

**REPORT TO:** Policy Performance and Review Committee

**MEETING DATE:** 7 October 2020

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

**SUBJECT:** Customer Feedback Reporting 2019/2020

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## **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To report on the use of the Council's Complaints Handling Procedure for 2019/2020 (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020).
- 1.2 To raise awareness of implemented and planned improved processes as result of trends seen in the reporting.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note the report and where appropriate highlight areas for further consideration.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 East Lothian Council complies with the model complaints handling procedure (CHP) for local authorities introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO):

**Stage 1 (Frontline Resolution)** - Complaint dealt with at point of service within 5 working days

**Stage 2 (Investigation)** – Complaint investigated; acknowledged within 3 working days and response provided within 20 working days. If complainants remain dissatisfied after completing this process they have a legal right of appeal to the SPSO.

- 3.2. Complaints handled at Stage 1 where customers are not satisfied with the response, escalate to Stage 2. Such complaints continue to be recorded separately. This ensures that the reporting of complaints “escalated to Stage 2” are more accurate.
- 3.3 The Customer Feedback and FOI team have grown in experience over the last year. Staff training has been a priority reducing key man dependency, strengthening knowledge not only regarding complaints but also within the wider FOI team. This has built capacity within both teams making all areas compliant within the required regulations.
- 3.4 The SPSO have included a new category within the complaint structure of “Upheld”, “Not Upheld”, “Partially Upheld”; going forward this will also include “Resolved.” The definition of this *“is when both the organisation and the customer agree what actions (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer”*, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld. In all cases where the category ‘Resolved’ has been applied to a complaint there must be a clear record of how the complaint was resolved, what action was agreed and the customer’s agreement to this as a final outcome.

With the introduction of ‘Resolved’ as an outcome to a complaint and to foster the idea that complaints are also learning opportunities, we are now asking that, at the closure of every Stage 1 complaint, all service areas involved complete a Complaint Handling Completion Form. This form will not only capture frequent points of complaint, but also will demonstrate what resolutions are rectifying the issues that our customers are facing. To this effect we will be able to proactively develop new practices, policies and procedures to improve the services we offer, engage constructively with customers and foster positive customer experiences.

- 3.5 The Feedback Team continue to support service areas and there has been increased focus over the year on training, communication and making the most of Feedback data to inform service improvements. Training has been delivered to Head Teachers regarding the Complaint Handling Procedure to strengthen their understanding when completing Stage 2 complaints.

Customer Service staff have also been made aware of the Complaints process, including what is undertaken when dealing with complaints and how these are progressed. Discussions have also been held to aid further understanding of how complaints can be used as a learning opportunity for the Council to improve their services.

- 3.6 The Council continues to record and report on complaints received by the Contact Centre, Local Area Offices and the Customer Feedback Team. Service areas are encouraged to report complaints they receive through these channels to ensure recording is as accurate as possible.

3.7 In previous reports it was highlighted that CRM (Customer Relationship Management software – case handling) is being replaced with the new OCP (On-line Customer Portal) to improve processes and generate efficiencies. The Feedback Team continues to liaise with the OCP Project Team regarding build requirements. It had been hoped that the migration would take place by Summer 2020; due to COVID-19, however, this will be delayed until normal services have fully resumed.

3.8 This report covers all Council services.

### 3.9 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK OVERVIEW 2019/2020

3.9.1 During 2019/2020, East Lothian Council received **899** complaints, compared with **717** in 2018/2019. Whilst there has been an increase, overall 2019/2020 was a positive year in relation to the continued decrease in Stage 2 complaints and the number of complaints not upheld.

#### 2019/2020

Stage	Complaints	Compliments	Comments
1	840	237	172
2	59		

#### 2018/2019

Stage	Complaints	Compliments	Comments
1	634	244	109
2	83		

3.9.2 Complaint **response times** were as follows:

**Stage 1: 55%** (462 of 840) responded to within 5 working days.

**Stage 2: 56%** (33 of 59) responded to within 20 working days.

3.9.3 Response times have remained stable since 2018/2019 at 55% for Stage 1 and increased from 54% to 56% for Stage 2. Greater complexity around the Stage 2 requests has required lengthy investigations by ELC service areas extending the 20 working day timescale in some instances. Whilst the response time is longer than the SPSO guidelines, customers are advised if their Stage 2 complaint is going to take more than 20 days and provided with regular updates, where required.

### **3.10 COMPLAINT ANALYSIS 2019/2020**

3.10.1 Complaint **outcomes** were as follows:

**Stage 1: 840** complaints received

Not Upheld 58% (492)

Partially Upheld 22% (191)

Upheld 19% (157)

Escalated to Stage 5.2% (44)

**Please note: Totals will not match as not all complaints are closed in the same quarter as in which they are received.**

The service areas receiving the highest volume of **Stage 1** complaints in **2019/2020** were:

**Property Maintenance 27%** (228)

**Road Services 10%** (85)

**Community Housing 9%** (80)

**Stage 2: 59** complaints received

Not Upheld 53% (31)

Partially Upheld 27% (16)

Upheld 12% (7)

**Please note: Totals will not match as not all complaints are closed in the same quarter as in which they are received.**

The service areas receiving the highest volume of **Stage 2** complaints in **2019/2020** were:

**Education 50%** (30)

**Planning 22%** (13)

**Adult Wellbeing 20%** (12)

**Road Services** received 10% (85) of all Stage 1 complaints received in 2019/2020 (840). Of the complaints received, over 50% were not upheld.

**Community Housing** received 9% (80) of all Stage 1 complaints (840) and has seen an increase from 53 in 2018/2019. Of the complaints received, over 50% were not upheld.

**Property Maintenance** received 27% (228) of all Stage 1 complaints received in 2019/2020 (840). Stage 1 complaints have risen from 171 in 2018-2019 to 228 this year. However, Stage 2 complaints have seen a positive decrease from 10 to 5. Of the complaints received, over 40% were not upheld.

**3.10.2 A table of all Service Area Complaints in 2019/2020 is shown in Appendix 1. Service Area Response Timescales are shown in Appendix 2.**

### **3.11 COMPLIMENTS OVERVIEW 2019/2020**

3.11.1 **237** compliments were received in **2019/2020**.

The following Service Areas received a high percentage of compliments:

**Adult Wellbeing 14%** (33)

**Customer Services 20%** (48)

**Property Maintenance 14%** (34)

This follows the trend seen in previous years as these Service Areas have a high volume of customer facing interactions and as such have more opportunity to receive more feedback, both compliments and complaints.

### **3.12 COMMENTS OVERVIEW 2019/2020**

3.12.1 **171** comments were received in 2019/2020.

The following Service Areas received a high percentage of comments:

**Roads 29%** (49)

**Sports Countryside & Leisure 28%** (48)

**Waste 19%** (34)

This follows the trend seen in previous years as these Service Areas have a high volume of customer facing interactions and as such have more opportunity to receive more feedback; both compliments and comments.

### **3.13 SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS AS A RESULT OF FEEDBACK**

3.13.1 As a result of feedback received the following improvements and actions have been carried out:

## **Roads**

The overall level of complaints have increased in comparison to last year. 2018-2019 58 complaints received, whilst 2019-2020 attracted 85 complaints.

Road and footway maintenance is a theme that has been prominent this year, as have the continued complaints regarding street lighting.

The service area has proactively taken the opportunity to update information on the website on how to report faults and worked with Community Councils to promote a preferred method for reporting road-related defects within East Lothian Council.

The main focus has been on encouraging customers to use the online system via the website both as the first method and to obtain updates on reported defects. This approach ensures that all defects are recorded, giving a more accurate picture when assessing the condition of the road network for future planned works. All of these measures support the larger aim of improving the customer experience and reducing complaints.

## **Community Housing**

The overall themes of Community Housing complaints were service delivery and neighbour disputes. This is also reflected in the number of upheld/partially upheld complaints, which the service area acknowledges occurred mainly in these areas. The total number of Community Housing complaints has increased from 53 in 2018/2019 to 80 in 2019/2020.

The service area continues to work hard to deliver the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes. Information received from the recent independent comprehensive tenant's satisfaction survey indicates that with five out of the six customer satisfaction measures, East Lothian Council continues to perform above the local authority average as per the Council's landlord report. A link has been provided to the landlord report in section 7.1.

Nevertheless the service area continues to improve performance and customer satisfaction further through a range of activities including analysis of customer feedback, pro-active transactional customer surveys and tenant scrutiny activity with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel, which can lead to service improvement work where required. These feedback loops allow the service to highlight areas for improvement and continuously review performance and customer satisfaction.

## **Property Maintenance**

The overall the level of Property Maintenance complaints has increased in 2019/2020 to 228 from 181 in 2018/2019, with the main theme being service delivery. Of these complaints, 50% were not upheld.

The service area has been working with the Feedback Team to identify individual trends in sub-standard performance and have used these as a basis for staff development where required, for example through performance review with line managers. Additionally, the ongoing Property Maintenance service review is currently in the final stages of phase 4, which will ensure an enhanced and more agile customer interface across our void and day-to-day repairs functions.

#### **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

#### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Financial - None

5.2 Personnel - None

5.3 Other – None

#### **6. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

6.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy

#### **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/21407/2720\\_landlord\\_report\\_to\\_tenants\\_201819](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/21407/2720_landlord_report_to_tenants_201819)

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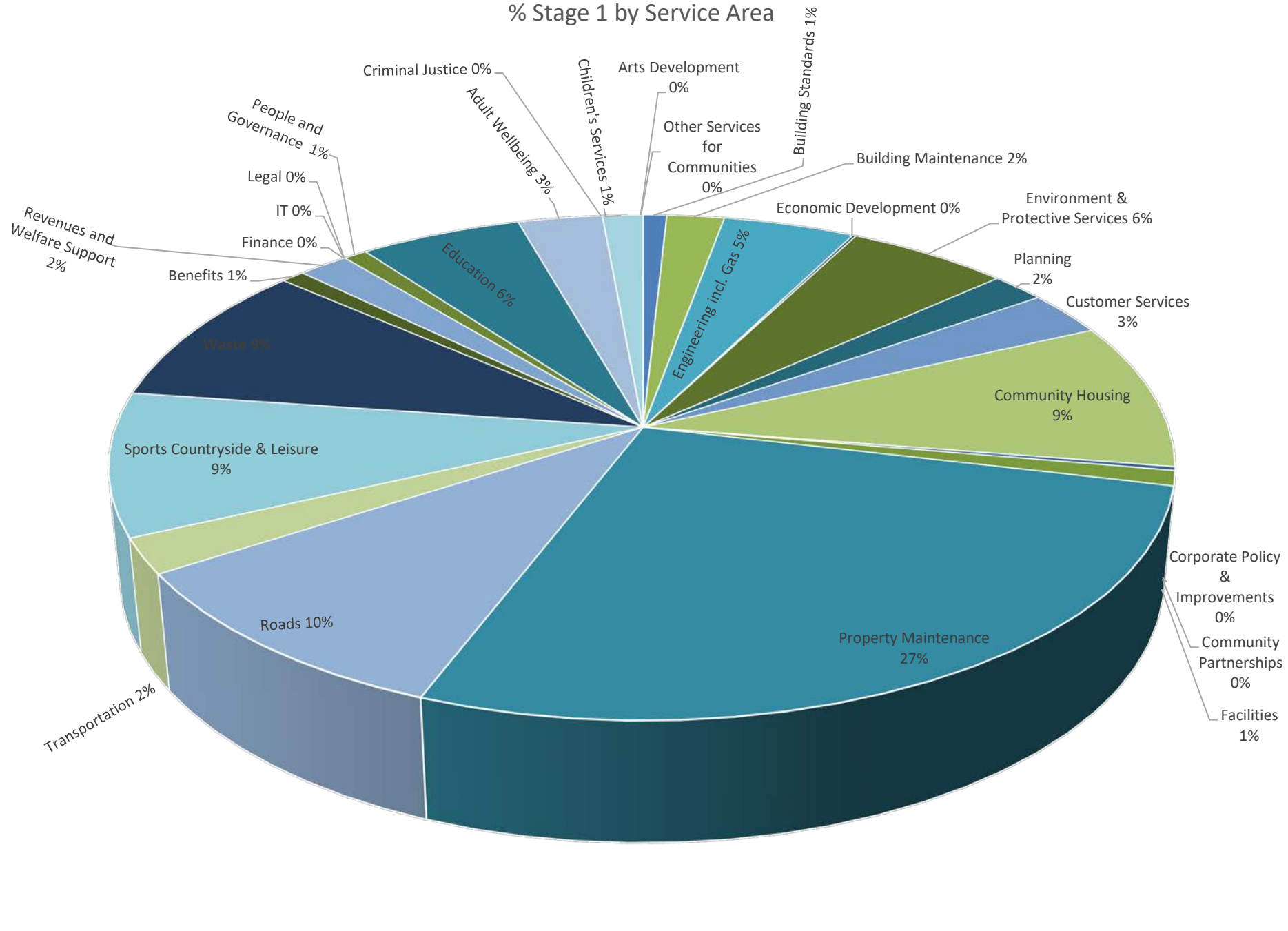


## Appendix 1 Customer Feedback Breakdown by Service 2019/2020

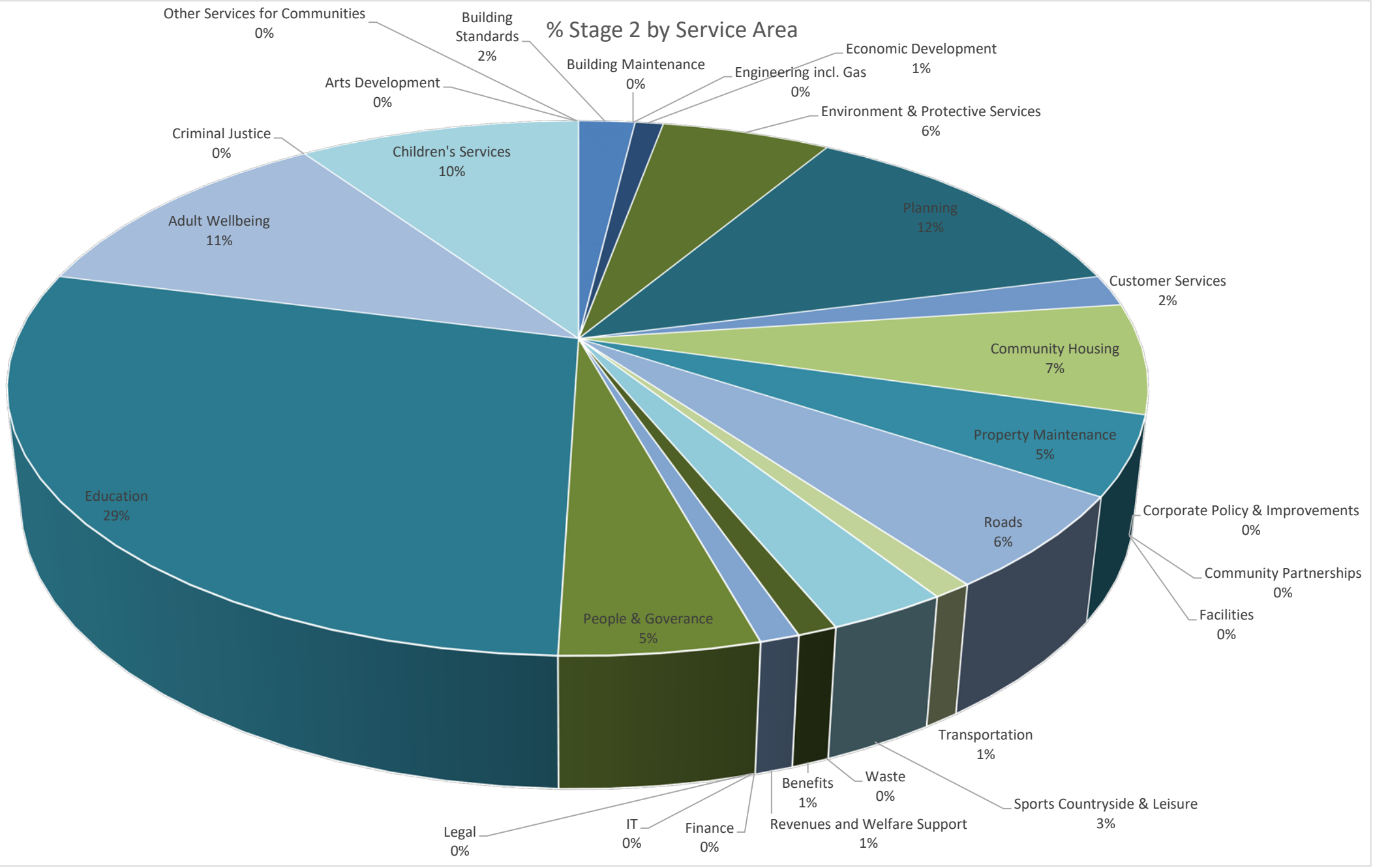
Service Area	Stage 1 Received	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Escalated to stage 2	Stage 2 Received	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Compliments	Comments
<b>Adult Wellbeing</b>											
Total	25	15	4	8	2	10	5	6	1	0	0
<b>Building Maintenance</b>											
Total	17	10	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Building Standards</b>											
Total	7	6	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Children's Services</b>											
Total	12	10	2	0	1	8	6	3	0	0	1
<b>Community Housing</b>											
Total	80	40	20	20	5	3	7	1	0	10	10
<b>Community Partnerships</b>											
Total	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2
<b>Corporate Policy &amp; Improvements</b>											
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Customer Services</b>											
Total	23	16	2	5	2	0	0	1	0	48	4
<b>Economic Development and Strategic Investment</b>											
Total	3	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Education</b>											
Total	50	33	12	5	8	20	16	10	2	3	3
<b>Engineering incl. Gas</b>											
Total	35	12	10	13	0	0	0	0	0	2	1

Service Area	Stage 1 Received	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Escalated to stage 2	Stage 2 Received	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Compliments	Comments
<b>Environment &amp; Protective Services</b>											
Total	46	31	7	8	4	0	4	0	0	4	7
<b>Facilities Management</b>											
Total	8	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	4
<b>People and Governance</b>											
Total	5	3	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	22	2
<b>Other Services for Communities</b>											
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Planning</b>											
Total	14	8	3	3	6	3	6	3	0	2	1
<b>Property Maintenance</b>											
Total	228	125	69	34	2	4	2	2	2	23	10
<b>Revenues and Welfare Support Services</b>											
Total	14	9	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	17	4
<b>Roads</b>											
Total	85	47	21	17	5	5	0	0	0	13	49
<b>Sports Countryside &amp; Leisure</b>											
Total	77	48	11	18	3	1	1	1	0	26	48
<b>Transportation</b>											
Total	18	8	8	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
<b>Waste</b>											
Total	77	53	12	12	0	0	0	0	0	27	34
<b>Benefits</b>											
Total	4	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	3	0

## % Stage 1 by Service Area



### % Stage 2 by Service Area



## Appendix 2 Customer Feedback Response Times by Service 2019/2020

Service Area	Stage 1 % responded to within 5 Working days	Stage 2 % responded to within 20 Working days
Adult Wellbeing	48%	50%
Building Maintenance	47%	**
Building Standards	29%	0%
Children's Services	33%	38%
Community Housing	44%	100%
Community Partnerships	100%	**
Corporate Policy & Improvements	**	**
Criminal Justice	**	**
Customer Services	71%	0%
Economic Development and Strategic Investment	67%	100%
Education	56%	86%
Engineering incl. Gas	33%	**
Environment & Protective Services	44%	100%
Facilities	100%	**
Finance	**	**
IT	**	**
Legal	**	**
People and Governance	29%	50%
Other Services for Communities	**	**
Planning	44%	0%
Property Maintenance	51%	67%
Benefits	60%	**
Revenues and Welfare Support	80%	**
Roads	68%	100%
Sports Countryside & Leisure	61%	**
Transportation	58%	0%
Waste	83%	**
** no complaints recorded		