

Summary of Compliments and Complaints 2016/17 to 2019/20

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Rod Hammerton, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260204, or Dave Myers, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260280.

1 Purpose of Report

This report advises Members of summary details regarding the compliments and complaints received during 2019/20, with comparisons to the previous three years.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

3 Background

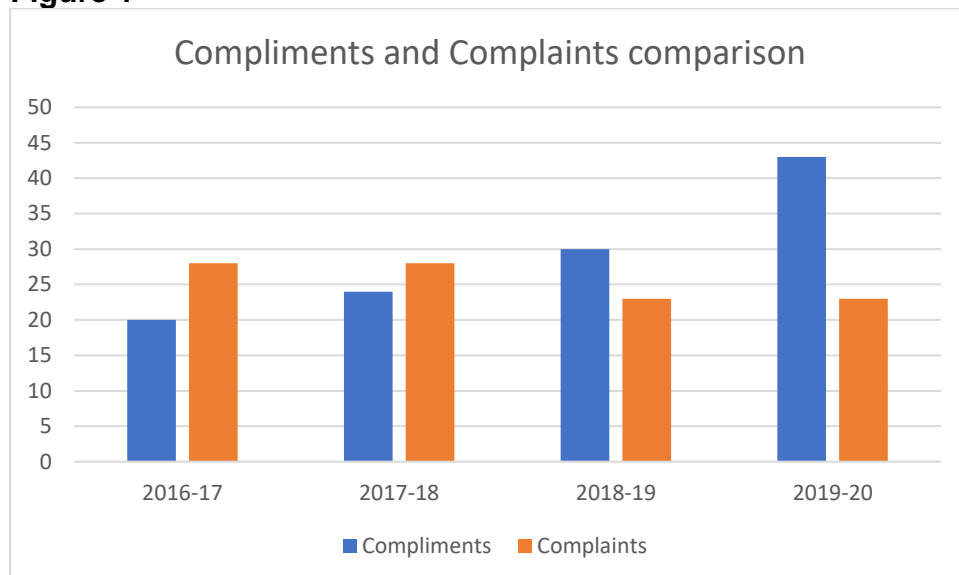
The Fire Authority's vision and strategic aims stress a commitment to providing high quality services to the community of Shropshire. The Service takes seriously both complaints and compliments made about the quality, nature or delivery of the services provided. Comments are also used to review the effectiveness of the provision of these services. Complaints are recorded, as are compliments, when they are addressed to the Chief Fire Officer or come to the attention of Executive Support Officers.

The Fire Authority has a Comments and Complaints Procedure in place to ensure complaints are handled in a fair and objective manner and that views expressed about the quality of services provided are acknowledged.

4 Summary of Compliments and Complaints Received during 2016/17 to 2019/20

Figure 1 (below) illustrates the number of compliments and complaints received in 2019/20, compared with the previous four-year period.

Figure 1



Compliments

The details of all complimentary communications received via the Executive Support Officers are circulated to the personnel concerned, their line management and Executive Officers. They are also published in the Service's weekly internal newsletter, 'The Pink', for all staff to appreciate and on the Service's website for public information. Care is taken, at each stage, to ensure that any personal, identifying details are removed.

The number of compliments received may be greater than shown in Figure 1, as this only captures those formally addressed to the Chief Fire Officer or passed to Executive Support. Compliments are often sent directly to stations, watches or departments and may not always be relayed to Executive Support Officers. However, work has been ongoing to raise awareness amongst staff to pass compliments to Executive Support and this may be a factor in the increased number of compliments seen in 2019/20.

The number and variety of compliments received make it difficult to benchmark specific areas of performance over a given period. However, Appendix A to the report provides a breakdown by type of the compliments received in 2019/20, together with some examples.

Complaints

Appendix B provides a breakdown of complaints received. There are no nationally prescribed classifications for recording complaints but, to facilitate local benchmarking across the period from 2016/17 to 2019/20, complaints received have been categorised into six key areas.

These are:

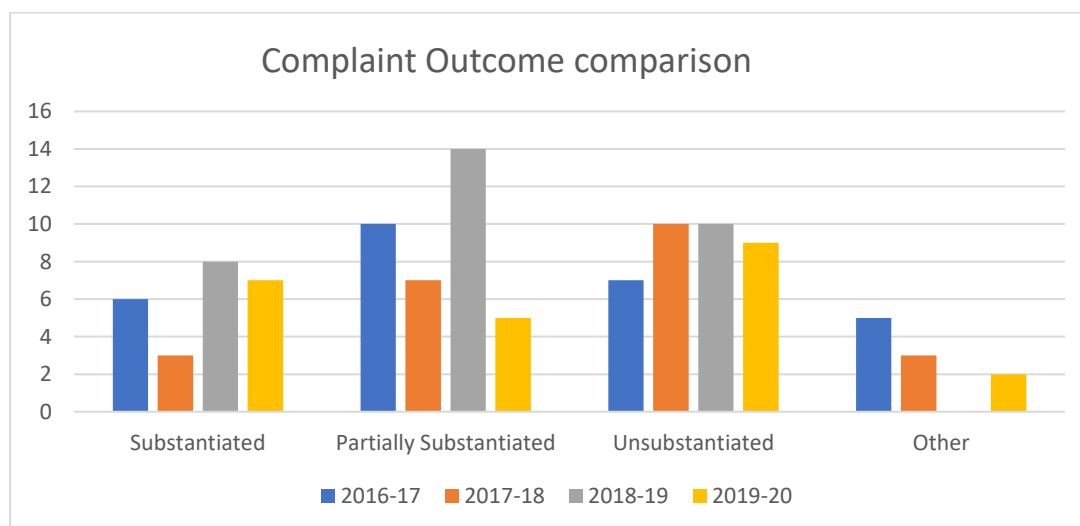
- Damage to property
- Poor driving behaviour
- Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service
- Failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection / procedure
- Environmental
- Other

Of the 23 complaints lodged during 2019/20:

- 7 were substantiated
- 5 were partially substantiated
- 9 were unsubstantiated

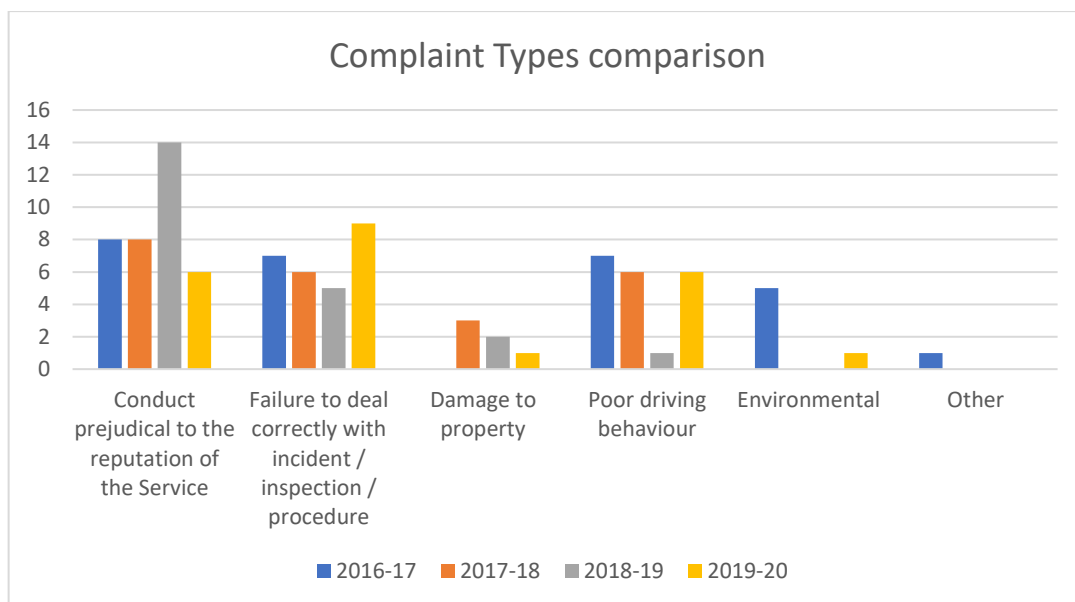
61% of all complaints were found to be fully or partially substantiated (see Figure 2). This was an increase of 6% over the previous year. In all cases, even those that were found to be unsubstantiated, the Service looks to identify any improvements that may help to avoid similar complaints arising into the future

Figure 2



The outcome category 'Other' refers to where the complaint was withdrawn or the outcome was not shared with Executive Support because the complaint was subsequently addressed through the Service's disciplinary procedure, and the outcome was confidential.

Figure 3



5 Management of Compliments and Complaints

Performance Standard

All complaints are fully investigated, with a written response provided to the complainant, advising of the outcome of the investigation. The Fire Authority sets a performance standard of 28 working days, in which to furnish the complainant with a written response or advise of an extension of time where necessary. This standard has consistently been achieved.

Appeals

Complainants dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation are entitled to appeal to the Chief Fire Officer and / or the Chair of the Fire Authority. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following this, an appeal may be directed to the Local Government Ombudsman.

While there has been a noticeable increase in the numbers of complainants wishing to continue their dialogue with the Service following receipt of the investigation outcome, only two formal appeals have been received by the Chief Fire Officer. These related to:

- 1 The Service's response to a complaint concerning a landlord's difficulties in negotiating fire safety legislation and the differing remits of the local authority and the fire and rescue service. A more comprehensive response was provided, citing the work being undertaken, as a result of the complaint, by the Service's Protection department in liaison with Shropshire Council.
- 2 The Service's response to a complaint concerning the behavior of a staff member where the complainant wanted more detailed information about any disciplinary action taken. A response was provided advising that it was not possible under data protection and employment law to share the level of detail requested.

No appeals against the outcome of a complaint have been made to the Local Government Ombudsman during 2019/20.

Lessons Learned

All lessons learned from complaints are communicated in the most appropriate manner to staff, with remedial action taken as necessary, e.g. retraining, discipline etc. Actions taken in relation to individuals are not published within this report, as it would not be appropriate.

6 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

Appendix A

Summary of Compliments received 2019/20

Appendix B

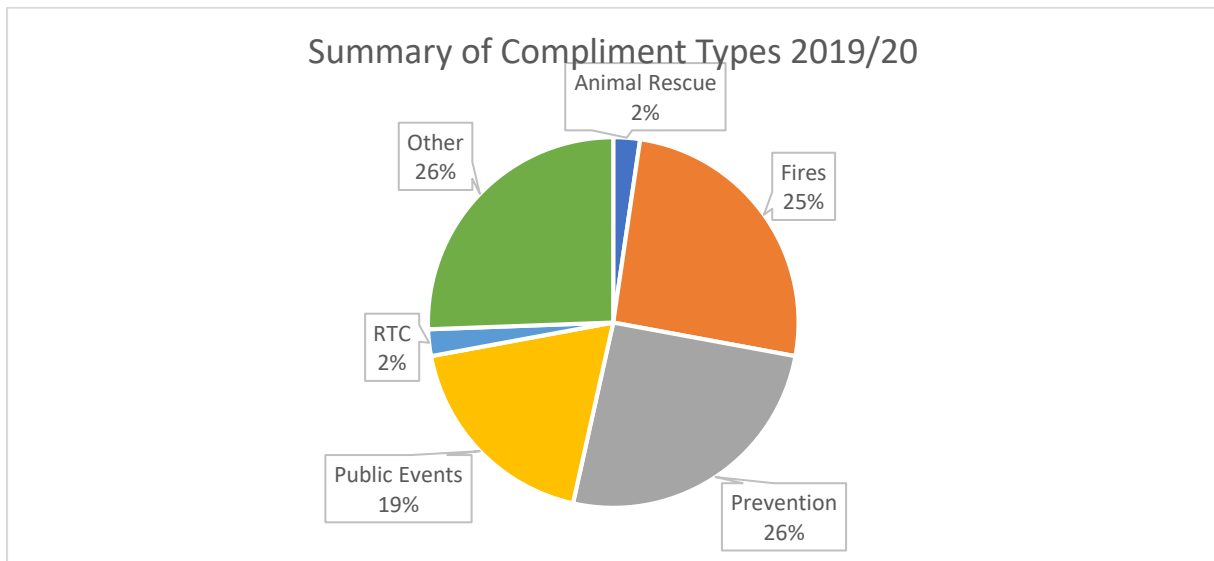
Summary of Complaints received between 2016/17 and 2019/20

9 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Summary of Compliments Received 2019/20

Figure 4



Examples of Compliments Received

Below are some examples of compliments received during 2019/20. More can be viewed on the Service website via the following link:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/management-support/compliments-and-thanks>

Compliment received following a fire in Shifnal on 13 April 2019

A HUGE thank you to the crew from Stafford Park, Telford who attended this fire tonight. Very prompt, totally professional - I'm very, very grateful. What a fantastic service we have. Thank you all.

Thanks received from a Shrewsbury resident on 28 May 2019

Fire Control received a call thanking Blue Watch Shrewsbury for the way in which they dealt with the resident's hedge fire on Bank Holiday Monday. He was grateful that they requested an ambulance for him and made sure that he was checked over. Happily, he confirmed that he was now fine.

Thanks from the business owners following fire.

To all of the wonderful firefighters who worked so tirelessly on 29 July 2019 to put out the fire at Weston Bakery; we cannot find the words to thank you enough for what you did for us that night. I've always thought the fire service were amazing for what they do but we did not realise just how hard you all work to keep us all safe until we had this tragic experience. From putting the fire out, to helping us pack our things, to just emotionally supporting us - you all went above and beyond your jobs for us. You truly are such heroes and we will never forget what you have done for us. All our love and thanks.

Compliment following Safe & Well Visit in the Ludlow area

The Service received a phone call from a recipient of a Safe & Well visit. She praised the Ludlow firefighter for having a lovely manner and making her feel completely at ease. She said that he was a "true credit to the fire service."

Thank you to Market Drayton Fire Station personnel - 23 October 2019

I would like to say an enormous thank you to our emergency services, especially Market Drayton Fire Station team.

They came to rescue an elderly friend today. She had fallen in the night and could not get up. She was locked inside her house, on the floor and not able to move. They had to break in and help her up, all of which they did with complete care, dignity and respect. Each and every member of the fire team could not have been a better ambassador for the Service or our community.

We are extremely lucky to have such a wonderful team in our community and I for one was extremely grateful for their support today. They even left a perfectly sized piece of wood for us to temporarily fix the hole in her door, tidied up after themselves, and for the icing on the cake, the wonderful team even brought in her milk from the doorstep and put it in the fridge before they left!

Above and beyond. Care, respect and thoughtfulness. Thank you - you know who you are.

Compliment following an incident in Hadley attended by Green Watch Wellington and Telford - 3 December 2019

Our Fire Control received an email of thanks from a member of the public regarding an incident at Near Vallens, Hadley, which crews from Wellington and Telford attended.

"On 3 December 2019 at 19:50hrs, my daughter had to call out the Fire Service due to smoke coming from the hall light fitting. She left the house with her two children and the dog. Her daughter is autistic and was hysterical, and not coping with the situation at all. Two fire engines and an officer arrived, which added to my granddaughter's distress.

My daughter explained to the fire crews why my granddaughter was behaving as she was, and they were so understanding! They turned the blue lights off and the motor noise down and gave my granddaughter a blanket. Once they had checked the house, they went to check that her guinea pigs were fine. She was very concerned about them!

We want to say a huge thank you to these crews. My daughter was able to deal with the situation without having to worry about her own daughter so much. It was such a huge help and a very thoughtful thing for the crews to do. The Fire Service has so much to deal with and to have such an understanding of autism too, is brilliant! Well done to you all and once again thank you for your understanding and support. It is very much appreciated."

Thank you after off duty assistance from an on-call firefighter

I was walking in Hodnet Hall gardens on Tuesday 21 March 2020, when I was taken ill. I was extremely lucky as one of the gardening staff was close by and called for an ambulance.

The Head Gardener, who is also a member of the staff at Hodnet Fire Station, went straight to the Fire Station to collect the oxygen bottle and mask, in order to administer oxygen until the ambulance arrived.

I would just like to thank him and say that I am extremely thankful and grateful that this was available at such short notice.

Summary of Complaints received between 2016/17 and 2019/20

Type of Complaint	Total 16/17	Outcomes		Total 17/18	Outcomes		Total 18/19	Outcomes		Total 19/20	Outcomes	
Damage to property	0	0	Substantiated	3	0	Substantiated	2	2	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		1	Withdrawn
Poor driving behaviour	6	2	Substantiated	6	0	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated	6	4	Substantiated
		3	Partially substantiated		4	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		1	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service	7	0	Substantiated	8	2	Substantiated	14	5	Substantiated	6	2	Substantiated
		2	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated		4	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		4	Unsubstantiated		3	Unsubstantiated		5	Unsubstantiated		3	Unsubstantiated
		1	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection / procedure	7	1	Substantiated	6	2	Substantiated	5	1	Substantiated	9	1	Substantiated
		3	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		4	Partially substantiated
		2	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated
		1	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Environmental	5	3	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated
		1	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		1	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		1	Ongoing due to Covid-19
Other	1	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated
		1	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Anonymous		2		0		2		1				
Total		26		23		22		23				