

CMT

Date:

Agenda item:

Subject: Complaints Management – Annual Report 2013/14

Lead officer: Karin Lane, Head of Information Governance

Lead member: Councillor Mark Allison

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Monica Coleman, Complaints Team Manager

Recommendations:

1. To note the contents of the report.
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1. Report and executive summary

- 1.1 To give CMT an overview of the council's management and performance in responding to complaints and the issues residents and customers have felt strongly enough to complain about. Effective complaint management is an important element of maintaining the council's reputation. Complaints are also a valuable tool in helping to understand resident's and customer's expectations of service delivery and should be an essential part in identifying service improvements across the council.

2. Details

- 2.1 Data for the annual report has been extracted from spreadsheets set up for each department.
- 2.2 The formal complaints procedure response timescales are:
 - Stage 1 complaints within 20 working days; and
 - Stage 2 complaints within 25 working days.
- 2.3 Social services have different statutory timescales with Adult Social Care complaints subject to a single stage review with a flexible timescale to be confirmed within 10 days. Children's Social Care complaints are subject to a three stage process and there is also the option to increase the response time deadline, to reflect the complexity of these types of

complaints. The response times are Stage 1 within 10 working days (or extended to 20 working days), Stage 2 within 25 working days (or extended to 65 working days) and Stage 3 within 30 working days.

- 2.4 Due to the statutory requirements of children's social care complaints, there is a separate complaints policy for these complaints.
- 2.5 The corporate complaints policy does not cover complaints subject to separate statutory procedures.
- 2.6 There is a single point of contact for all telephone and email complaints.

3. Complaints

- 3.1 The council received a total of 961 complaints in 2013/14, with 886 Stage 1 complaints received in 2013/14, a 19% increase from 2012/13.

	2013/14	2012/13	% change
Children, Schools & Families	79	60	26.7%
Community & Housing	94	107	-12.1%
Corporate Services	240	236	1.7%
Environment & Regeneration	473	341	38.7%
Total	886	744	19.1%

- 3.3 The council received a total of 75 Stage 2 complaints in 2013/14, a decrease of 11% on 2012/13.

	2013/14	2012/13	% change
Children, Schools & Families	6	6	0%
Community & Housing	4	9	-55.6%
Corporate Services	18	31	-41.9%
Environment & Regeneration	47	38	23.7%
Total	75	84	-10.7%

- 3.4 No Stage 3 complaints were received by Children's Social Care in 2013/14.
- 3.5 The council responded to 84.8% of Stage 1 complaints on time in 2013/14, a decrease in performance from 2012/13. However, there was an increase in performance in dealing with Stage 2 complaints.

	2013/14		2012/13		2011/12	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2
Children, Schools & Families	58.2%	33.3%	85.0%	28.6%	84.1%	33.3%
Community & Housing	87.2%	100%	89.4%	100%	79.7%	100%
Corporate Services	91.7%	83.3%	93.6%	83.9%	78.0%	90.0%
Environment & Regeneration	85.2%	91.5%	89.7%	84.2%	79.9%	81.5%
Total	84.8%	85.3%	90.5%	81.2%	80.0%	81.8%

- 3.6 The council upheld / partially upheld 433 complaints in 2013/14, 45% of the total number received, an increase from 32% for 2012/13.

	2013/14		2012/13	
	Upheld	Partially upheld	Upheld	Partially upheld
Children, Schools & Families	2	3	4	3
Community & Housing	15	12	20	4
Corporate Services	40	57	38	12
Environment & Regeneration	204	100	143	45
Total	261	172	205	64

- 3.7 The Complaints team received 202 compliments on departmental service delivery.

	2013/14	2012/13
Children's Schools & Families	23	26
Community & Housing	115	100
Corporate Services	44	79
Environment & Regeneration	22	18
Total	202	223

- 3.8 The Complaints team work closely with service areas where there are a large number of complaints, to identify any trends or problem areas that need to be addressed. This has resulted in some positive action including training for Housing Needs staff on how to deliver a 'no' message more positively and Merton Adult Education changing their waiting list procedure.
- 3.9 A Data Quality checking template is sent to all officers dealing with complaints, to help them ensure all aspects of the complaint are addressed. It is not mandatory for officers to complete the template. If a Stage two complaint is received and the template was completed at Stage 1, then it will be reviewed. If the reason for the complaint escalating was something that should have been addressed at Stage 1, it will be raised with the responding officer.
- 3.10 Complaints Officers can, and do, make recommendations for payments to be made to complainants, either as compensation for time and trouble or as a remedy for injustice. During the year £550 was paid to complainants, with a further £2,000 paid to a complainant as a result of a children's social care Stage 2 complaint.

4. Policy and Informal Complaints

- 4.1 Policy complaints are defined as ‘expressions of dissatisfaction with the council’s policy in a specific service area’, as opposed to the council’s failure to meet its service standards. Policy complaints are dealt with under Stage 1 of the complaints process with issues fed back to team managers so that they are aware of the impact of their decisions. Policy complaints cannot be escalated without an appeal.
- 4.2 The Complaints team have worked closely in ensuring that when a complaint is classed a policy complaint, that the service user is either signposted to the relevant policy on the council’s website or sent a copy of the policy.
- 4.3 Twenty-eight policy complaints were received in 2013/14, a decrease from 33 in 2012/13.

	2013/14	2012/13
Children, Schools and Families	1	1
Community and Housing	1	1
Corporate Services	12	15
Environment and Regeneration	14	16
Total	28	33

- 4.4 Of the 12 Policy complaints Corporate Services received, five related to bailiff policy. The rest related to:
- Council tax exemptions;
 - Single person discount;
 - Housing benefit timescales; and
 - Freedom passes.
- 4.5 Of the 14 Policy complaints Environment and Regeneration received, five related to waste charges and wheelie bins and four related to payments and policies of parking. The rest related to:-
- Planning not adhering to policy;
 - Lack of out of hours enforcement service;
 - Tree cutting;
 - CCTV vans parking on double yellow lines; and
 - Timings of crossover work.
- 4.6 Community and Housing received one policy complaint which related to the toilet provision at Wimbledon library and Children, Schools and Families received one policy complaint which related to payment of rent.

- 4.7 Defining complaints correctly is key in ensuring complaints are dealt with effectively. Informal complaints are issues where the problem is considered resolvable quickly, for example a missed bin collection, or where the customer was not sure how to contact the appropriate service to deal with a matter so contacted the Complaints team. These enquiries are directed to the relevant service area to allow them to correct the perceived service failure, within two working days. In 2013/14, when detailed statistics started to be kept, 320 informal complaints were received. The figures below show the total received for each department and in brackets are the figures for the service areas which received the most informal complaints.

Children, Schools & Families	2 (1 Social Care & 1 Commissioning, Strategy & Performance)
Community & Housing	7 (4 Housing)
Corporate Services	23 (20 Customer Services)
Environment & Regeneration	288 (239 Street Scene & Waste)

5. Top 5 areas of complaints

- 5.1 In 2013/14 the top 5 areas that customers complained about the most were:-

	2013/14		2012/13	
	Number	% of total no. received*	Number	% of total no. received*
Waste	517	40%	406	35%
Council Tax	90	7%	91	7.9%
Benefits	74	5.8%	77	6.7%
Parking	78	6%	73	6.3%
Planning	73	5.7%	40	3.4%

*Complaints figures include informal, Stage 1 and Stage 2

6. Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Enquiries

- 6.1 The Annual Review letter from the LGO is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 6.2 A detailed breakdown of investigations made by the LGO for all London Boroughs is attached as **Appendix B**. It should be noted that the council's LGO statistics are for complaints received and dealt with, within the financial year 2013/14, but the LGO has included in their statistics, cases received and decided in different business years. The council's data is therefore slightly different to the LGO's. The council has received 22 investigations over the course of the year, and 8 enquiries have been made but have not been subject to an investigation. These are detailed in **Appendix C**. The council answered 96% of all LGO complaints and enquiries on time.

- 6.3 In total, £4,000 has been paid following decisions made by the LGO. The majority of payments were to compensate complainants for time and trouble.
- 6.4 The LGO statistics show that Merton, with 107 complaints, had one of the lowest number of LGO complaints across London – ranked 25th out of the 33 London boroughs. Merton had 62.1% of LGO complaints upheld, which was the 5th highest across London. However it should be noted that 70% of all London Boroughs had over 50% of their complaints upheld.
- 6.5 With effect from February 2014, the LGO amended their descriptions of their decisions, attached as **Appendix D**.

7. Benchmarking

- 7.1 The Complaints team continues to work with London wide complaints groups to share best practice and are active members of the London Complaints Managers Group, who work closely with the LGO and other agencies.
- 7.2 There has been no benchmarking against the numbers of complaints received by neighbouring boroughs, because the recording of complaints varies greatly so there is no comparative data which is of value.
- 7.3 A recent national report issued by the LGO has reported that complaints about handling of benefits and council tax rose by 26% and Adult Social Care by 16% in 2013/14. Benefits, council tax and Adult Social Care were also the areas where the LGO was most likely to uphold complaints after detailed investigations. It should be noted that in Merton, complaints for Revenues and Benefits reduced by 6% in 2013/14 but Adult Social Care complaints increased from 33 in 2012/13 to 37 in 2013/14, a 12% increase.

8. Members and MP Enquiries

- 8.1 The total number of Member and MP enquiries received via the Complaints team in 2013/14 was 2,583 with 90.17% responded to within the 15 working day timescale.

	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Children Schools and Families	117	159	176
Community and Housing	804	724	735
Corporate Services	329	300	580
Environment and Regeneration	1,333	1,156	1,506
Total	2,583	2,339	2,997

- 8.2 Of the 329 received for Corporate Services, 266 related to Revenues and Benefits.
- 8.3 Of the 117 received for Children Schools and Families, 30 related to School Admissions and 17 for Central Social Work.
- 8.4 Of the 1333 received in Environment and Regeneration, 371 related to Traffic and Highways and 342 for Waste Services issues.
- 8.5 Of the 804 Member and MP enquiries received for Community and Housing, 689 related to Housing Needs.
- 8.6 Details of Member and MP enquiries received by Ward are detailed in **Appendix E**.

9. Service improvements and learning from complaints

- 9.1 Where LGO enquiries have been particularly complex or have resulted in recommendations for changes to be made to council practice or policy, the Complaints team has arranged 'post-mortem' meetings with the relevant officers to identify lessons learned and identify actions to be taken to improve service delivery.
- 9.2 An LGO complaint about the conduct of a Chair of a Child Protection Conference led to a recommendation that we review the information given to parents regarding complaints about Child Protection Conferences. The Children, Schools and Families complaints policy has been updated to include the appropriate guidance and is currently being consulted on with officers.
- 9.3 An LGO enquiry was made about the way we pursued recovery action following non-payment of a penalty charge notice by a vulnerable customer. We have now introduced a procedure for Parking Services

when dealing with vulnerable debtors, such as those suffering from mental ill-health.

- 9.4 Following an enquiry made on behalf of a local resident, the LGO recommended that advice and information given to parents by Education Welfare Officers by telephone should be followed up in writing. This has been implemented.
- 9.5 Following a complaint made this year, the Library and Heritage Services Manager has updated the terms and conditions of use of Merton's public libraries. The procedure for suspending a user from our library services has been made clearer and the appeals process is also described in this document. A library user who was suspended made a complaint to the LGO which was not upheld as they were satisfied that there was no evidence of fault.
- 9.6 At the recommendation of the LGO we have updated our website to ensure our requirements for booking sporting facilities are clearly explained.
- 9.7 After an LGO complaint was upheld regarding charging for adult social care, the council wrote to all care providers to remind them that they cannot charge extra fees for the same care directly to the service user or their families. A reminder is also issued with correspondence sent out relating to financial assessments.
- 9.8 Weekly lists are now sent to Directors and managers with due and outstanding complaints and member enquiries, so they are fully aware of any issues within their service areas.
- 9.9 In November 2013, Parking Services appointed a Customer Relations Manager. The role includes identifying trends in complaints made. Details of those trends and the actions taken to respond to complaints made are attached as **Appendix F**.
- 9.10 Complaints are a central component of the new Ofsted inspection framework and we are required to evidence organisational learning from complaints and customer feedback. Detailed information on complaints about the Children, Schools and Families department during 2013/14 is now held on file and is readily available for inspection purposes.

- 9.11 With effect from December 2013, complainants are now being sent customer feedback forms with their acknowledgement to both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. This feedback is being used for learning from complaints. To date 13 feedback forms have been received

Question	% Yes	Comments
Was the letter correctly addressed?	92%	Surname spelled incorrectly
Does the letter include details of an officer to contact?	85%	Phone number/email only
Did the letter address all points raised?	62%	Points ignored - escalation
Was the letter easy to understand?	92%	Less jargon
Did the letter explain what had happened?	23%	Partial / unconvincing explanation
Did the letter give details of next steps of complaints?	92%	
Other comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied & impressed at prompt & thorough response over the holiday period • Response delayed, full of "legaleeze" & did not feel like much of an apology • Satisfied at the moment, hope collections / cleansing continue (x4) • Subsidiary matters raised in complaint not addressed, only main subject • Feels at stage two that complaint still unanswered after "weeks of errors, delays, obfuscation, denial & refusal to learn and apply lessons" – escalating to LGO 		

10. Next Steps

- 10.1 The Complaints team will review the corporate complaints procedure to ensure it is fit for purpose and takes account of any new legislation impacting on complaints.

11. Alternative options

- 11.1 Not applicable.

12. Consultation undertaken or proposed

- 12.1 The Complaints Officers were consulted on this report.

13. Timetable

- 13.1 This is dependant on receipt of the LGO annual letter.

14. Financial, resource and property implications

- 14.1 During the year £2,550 was paid to complainants as local settlement and £4,000 was paid following decisions made by the LGO, mainly for time and trouble payments. These amounts are paid out from the service area budget that the complaint was about.

- 14.2 Stage 2 complaints subject to the Children Act regulations require the appointment of an Independent Investigator and an Independent Person. New procedures have been put in place to ensure improved value for money when appointing these officers.

15. Legal and statutory implications

- 15.1 The council has a number of legal and statutory obligations for adult and children's social care.
- 15.2 There is no statutory requirement to publish this report.

16. Human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications

- 16.1 It is important all those involved in dealing with complaints are mindful of ensuring a consistent approach with all complainants in line with equalities principles.
- 16.2 All complaints where there has been an allegation of discrimination are reviewed the Equalities and Community Cohesion Officer. There were 11 complaints in 2013/14 that alleged discrimination, one was partially upheld and the rest were not upheld. The partially upheld complaint related to the non-payment of a penalty charge notice, where the member of the public had mental health issues. A procedure has now been introduced for Parking Services when dealing with vulnerable debtors.

17. Risk management and health and safety implications

- 17.1 Poor complaint handling could be a reputational risk to the council and also incur compensation payments to complainants.

18. Appendices – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- 18.1 Appendix A - Annual Review Letter of the LGO.
Appendix B – LGO complaints by category and number upheld
Appendix C – Merton LGO statistics
Appendix D – Description of LGO decisions
Appendix E – Member and MP enquiries analysis by Ward
Appendix F – Learning from complaints for Parking Services

19. Background Papers – the following documents have been relied on in drawing up this report but do not form part of the report

19.1 None

20. Report author

- Name: Monica Coleman
- Tel: 020 8545 3573
- Email: complaints@merton.gov.uk

Local Government
OMBUDSMAN

7 July 2014

By email

Mr Ged Curran
Chief Executive
Merton London Borough Council

Dear Mr Ged Curran

Annual Review Letter 2014

I am writing with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2014. This is the first full year of recording complaints under our new business model so the figures will not be directly comparable to previous years. This year's statistics can be found in the table attached.

A summary of complaint statistics for every local authority in England will also be included in a new yearly report on local government complaint handling. This will be published alongside our annual review letters on 15 July. This approach is in response to feedback from councils who told us that they want to be able to compare their performance on complaints against their peers.

For the first time this year we are also sending a copy of each annual review letter to the leader of the council as well as to the chief executive. We hope this will help to support greater democratic scrutiny of local complaint handling and ensure effective local accountability of public services. In the future we will also send a copy of any published Ombudsman report to the leader of the council as well as the chief executive.

Developments at the Local Government Ombudsman

At the end of March Anne Seex retired as my fellow Local Government Ombudsman. Following an independent review of the governance of the LGO last year the Government has committed to formalising a single ombudsman structure at LGO, and to strengthen our governance, when parliamentary time allows. I welcome these changes and have begun the process of strengthening our governance by inviting the independent Chairs of our Audit and Remuneration Committees to join our board, the Commission for Administration in England. We have also recruited a further independent advisory member.

Future for local accountability

There has been much discussion in Parliament and elsewhere about the effectiveness of complaints handling in the public sector and the role of ombudsmen. I have supported the creation of a single ombudsman for all public services in England. I consider this is the best

way to deliver a system of redress that is accessible for users; provides an effective and comprehensive service; and ensures that services are accountable locally.

To contribute to that debate we held a roundtable discussion with senior leaders from across the local government landscape including the Local Government Association, Care Quality Commission and SOLACE. The purpose of this forum was to discuss the challenges and opportunities that exist to strengthen local accountability of public services, particularly in an environment where those services are delivered by many different providers.

Over the summer we will be developing our corporate strategy for the next three years and considering how we can best play our part in enhancing the local accountability of public services. We will be listening to the views of a wide range of stakeholders from across local government and social care and would be pleased to hear your comments.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Dr Jane Martin
Local Government Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaints and enquiries received by category 2013/14

Local Authority	London	Adult Care Services	Benefits & Tax	Corporate & Other Services	Education & Childrens Services
Barking & Dagenham	Yes	13	22	8	25
Barnet LB	Yes	15	31	14	24
Bexley LB	Yes	5	20	4	13
Brent LB	Yes	21	30	11	17
Bromley LB	Yes	30	40	5	23
Camden LB	Yes	11	7	11	19
City of London	Yes		1	1	1
Croydon LB	Yes	28	47	10	44
Ealing LB	Yes	24	28	13	19
Enfield LB	Yes	14	23	5	27
Greenwich LB	Yes	7	21	9	17
Hackney LB	Yes	7	35	9	15
Hammersmith & Fulham	Yes	8	29	9	10
Haringey LB	Yes	12	63	14	15
Harrow LB	Yes	17	29	6	19
Havering LB	Yes	12	22	9	5
Hillingdon LB	Yes	13	26	6	10
Hounslow LB	Yes	19	54	9	11
Islington LB	Yes	13	19	14	14
Kensington & Chelsea	Yes	7	9	2	12
Kingston upon Thames	Yes	7	9	2	11
Lambeth LB	Yes	24	68	15	43
Lewisham LB	Yes	12	35	9	20
Merton LB	Yes	10	23	5	9
Newham LB	Yes	13	36	15	27
Redbridge LB	Yes	27	30	6	19
Richmond upon Thames	Yes	12	3	1	13
Southwark LB	Yes	10	28	14	22
Sutton LB	Yes	9	12	1	8
Tower Hamlets LB	Yes	6	23	10	6
Waltham Forest LB	Yes	16	29	13	23

Wandsworth LB	Yes	5	25	5	12
Westminster City C	Yes	11	55	6	8

Notes

The statistics include all the complaints and enquiries received in 2013/14.

Number of complaints and enquiries received: a number of cases will have been received and decided in different business years, this means the number of complaints and enquiries will not always match t

For further information on interpreting the statistics, click

[Local Government Ombudsman • Note on interpretation of local autl](#)

Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Highways & Transport	Housing	Planning & Development	Total
6	23	21	2	120
17	39	25	26	191
5	21	9	8	85
11	25	49	15	179
11	14	19	15	157
9	31	45	9	142
	3	3		9
16	29	64	16	254
11	36	55	16	202
7	15	44	15	150
6	12	30	8	110
8	31	53	8	166
3	26	36	9	130
22	26	48	23	223
14	46	17	13	161
4	16	32	19	119
6	3	21	8	93
10	28	35	11	177
8	21	33	7	129
7	9	16	7	69
1	18	13	4	65
24	46	79	9	308
10	10	27	4	127
9	28	9	14	107
15	79	103	9	297
7	37	27	21	174
5	7	9	12	62
12	11	76	21	194
6	8	13	9	66
6	24	30	6	111
12	24	34	11	162

6	13	25	7	98
12	25	87	4	208

the number of decisions made.

[hority statistics](#)

Decisions made (by local authority)

Authority	London	Advice given	Closed after initial enquiries		Referred back for local resolution		Upheld	Not upheld	% upheld*	Total
				Incomplete/invalid						
Barking & Dagenham	Yes		14	36	3	48	11	9	55.0%	121
Barnet LB	Yes		14	67	3	79	14	10	58.3%	187
Bexley LB	Yes		0	28	2	38	10	12	45.5%	90
Brent LB	Yes		10	48	6	77	11	15	42.3%	167
Bromley LB	Yes		2	42	3	74	14	20	41.2%	155
Camden LB	Yes		24	66	2	37	20	16	55.6%	165
City of London	Yes		2	2	0	1	0	1	0.0%	6
Croydon LB	Yes		10	71	6	121	37	23	61.7%	268
Ealing LB	Yes		12	63	6	86	39	21	65.0%	227
Enfield LB	Yes		7	36	5	66	23	16	59.0%	153
Greenwich LB	Yes		16	33	6	45	14	11	56.0%	125
Hackney LB	Yes		24	47	9	67	31	6	83.8%	184
Hammersmith & Fulham	Yes		11	57	4	40	11	12	47.8%	135
Haringey LB	Yes		17	72	3	83	32	23	58.2%	230
Harrow LB	Yes		5	56	4	61	21	17	55.3%	164
Havering LB	Yes		6	30	4	60	11	10	52.4%	121
Hillingdon LB	Yes		4	26	2	44	5	4	55.6%	85
Hounslow LB	Yes		8	48	3	100	19	15	55.9%	193
Islington LB	Yes		24	41	4	39	18	20	47.4%	146
Kensington & Chelsea	Yes		1	18	4	33	4	14	22.2%	74
Kingston upon Thames	Yes		5	21	2	26	8	6	57.1%	68
Lambeth LB	Yes		41	95	13	104	51	34	60.0%	338
Lewisham LB	Yes		8	32	7	62	15	10	60.0%	134
Merton LB	Yes		1	27	4	49	18	11	62.1%	110
Newham LB	Yes		19	90	8	133	28	21	57.1%	299
Redbridge LB	Yes		5	52	7	63	30	25	54.5%	182
Richmond upon Thames	Yes		0	21	3	21	11	10	52.4%	66
Southwark LB	Yes		47	57	7	69	44	18	71.0%	242
Sutton LB	Yes		3	19	4	30	4	6	40.0%	66
Tower Hamlets LB	Yes		11	40	3	51	10	3	76.9%	118
Waltham Forest LB	Yes		7	52	4	62	27	20	57.4%	172
Wandsworth LB	Yes		9	37	2	37	6	13	31.6%	104
Westminster City C	Yes		9	53	7	77	18	57	24.0%	221

Notes

Number of complaints and enquiries received: a number of cases will have been received and decided in different business years, this means the number of complaints and enquiries received will not always

* Percentage of complaints that are investigated in more detail.

For further information on interpreting the statistics click

[Local Government Ombudsman • Note on interpretation of local authority statistics](#)

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Annual complaints report 2013/14: Appendix C LGO investigations

	Ref no.	Department – section	Decision	Outcome
1	12 021 037	E&R – Planning Enforcement	No fault but unacceptable delays in reaching a decision	Apology sent
2	12 017 527	E&R – Planning	Administration fault	Procedures changed
3	13 011 239	E&R Planning	Decision still to be made	Still outstanding
4	13 012 567	E&R Building Control	Not upheld	N/A
5	13 010 151	E& R Planning	Did not cause significant injustice	N/A
6	13 013 485	E&R Planning	No fault	N/A
7	13 013 710	CS – Council Tax	No fault	N/A
8	13 0178 91	E&R Planning	Decision still to be made	Still outstanding
9	13 015 306	E&R Waste	There was fault leading to injustice	£100
10	13 008 336	E&R Future Merton	No administrative fault	N/A
11	13 016 595	E&R Planning	Injustice caused to the complainant	£600
12	12 020 096	CS – Council tax recovery	Fault which caused an injustice	N/A
13	12 004 165	CS – Customer Services Revs & Bens	Injustice caused	£150
14	13 013 079	CS – Customer Services Council Tax	Fault causing unnecessary distress and time and trouble in attending court	£100
15	13 000 426	CS & E&R PCN Bailiff	Injustice caused	£250 (offset against debt)
16	12 007 829	CS & E&R PCN Bailiff car removal	Fault	£1,250
17	13 012 454	CSF	Injustice caused	£300
18	13 015 268	CSF Education	Fault remedy council apologise and procedural changes.	Apology sent & procedures changed
19	13 006 532	CSF - SEN	Fault	£1,500
20	13 015 714	ASC	No significant injustice but fault in the way social worker spoke to family and friends	Apology
21	13 014 000	ASC	Decision still to be made	No decision
22	13 003 098	C&H	No maladministration.	N/A
Total paid was £4,000 plus £250 which was offset against a debt				

Decision Notices			
23	12 021 173	E&R - Parking	Outside jurisdiction
24	13 000 742	E&R - Parking	Outside jurisdiction
25	12 021 187	E&R – Planning	Other suitable appeal process
26	13 005 681	ER – Parking	Other suitable appeal process
27	12 012 292	ASC	The council already gave a suitable remedy for injustice
28	13 005 263	HR	Outside jurisdiction
29	13 005 739	CS – Revs and Bens	Other suitable appeal process
30	13 008 713	CS – Council Tax	Not enough evidence of fault by the Council to warrant investigation

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LGO Decision Descriptions with effect from February 2014

Decision Reasons from 1 April 2013	What changed in February 2014	Annual Letter categorisation
<i>Not in jurisdiction (OJ) and no discretion</i>	<i>No Change</i>	<i>Closed after initial enquiries</i>
<i>Not in jurisdiction (OJ) and discretion not exercised</i>		
<i>Not investigated</i>		<i>Not upheld</i>
<i>To discontinue investigation</i>		<i>Upheld</i>
<i>To discontinue investigation (for those cases where a remedy is agreed with an authority without LGO making a finding of maladministration or fault)</i>		
<i>Investigation complete and satisfied with authority actions or proposed actions and not appropriate to issue report S30(1B)</i>	<i>Investigation complete: Maladministration and Injustice</i>	<i>Upheld</i>
	<i>Investigation complete: Maladministration, No Injustice</i>	
	<i>Investigation complete: No Maladministration</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
<i>Investigation complete and appropriate to issue a report S30(1)</i>	<i>Investigation complete and report issued: Maladministration and Injustice</i>	<i>Upheld</i>
	<i>Investigation complete and report issued: Maladministration, No Injustice</i>	
	<i>Investigation complete and report issued: No Maladministration</i>	<i>Not upheld</i>

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	Community & Housing						Corporate Services						Children, Schools & Families					Total	
	Access & Assessment	ASC Commissioning	Public Health	Direct Provision	Housing	Libraries	Business Improvement	Corp. Gov.	Customer Services	HR	I&T	Resources	CSP	Early Years	Schools admissions	Social Care & Youth Inclusion	Education		SENAT
Abbey	2	1	0	0	15	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	23
Cannon Hill	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Colliers Wood	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	6
Cricket Green	15	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	23
Dundonald	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
Figges Marsh	13	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Graveney	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	9
Hillside	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	12
Lavender Fields	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Longthornton	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Lower Morden	10	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
Merton Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Pollards Hill	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	7
Ravensbury	8	0	1	0	19	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	33
Raynes Park	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	10
St Helier	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
Trinity	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Village	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Barnes	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	6	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	16
Wimbledon Park	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	8
Blank & splits	14	5	0	0	12	0	0	3	5	1	0	2	4	1	0	2	1	0	50
Total	85	12	1	1	70	1	2	3	277	6	1	11	11	3	1	3	10	0	498

Environment & Regeneration

	Traffic & Highways	Waste	Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Licensing	Parking	Planning	Future Merton	Property	Greenspaces	Leisure	Safer Merton	Transport	Splits	Total
Abbey	19	21	6	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	55
Cannon Hill	19	6	1	0	4	1	1	2	0	0	0	4	38
Colliers Wood	9	9	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	22
Cricket Green	3	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	12
Dundonald	4	7	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	18
Figges Marsh	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
Graveney	21	20	8	3	6	1	0	1	0	2	0	5	67
Hillside	9	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	19
Lavender Fields	3	6	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	5	20
Longthornton	26	15	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	1	8	60
Lower Morden	9	6	3	1	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	27
Merton Park	4	6	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	19
Mitcham and Morden - MP	108	129	68	34	59	10	11	39	4	19	0	36	517
Pollards Hill	8	12	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	3	29
Ravensbury	12	9	4	3	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	37
Raynes Park	15	7	5	2	4	1	0	3	0	1	0	6	44
St Helier	5	9	3	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	27
Trinity	7	15	4	2	8	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	40
Village	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6
West Barnes	51	30	9	3	11	1	1	0	0	0	0	12	118
Wimbledon - MP	14	3	5	15	8	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	51
Wimbledon Park	13	11	4	3	7	3	4	7	0	0	0	3	55
Blank	9	7	1	17	4	2	0	2	0	0	0		42
Total	371	336	138	98	133	28	17	65	5	31	1	106	1,329

Parking Services – Learning from Complaints December 2013 – July 2014

<u>Service Area</u>	<u>Complaint Trend</u>	<u>Issue identified</u>	<u>Improvement Implemented</u>
Telephone line into Parking Services	Difficulty getting through to an officer when telephoning Parking Services. Customer perception that nobody is in the office or if they are they do not answer the telephones. Customers reporting that their calls were cut off.	The standard phone system was not able to cope with the volume of calls received by Parking Services. Incoming calls were stuck in a 'bottle neck' situation resulting in some calls being cut off by the system. Also there was no queue system or notification that officers were dealing with other customer calls resulting in the customer thinking that the phones were left to ring unanswered.	New call centre system has been installed which is able to cope with a high volume of simultaneous calls. Bespoke menus and information messages have been created and built into the system with a view to streamlining the customer experience, providing key information from the first point of contact and enabling smooth and swift transit through to the correct officer. The system also includes a queue facility which advises the customer of their position.
Permit renewal reminders letters	Reminder letters for permit renewals were not received. Customer perception was that they had been forgotten and were not receiving the same service as other customers.	Reminder letters were sent out but there have been issues with missing post items in certain areas of the borough.	An on-going project is underway to look into different ways we can remind customers of their permit expiry dates. Also trialling various delivery services with alternative service providers.
Permit renewal reminders emails	Concerns that email reminders did not contain sufficient information regarding methods of permit renewal other than on-line	Investigation identified that not all of the contact information contained on the reminder letter had been	The email reminder format was amended so that the missing contact information is now included on all renewal reminder

	options.	transferred over to the reminder email format via the system, and that some information was missing.	emails.
Service complaints within PCN representations	Complaint issues included in representations against PCNs cannot be responded to within the statutory PCN process. Customer perception is that these issues are being purposely ignored.	Identified a need to provide clarification on the different procedures, to be open and transparent in providing details of how customers can make a complaint and to maintain a consistent approach to complaints within representations.	Currently working with the PCN Processing Team to develop a procedure to ensure a consistent approach to dealing with service failure allegations within representations, which ensure the two procedures remain separate. Template paragraphs are now used within representation responses which detail how to submit a complaint and provide the contact details for the Complaints Team.
Car Park tariff boards	Customer confusion over specific tariff boards at car parks where an evening tariff applies after a certain time. Customer perception was that we had made the information purposely complex in the hope to encourage and benefit from overpayment.	The tariff system across the borough is currently under review. However, an interim measure was identified to provide clarification at the car parks where the concerns had been raised.	An information sticker was added to the relevant tariff boards, which provides additional information to that already on the boards and hopefully assists in providing further clarification.