upheld or partly upheld complaints varies widely from service to service. Those services with a significant number of complaints and proportion of

upheld or partly upheld complaints Housing needs, Culture Heritage & Arts, Environmental services, Green spaces, Leisure, CNH Income, CNH Repairs & Maintenance and CNH Tenancy Services, need to consider: the lessons to be learnt for individual complaints to consider ways of reducing the opportunities for similar complaints to happen in the future;  
the corporate lessons learnt to ensure that lessons learnt in other services are disseminated throughout the organisation.

## 2.7 Complaint reasons

The major cause of complaints (45%) concerned services' failure to deliver the service expected by the customer and two-thirds of those complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

The next major cause of complaint (16%) is that customers feel that the behaviour and/or attitude of staff they dealt with were not appropriate and again two-thirds of those complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

Services may wish to consider this from two perspectives:

- service centred by ensuring that service and corporate lessons learnt are implemented;
- customer centred and in particular the customer care element of customer service delivery.

## 2.8 Response rates

The target response rate was achieved in 91% of case, which is again an improvement on last year (88%) and the previous year (83%). Services that have achieved less than 90% (Health & Housing, Leisure & Environment and Partnerships & Customer Services) should give further consideration to their response rates.

## 2.9 Customer satisfaction with complaints handling

A total of 8 Complaints Satisfaction Monitoring Reports were completed and returned, which is statistically a very small percentage (1.7%). Services are routinely sending our customer satisfaction monitoring surveys but response rates are low and this is an area that requires improvement.

## 2.10 Local Government Ombudsman

There has been an increase in the number of Ombudsman complaints compared with last year. This has been primarily caused by an increase in complaints about CNH. There have been three local settlements and the result of one investigation by the Ombudsman is awaited.

## 2.11 Corporate areas for focus

No	Aim	Action	By Whom
1	To reduce the number of complaints arising from service failure/delay.	Where incidents of service failure/delay have occurred, those services should take appropriate actions to reduce the opportunities for similar complaints to arise in the future, for example by contacting customers proactively.	All Services and in particular services identified on the Corporate Lessons Themes Annual Report 2010-11: Housing Needs Environmental Services Green Spaces CNH Income CNH Repairs & Maintenance CNH Tenancy & Warden Services

2	To reduce the number of complaints arising from poor staff attitude/behaviour.	Where complaints have been received regarding poor staff attitude/behaviour, those services should take appropriate actions to reduce the opportunities for similar complaints to arise in the future.	All Services and in particular services identified on the Corporate Lessons Themes Annual Report 2010-11: Environmental Services CNH Repairs & Maintenance CNH Tenancy & Warden Services
3	To continue to ensure that service delivery processes in the Development service minimise opportunities for customers to make formal complaints to the Ombudsman.	To continue to ensure that the Development service delivery processes take into account complaints received and any lessons learnt and to investigate with other local authorities/through the development control forum examples of good practice in respect of dealing with complaints.	Head of Planning and Regeneration
4	To continue to provide support to reduce the number of complaints received by CNH.	To continue to develop opportunities to support CNH at strategic and operational level.	Head of Housing and other Heads of Service as applicable

### Attachments

Attached are the following reports for the year 01.04.10 to 31.03.11:

1. Analysis of complaints by service and type at each stage of the complaints process
2. Analysis of complaint reasons
3. Details of each individual complaint with actions to be taken and lessons to be learnt
4. Analysis of stage 3 complaints
5. Analysis of complaints satisfaction
6. Corporate lessons themes

## 1. Background

The corporate complaints procedure, which utilises a workflow within Lagan, the corporate CRM, has now been in place for six years and continues to work well. The procedure is managed by a network of Service Development Officers and Administrators within all services, which ensures that complaints are dealt with and resolved in accordance with the corporate policy.

## 2. Findings

### 2.1 Number of complaints received

A total of 479 complaints were received during the year.

Year	Number of complaints received	Percentage increase/reduction on previous year
2005/06	312	-
2006/07	394	+32%
2007/08	420	+7%
2008/09	614	+46%
2009/10	548	-11%
2010/11	479	-12%

For the second consecutive year, there has been a decrease in the number of corporate complaints received over the year and there has been a 12% decrease from the previous year (2009/10).

The split between Charnwood Borough Council and Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing is as follows:

Year	Charnwood Borough Council		Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing	
	Number of complaints received	%age increase/decrease on previous year	Number of complaints received	%age increase/decrease on previous year
2007/08	350	-	70	-
2008/09	450	+29%	164	+135%
2009/10	372	-17%	176	+7%
2010/11	260	-30%	219	+24%

There has been a 30% decrease in the number of complaints CBC received, and a 24% increase in the number of complaints CNH received.

### 2.2 Complaints dealt with at each stage

Dealt with at Stage	2005/06 (01.05.05-31.03.06)		2006/07		2007/08		2008/09		2009/10		2010/11	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
I	291	93	373	95	389	93	579	94	506	92	428	89

	2005/06 (01.05.05- 31.03.06)		2006/07		2007/08		2008/09		2009/10		2010/11	
2	9	3	7	2	12	3	24	4	27	5	24	7
3	12	4	14	4	19	4	11	2	15	3	17	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>100</b>

The vast majority of complaints (89%) were dealt with at stage 1 which is slightly lower than previous years (92% last year and 94% the year before). 7% (34) of complaints were considered at stage 2 (which is slightly higher than previous years [5% last year and 4% the year before]) and 47% (16) of those were upheld or partly upheld at that stage (which is higher than last year [41%]). 4% (17) of complaints were considered at stage 3 (which is slightly higher than last year [3%]) and 41% (7) of those were upheld or partly upheld (which is slightly higher than last year [33%]).

### 2.3 Number of complaints by department

The number of complaints received by department is:

DEPARTMENT	Complaints 2005/06 (01.05.05- 31.03.06)		Complaints 2006/07		Complaints 2007/08		Complaints 2008/09		Complaints 2009/10		Complaints 2010/11	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Chief Executive	0	0	0	0	1	.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Programme & Resources	7	2	7	2	6	1.4	0	0	0	0	3	.5
Development	41	13	26	7	49	11.7	30	5	47	8.5	30	6
Housing & Health	86	28	100	25	26	6.2	32	5	28	5	22	5
Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing					71	16.9	164	27	176	32	219	47
Leisure & Environment	129	41	162	41	163	38.8	259	42	212	39	153	32
Partnerships & Customer Services	42	13	95	24	32*	7.6	51	8	13	2.4	16	3
Governance & Procurement	4	1	3	1	2	.5	4	1	3	.6	3	.5
Deputy Chief Executive	3	1	1	0	70**	16.7	74	12	69	12.5	33	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>100</b>

Blue colour indicates services where complaint numbers have remained roughly similar to last year (Chief Executive, Programme & Resources, Governance & Procurement, Partnerships & Customer Services)

Green colour indicates services where complaint numbers have reduced from last year (Development, Housing & Health, Leisure & Environment, Deputy Chief Executive)

Red colour indicates services where complaint numbers have increased from last year (Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing)

### 2.4 Number of complaints by service

A more detailed account of the type of complaints received by service is shown on the attached report (Complaints Analysis by Service). The services that generated 20 complaints or over during the year are:

Service	Type	2008/09			2009/10			2010/11		
		No	Service %age of total complaints	Corporate %age of total complaints	No	Service %age of total complaints	Corporate %age of total complaints	No	Service %age of total complaints	Corporate %age of total complaints
Deputy Chief Executive	<b>Revenues</b>	<b>45</b>	61%	7%	<b>54</b>	78%	10%	<b>26</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Development	<b>Development Control</b>	<b>24</b>	80%	4%	<b>42</b>	89%	8%	<b>29</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Leisure & Environment	<b>Environmental Services</b>	<b>157</b>	61%	26%	<b>129</b>	61%	23%	<b>73</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>15%</b>
Leisure & Environment	<b>Green spaces</b>	<b>49</b>	19%	8%	<b>31</b>	15%	6%	<b>31</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing	<b>Income</b>	<b>4</b>	2%	1%	<b>25</b>	14%	5%	<b>23</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing	<b>Repair/Maintenance</b>	<b>116</b>	71%	19%	<b>93</b>	53%	17%	<b>120</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>25%</b>
Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing	<b>Tenancy Services</b>	<b>42</b>	26%	7%	<b>58</b>	33%	11%	<b>76</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>16%</b>

Green colour indicates services where complaint numbers have reduced from last year (Revenues, Development, Environmental services)

Blue colour indicates services where complaint numbers have remained roughly the same (Green spaces, CNH Income)

Red colour indicates services where complaint numbers have increased from last year (CNH Repairs & Maintenance and CNH Tenancy services)

## 2.5 Outcome of complaints

Status of complaint	Total		Stage 1		Stage 2		Stage 3	
	Number	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>Upheld</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>32</b>	143	33	9	26	4	22
<b>Partly upheld</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>27</b>	118	28	7	21	3	16
<b>Not upheld</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>41</b>	166	39	18	53	11	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>100</b>	427	100	34	100	18	100

59% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld (60% at stage 1) which means that in just under two-thirds of all cases the complaints we received were fully or partly justified. This is a 4% increase in last years (2009-10) figures where 55% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld (57% at stage 1), and is a 6% decrease in the year before (2008-09) when 65% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld (67% at stage 1).

This may indicate that whilst we continue to admit our mistakes early in the complaints process, some services are getting better at “getting it right first time” and are implementing improvements from lessons learnt from previous complaints.

Those services where complaint number are increasing (marked in red on the table in 2.4) may need to consider: the lessons to be learnt for individual complaints (Details of Complaints report) to ensure that the actions have been implemented; the reasons that complaints were made (Complaints Reasons report) to consider ways of reducing the opportunities for similar complaints to happen in the future: the corporate lessons learnt to ensure that lessons learnt in other services are disseminated throughout the organisation and taken on board by all services; and may need to implement an improvement plan to address any issues issue.

Development Control received a small number of complaints but found that a high percentage of those complaints (even though they are not upheld) continued to stages 2 and 3 and that service may wish to consider other ways to explain the development control legislation, administration and decision making process.

## 2.6 Outcome of complaints by service

A more detailed account of the outcome of complaints received by services is shown on the attached report (Complaints Analysis by Service). An overview is:

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Upheld or Partly upheld</b>	<b>%age of Upheld or Partly upheld</b>
<b>Chief Executive</b>	0	0	0%
<b>Deputy Chief Executive</b>			
Computer services	0	0	0%
Financial services	0	0	0%
Human resources	0	0	0%
Benefits	7	0	0%
Revenues	26	3	11%
<b>Development</b>			
Building control	1	1	100%
Development control	29	6	21%
Policy, Landscaping, Regeneration	0	0	0%
<b>Governance &amp; Procurement</b>			
Property services	2	2	100%
Standards/Monitoring Support	1	0	0%
<b>Health &amp; Housing</b>			
Environmental Protection	3	1	33%
Private housing	2	2	100%
Housing needs	17	11	65%
<b>Leisure &amp; Environment</b>			
Culture, Heritage & Arts	10	5	50%
Environmental services	73	46	63%
Green spaces	31	16	52%
Leisure	17	9	53%
Sports and active recreation	3	1	33%
Street management	19	6	32%

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Upheld or Partly upheld</b>	<b>%age of Upheld or Partly upheld</b>
<b>Partnerships &amp; Customer Services</b>			
Communication and consultation	2	1	50%
Customer services	10	8	80%
Licensing	3	1	33%
Community safety	1	0	0%
<b>Programme &amp; Resources</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
Electoral Registration	3	0	0%
<b>Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing</b>			
Income	23	16	70%
Repairs and maintenance	120	91	76%
Tenancy services	76	58	76%
<b>Total</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>59%</b>

The percentage of upheld or partly upheld complaints varies widely from service to service. Those services with a significant number of complaints and proportion of upheld or partly upheld complaints (marked in red on the table in 2.6 ) may need to consider: the lessons to be learnt for individual complaints (Details of Complaints report) to ensure that the actions have been implemented; the reasons that complaints were made (Complaints Reasons report) to consider ways of reducing the opportunities for similar complaints to happen in the future: the corporate lessons learnt to ensure that lessons learnt in other services are disseminated throughout the organisation and taken on board by all services; and may need to implement an improvement plan to address any issues issue.

## 2.7 Complaint reasons

A more detailed account of the reasons for complaints received by services is shown on the attached report (Complaints Reasons by Service). An overview is:

<b>Complaint reason</b>	<b>Total number</b>	<b>%age of total corporate complaints</b>	<b>Total number upheld or partly upheld</b>	<b>%age of upheld or partly upheld</b>
<b>Service failure</b>	217	45%	143	50%
<b>Service delay</b>	55	12%	41	14%
<b>Procedure not in place/requires review</b>	31	6%	12	4%
<b>Procedure not followed</b>	20	4%	10	4%
<b>Incorrect/insufficient information</b>	67	14%	22	8%
<b>Administrative error</b>	13	3%	5	2%
<b>Staff attitude/behaviour</b>	76	16%	51	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>100%</b>

The major cause of complaints (45%) concerned services' failure to deliver the service expected by the customer and nearly two-thirds of those complaints were upheld or partly upheld. Even though one-third of those complaints were not upheld, the customers' perceptions in those cases were that they had failed to receive the service they expected. This could indicate that services need to analyse the areas where failures happen in their operation and consider actions that can be taken. This may centre on the operation of the service by ensuring that where mistakes happen they are put right and the lessons to be learnt (as detailed in the Details of Complaints report attached [Housing Needs, Environmental Services, Green Spaces, CNH Income, CNH Repairs & Maintenance, CNH Tenancy & Warden Services]) are implemented. It may also centre around the customer by services considering the needs and expectations of different customers and managing those expectations, providing timely and accurate information and signposting where additional information can be found, and keeping customers informed during their journey through the service delivery process. A tool that might be useful for services to use is customer journey mapping which may provide a basis for services to consider the end to end delivery process including issues such as engagement and consultation, accessibility, availability and timeliness, information, communication, quality, reliability, consistency, flexibility, professionalism, customer care, etc.

The next major cause of complaint is that customers feel that the behaviour and/or attitude of the staff they dealt with were not appropriate (16%) and two-thirds of these complaints were upheld or partly upheld. All services, but particularly those services where this is shown to be of concern (as detailed in the Analysis of Complaint Reasons report attached [Environmental Services, CNH Repairs & Maintenance, CNH Tenancy & Warden Services]) should consider actions to improve customer care such as providing refresher training, setting service standards, introducing performance management.

The other five complaint reasons occur in roughly equal numbers and all are upheld or partly upheld in the majority of cases. This again indicates that services need to review past complaints to ensure that procedures and practices are in place to ensure the same mistake doesn't happen again.

## 2.8 Response rates

The target response times for CBC are 15 days for stage 1 complaints and 20 days for stage 2 and 3 complaints. The target response times for CNH are 10 days for stages 1 and 2 and 15 days for the organisation of a Panel Hearing for stage 3. The achievement rates are:

SERVICE	Response rate achievement 2008/09			Response rate achievement 2009/10			Response rate achievement 2010/11		
	Total number of complaints	Total response time achieved	%	Total number of complaints	Total response time achieved	%	Total number of complaints	Total response time achieved	%
Chief Executive	0	0		0	0		0	0	
Programme & Resources	0	0		0	0		3	3	100%
Development	30	25	83%	47	40	85%	30	29	97%
Health & Housing	32	28	80%	28	19	68%	22	19	86%
Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing	164	141	86%	176	154	87%	219	203	93%

	Response rate achievement 2008/09			Response rate achievement 2009/10			Response rate achievement 2010/11		
Leisure & Environment	259	193	75%	212	185	87%	153	132	86%
Partnerships & Customer Services	51	48	94%	13	13	100%	16	12	75%
Governance & Procurement	4	3	75%	3	2	66%	3	3	100%
Deputy Chief Executive	74	72	97%	69	67	97%	33	33	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>91%</b>

The target response rate was achieved in 91% of case, which is an improvement on last year (88%) and the previous year (83%). Some services have achieving better rates than others but the majority of services have either achieved similar rates to last year or have improved. Realistically, we should be looking to achieve a response rate of 90% and corporately we have achieved that and those services that have achieved less than 90% (Health & Housing, Leisure & Environment and Partnerships & Customer Services) still need to make progress on this issue.

## 2.9 Customer satisfaction with complaints handling

A total of 8 Complaints Satisfaction Monitoring Reports were completed and returned, which is statistically a very small percentage of the possible total at 1.7%. Services are routinely sending out customer satisfaction monitoring surveys but customers are not completing and returning them and this is an area that requires further consideration.

I thought their complaint had been handled fully satisfactorily, 3 partly satisfactorily, and 3 not at all. 3 thought they had been treated very well, 3 well, and 1 badly. Customers were asked to let us know the best thing about how we handled their complaint, the worst thing, and how they rated the reply they received. They could answer each question with more than one response. The best thing that received the most responses was quick reply, the worst thing that received the most responses was the outcome, and the reply option that got the most responses was that the reply was inaccurate. This indicates that although just over half of complainants who responded considered that their response was dealt with fully or partly satisfactorily, services can still make improvements to the way they handle complaints and should use the feedback received from customers to identify the areas of concern to customers.

## 2.10 Local Government Ombudsman

There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman compared with last year. In 2010/11 there were 26 complaints and there were 11 complaints in 2009/10. It is however almost the same number as in 2008/09. The proportion of complaints investigated by the Ombudsman increased slightly from 26% to 31%. There has also been an increase in the proportion of premature complaints (from 27% to 50%). Seven of the 13 premature complaints related to CNH and reflect the problems discussed in more detail below.

The number of Ombudsman complaints since 2004/05 is set out in the table below. This suggests that although there are year on year changes the underlying volume of complaints to the Ombudsman has been steady at about 20 per year for the last four or five years.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of complaints received</b>	<b>Two-year average</b>
<b>2004/05</b>	51	-
<b>2005/06</b>	33	42
<b>2006/07</b>	20	27
<b>2007/08</b>	15	18
<b>2008/09</b>	25	20
<b>2009/10</b>	11	18
<b>2010/11</b>	26	19

The increase in the number of complaints in 2010/11 is mainly due to an increase in the number of complaints relating to CNH which is five times higher than in 2008/09 and 2009/10. In total 11 complaints relating wholly or partly to CNH were received in 2010/11, seven of which were premature. As a result a number of issues were identified during the year in respect of dealing with complaints of neighbour nuisance and anti-social behaviour and this appears to have improved. However the risk of this area generating complaints to the Ombudsman was identified in the last three annual reports to SMT and the continuing rise in corporate complaints about CNH is highlighted earlier in this report.

There was also an increase in the number of complaints relating to the Development Directorate. There were 10 complaints in total, of which eight related to Development Management. This number of complaints did represent a lower proportion of the total number of complaints than in 2009/10 (from 55% to 38%) but this level is still higher than the average proportion across the country of approximately 25% (taking into account only district council functions).

The following table provides a breakdown of the complaints received during the year by Directorate (using the previous structure).

<b>Ombudsman Complaints – Directorate</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2009/10 %</b>	<b>2008/09 %</b>
Deputy Chief Executive	1	4%	9%	24%
Development	10	38%	55%	28%
Governance and Procurement	3	12%	0%	0%
Housing and Health	0	0%	0%	24%
Leisure and Environment	0	0%	18%	4%
Partnerships and Customer Services	0	0%	0%	8%
Programmes and Resources	1	4%	0%	0%
Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing	9	35%	18%	12%
Joint CNH/Housing and Health	2	8%	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>			

Three local settlements were agreed in relation to the complaints received in 2010/11. These were:

- CNH paid compensation of £1200 in relation to the condition of a property which was the subject of a mutual exchange.
- CNH paid compensation of £50 for failing to keep the complainant informed of the progress of their complaint about nuisance and anti-social behaviour by their neighbour.
- The Council has agreed to pay compensation of £250 for the time and trouble of pursuing a complaint relating to the granting of planning permission for an extension to a neighbour's property. There was an error in reporting the extent of permitted development rights to Plans Committee. The Council's view was that the outcome was not affected and this has been accepted by the Ombudsman.

The outcome of a separate investigation of a complaint relating to anti-social behaviour by council tenants is still awaited.

The Council's average response time to the Ombudsman's enquiries during the year was 19.6 days. This was inside the Ombudsman's target of 28 days and a slight improvement on last year's performance of 20.0 days.

The Ombudsman's Annual Letter will be published on the Council's website and circulated to the Cabinet once it is received.

Caroline Marshall  
Corporate Service Development Officer

Michael Hopkins  
Standards and Monitoring Support Officer