

Summary of Compliments and Complaints 2013/14 to 2015/16

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact John Redmond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260203, or Rod Hammerton, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260204.

1 Purpose of Report

This report advises Members of summary details regarding the compliments and complaints received during 2015/16, with comparisons to 2014/15 and 2013/14.

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 compliments and complaints 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 in place a Comments and Complaints Procedure 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 2013/14 to 2015/16

Figure 1 (below) illustrates the number of compliments and complaints received in 2015/16, compared with the previous two-year period.

Figure 1



Where appropriate, compliments are posted on the Service's website. 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. Care is taken, at each stage, to ensure that any personal, identifying details are removed.

The number of compliments received is actually far greater than shown in Figure 1, which represents only those addressed directly to the Chief Fire Officer or Headquarters. Many more compliments are sent to stations, watches or departments and are not always passed on to Executive Support Officers.

The number and variety of compliments received make it difficult to benchmark specific areas of performance over a given period of time. However, Appendix A to the report provides a breakdown by type of the compliments received in 2015/16, together with some examples.

The appendix provides a breakdown of complaints received. There are no nationally prescribed classifications for recording complaints but, to facilitate local benchmarking between the periods 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16, complaints received have been categorised into five 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
- Other

At the request of the Service Management Team the terminology used to describe the outcome of complaints has been changed from 'Upheld,' 'Partially Upheld' and 'Overturned' to 'Substantiated,' 'Partially substantiated' and 'Unsubstantiated' respectively.

Of the 12 complaints lodged during 2015/16, one was substantiated, two were partially substantiated and nine were unsubstantiated.

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.

No appeals against the outcome of a complaint have been made to either the Chief Fire Officer, Chair of the Fire Authority or the Local Government Ombudsman during 2015/16.

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 Initial Impact Assessment

This report contains merely statements of fact / historical data. An Initial Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

9 Appendices

Appendix A

Summary of Compliments received 2015/16

Appendix B

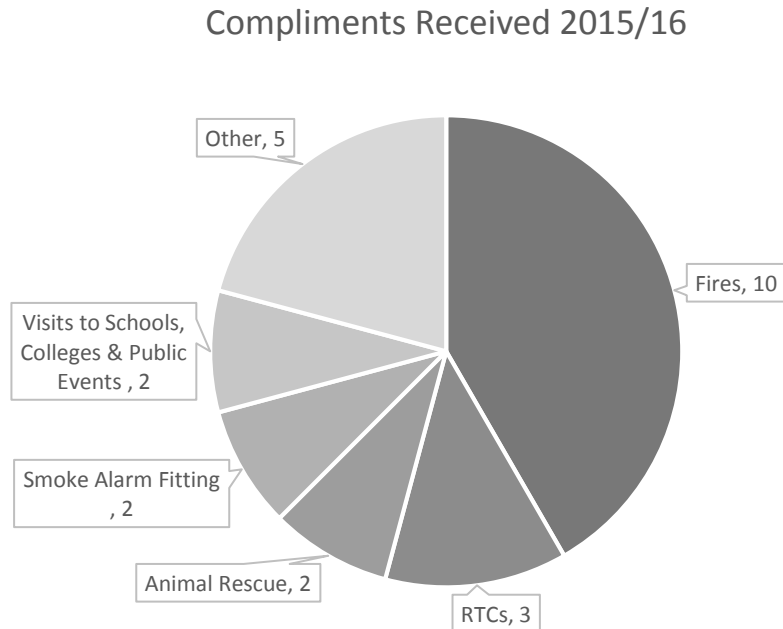
Summary of Complaints received 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Summary of Compliments Received 2015/16

Figure 2



NB 'Other' includes light aircraft rescue, flooding response and casualty evacuation from hillside

Examples of Compliments Received

Below are some examples of compliments received during 2015/16. More can be viewed on the Service website via the following link:

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

Extract from a 'thank you' letter received following a serious Shrewsbury house fire

"I will never forget the utter relief of hearing the fire engine sirens and seeing a fireman open my garden gate. In all the panic and mayhem, that fireman and subsequent others right behind him, gave a feeling of relief and absolute security. Also the precious, hardly any time at all, minutes it took them to arrive on scene was amazing."

Summary of a telephone call taken by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer

A grateful householder wished to say thank you to the crews for providing an excellent service dealing with the fire and providing fire safety advice and support following property fire near Newport.

Summary of a telephone call taken in Executive Support following a cornfield fire near Claverley

The occupant of a nearby half timbered property wanted to pass on his thanks for the speed of the response and the professionalism of the crew who attended. They contained the spread of fire which was heading towards his house and extinguished it quickly using jets from the appliances, beaters and the fire fogging pump on the Incident Support Unit.

Received following an enquiry about a smoke alarm

“I would like to say a big thank you to the fire service for helping me in my hour of need. My smoke alarm ran out and not knowing what to do, being 90 years old, I panicked. I remembered a talk I went to and they said if in trouble call the fire service, which I did. You kindly put me a new alarm, thank you very much, you are very kind. I wish you a very happy New Year. Bless you for all your kindness.”

Received following a serious collision

“From the start of the accident I was aware of a firefighter talking to me throughout. He was in the vehicle with me the whole time. After some time trapped in my car and due to the result of my injuries, I became exhausted and wasn't able to breath. Without wanting to sound dramatic, I felt myself giving up and knew I was going to die at that stage. I was awake throughout the entire incident and remember telling the firefighter that I couldn't continue to hold on. I was then aware of the firefighter dragging me out of the vehicle. I am under no illusion that if he had not done this then I would have died inside my car that morning.

I am now out of hospital following a total of 11 operations for the life threatening injuries I received that day and would dearly like to find out the name of the firefighter in order for me to pass on my thanks for saving my life that morning.”

Received following the rescue of a dog from a quarry ledge

“I just wanted to pass on my thanks to all who turned up to rescue my dog, Charlie yesterday. I have never had to call the emergency services before and know how precious your time is. Whilst I know Charlie is just a dog he is a huge part of our family and we would have been devastated if anything would have happened to him. Please pass on our heartfelt, thanks to all who attended. Charlie is still in the dog house!”

Received via the Service's website during Shropshire crews deployment to Cumbria in the wake of Storm Desmond

“We would like to thank your team for rescuing us and two dogs today at our cottage in Cumbria. We were so grateful to you all. You made us feel safe and were so professional and caring. Thank you so much.”

Summary of Complaints Received 2013/14 to 2015/16

Type of Complaint	Total 13/14	Outcomes		Total 14/15	Outcomes		Total 15/16	Outcomes	
Damage to property	0	0	Substantiated	2	1	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn ¹		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Poor driving behaviour	4	0	Substantiated	2	2	Substantiated	3	0	Substantiated
		1	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		1	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated
		2	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service	5	0	Substantiated	4	1	Substantiated	6	1	Substantiated
		1	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		4	Unsubstantiated		3	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection	2	0	Substantiated	2	1	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated
		1	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		1	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Other	3	0	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated
		1	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		2	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Anonymous²		2			1			0	
Total		16			12			12	

¹ This figure includes those instances where the Service has been unable to take any further action, for example because of a lack of information or evidence

² Anonymous complaints are investigated as far as reasonably practicable with action taken, where appropriate. Anonymous complaints are not included within the overall statistics reported.