

Summary of Compliments and Complaints 2020/21 to 2023/24

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report advises Members of summary details regarding the compliments and complaints received during 2023/24, with comparisons to the previous three years.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

3 Background

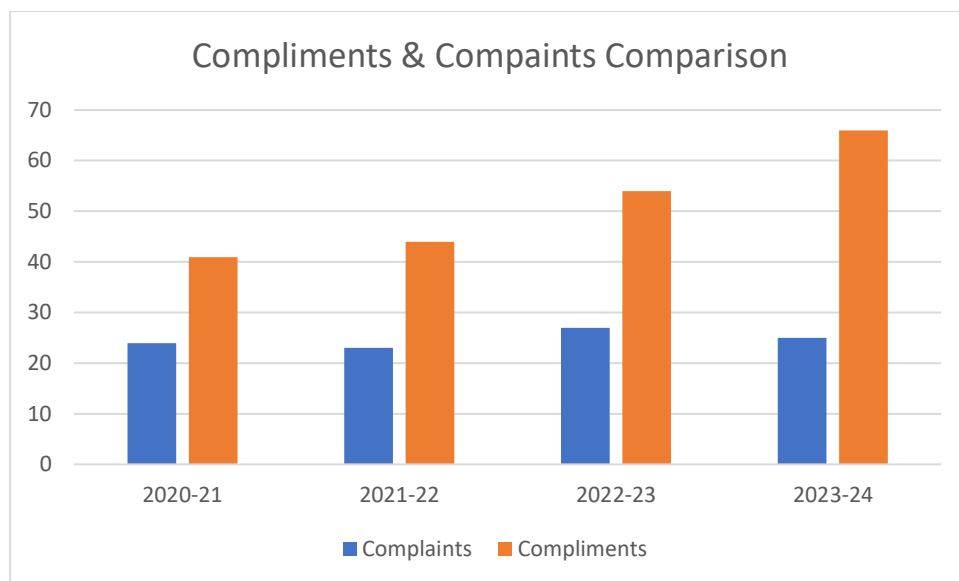
The Fire Authority's vision and strategic aims stress a commitment to providing high quality services to the community of Shropshire. The Service takes seriously both complaints and compliments made about the quality, nature or delivery of the services provided. Comments are also used to review the effectiveness of the provision of these services.

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.

Compliments are recorded when they are addressed to the Chief Fire Officer or are brought to the attention of Executive Support Officers as per established process.

4 Summary of Compliments and Complaints received during 2020/21 to 2023/24

Figure 1 (below) illustrates the number of compliments and complaints received in 2023/24, compared with the previous three-year period.



Compliments

The details of all complimentary communications received via the Executive Support Officers are circulated to the personnel concerned, their line management, Executive Officers and Members. Compliments 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, where appropriate. Care is taken at each stage, to ensure that any personal, identifying or sensitive 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 recorded in the last few years. There has been a steady increase in the number of compliments recorded.

Compliments are now reported on a six-monthly basis to the Service Management Team in summary form, identifying the recipients of the compliment.

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 2023/24, together with some examples.

Complaints

Appendix B provides a breakdown of complaints received in comparison with previous years. There are no nationally prescribed classifications for recording complaints but, to facilitate local benchmarking across the period from 2020/21 to 2023/24, 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 25 complaints lodged during 2023/24:

8 related to 'failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection / procedure'

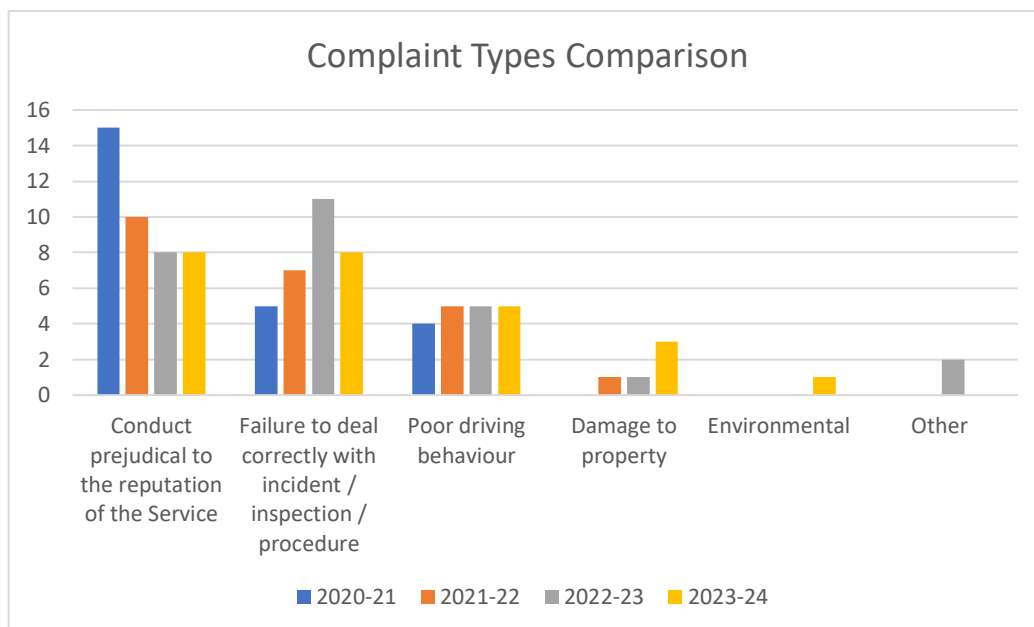
8 related to 'conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service'

5 related to 'poor driving behaviour'

3 related to 'damage to property'

1 related to 'environmental' were classed as 'other'

Figure 2



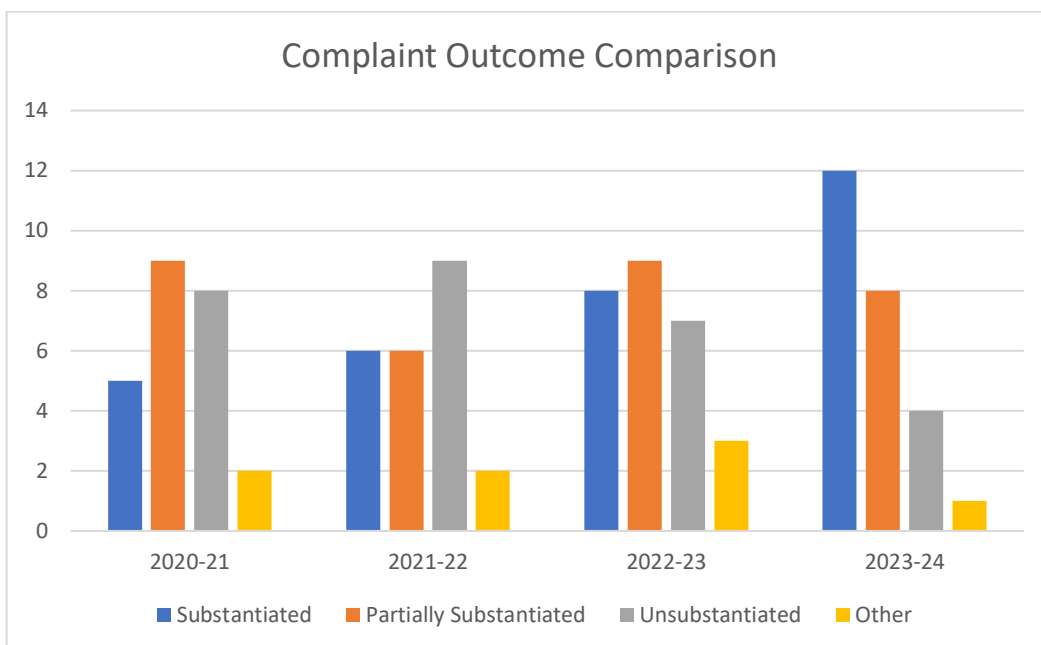
Of the 25 complaints lodged during 2023/24:

- 12 were substantiated
- 8 were partially substantiated
- 4 were unsubstantiated
- 1 was withdrawn

80% of the complaints were either fully or partially substantiated. This was an increase of 17.1% on the previous year (2022-23), which itself had seen an increase of 15.1% from 2021-22. There was an aggregate increase of 2%.

Please note the small sample size involved and the corresponding impact on the statistics of just one or two complaints.

Figure 3



The outcome category 'Other' refers to where the complaint was withdrawn or the outcome was not shared with the Service i.e. if the complaint was referred to a contractor. As mentioned previously, in 2023/24 one complaint was withdrawn.

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 in the future.

Complaints are reported six-monthly to the Service Management Team. In addition, complaints that are either fully or partially substantiated are reported to the People Management Team in closed session. Complaints arising from operational activities that are either fully or partially substantiated are reported to the Operational Learning Board.

5 Management of Compliments and Complaints

Compliments addressed to the Chief Fire Officer are recorded by Executive Support and replied to by or on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer. Staff are encouraged to pass compliments to Executive Support, these are also acknowledged where contact details are available and shared with the staff concerned and their line management. Compliments are also shared with Members as part of that circulation.

Complaints Performance Standard

Where contact details are provided, receipt of the complaint is formally acknowledged to complainants within five working days. All complaints are fully investigated irrespective of whether the complainant has identified themselves. Where possible, a written response is provided to complainants, 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 was consistently achieved, apart from one exception where the response was a day late. Having been of renewed focus, this was an improvement from the five occasions the previous year.

Appeals

Complainants dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation are entitled to appeal to the Chief Fire Officer within 28 days. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following this, an appeal may be directed to the Local Government Ombudsman.

During 2023/24 there was one formal appeal to the Chief Fire Officer received.

No appeals against the outcome of a complaint have been made to the Local Government Ombudsman during 2022/23.

Lessons Learned

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

6 Capacity

In 2022- 23, officers were asked to record the length of time taken to investigate and report their findings. The least time taken was half an hour and the longest 10 hours. The average was 4.20 hours.

In 2023-24, the least time taken in investigation was half an hour and the longest was 14 hours. The average time was 4.80 hours.

In 2023-24, the Service's Complaints Officer (whose role is to assess the investigation report, approve the findings and provide an outcome to the complainant) and the administrator (who records and co-ordinates the process) were also asked to record they time taken for their role. This doubled the time commitment to an average of 8.68 hours.

However, there were no capacity issues that impacted on the timely completion of the complaints' procedure.

7 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

There are no opportunities for collaborative working at the current time. Both the compliments and complaints relate solely to the actions of the Service and its personnel and need treating with discretion.

8 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

11 Community Safety

Lessons learnt from complaint investigation outcomes are fed back into the Service to improve performance and therefore, where applicable, community

safety. The compliments positively reflect the Service's impact on community safety.

12 Environmental

There was one complaint in 2023/24 classed as 'environmental'. This related to lights at one fire station being left on and shining into a neighbouring property's windows.

14 Health and Safety

Lessons learnt from complaint investigation outcomes are used to mitigate any health and safety impacts.

15 Fire Standard Core Code of Ethics and Human Rights (including Data Protection)

There are no impacts on compliance with the Fire Standards Core Code of Ethics or human rights arising from this report. The data collected during the management of complaints and compliments is subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

16 Reputation

Lessons learnt from complaint investigation outcomes mitigate against any negative impact on the Service's reputation. The compliments positively reflect the Service's reputation within the community.

17 Training

There are no training impacts arising from this report. However, guidance notes to support awareness of the complaints process have been circulated to officers and Fire Control.

18 Appendices

Appendix A

Summary of Compliments received 2023/24

Appendix B

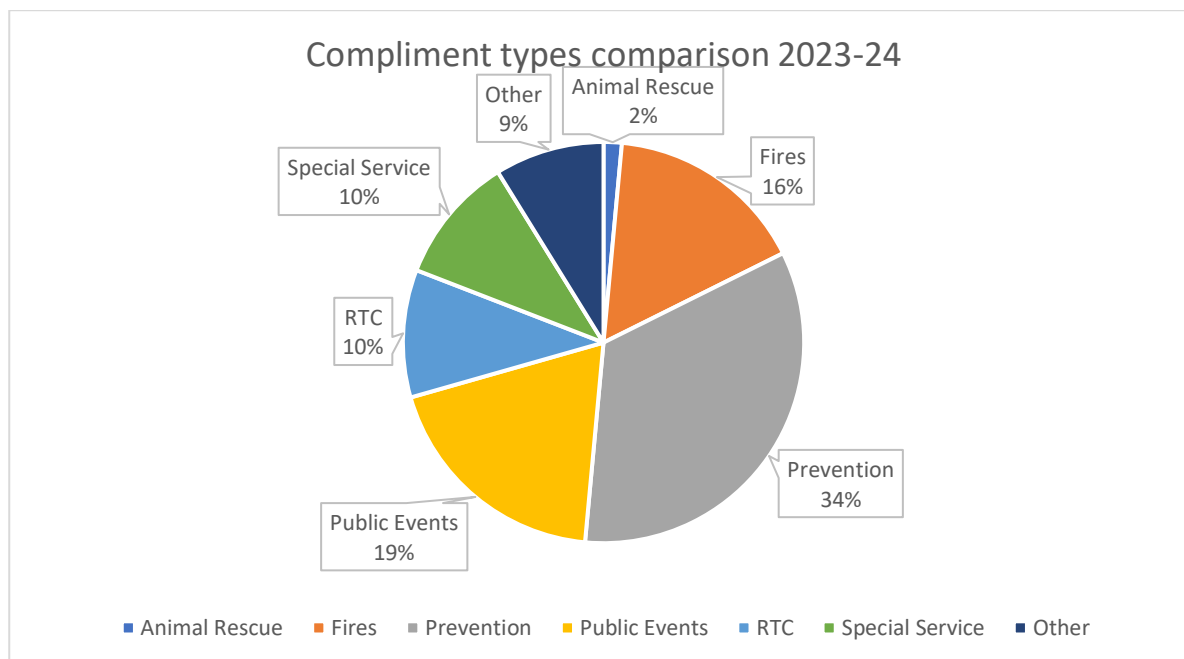
Summary of Complaints received between 2020/21 and 2023/24.

19 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Summary of Compliments Received 2023/24

Figure 4



Examples of Compliments Received

Below are some examples of compliments received during 2023/24. More can be viewed on the Service website via the following link:

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

Recognition of Excellence from Midlands Air Ambulance Charity - Church Stretton Fire Station crew

On 25 April 2023, an elderly man sustained an ankle fracture/dislocation having slipped while hiking in a remote, off-road area to the south of Carding Mill Valley. He had been exposed to the elements, although it wasn't the coldest of days, sitting on the ground injured for some time before he was able to be found. An Air Ambulance was assigned to the case in the hope that they could land quicker and closer to the patient than a road ambulance.

In the absence of an off-road vehicle suitable to transport the patient to the helicopter, the fire crew took on the arduous task of carrying the patient for an hour to the aircraft over difficult terrain. They even kept the patient upbeat and informed with their progression throughout the journey. They made sure that he was comfortable and always reassured. We simply can't thank and appreciate Church Stretton fire crew enough for their exhausting efforts. Their actions demonstrate the most sincere, selfless and thoughtful care for out-patient. They indisputably went over, above and beyond. Well done and thank you, you are a credit to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service".

Thanks following stable fire near Bridgnorth on 3 June 2023

"Can I just say how overwhelmed with thanks we are for the amazing effort your teams did with our stable fire on Saturday evening. So very calm, professional and total heroes; if you hadn't arrived so quickly, with the intensity of the fire, we could of lost our home, cars, horses etc thankyou from the bottom of our hearts."

Compliment for Newport On-call crew and Control operator

“I would like to praise the team who came out to free my mother-in-law who fell out of bed and was trapped by her arm in a bed sideguard. She was in an extreme amount of pain and couldn't move. Thank you to the lady on the phone and the Newport fire team who helped to free her and put her back into bed, and who also dressed a wound on her leg sustained in the fall. They showed extreme professionalism and were courteous throughout. Thank you”.

Dog rescue by Green Watch Wellington

A cocker spaniel was rescued from a 6m deep disused kiln on Limekiln Road, Wellington on 26 June. Green Watch Wellington retrieved the dog using line rescue techniques. The dog's owner said “Please pass on my thanks to the crew, they really were so quick, professional and just amazing”.

Thanks following Safe & Well visit

A vulnerable gentleman, who had experienced problems with his smoke alarm, phoned in to express his appreciation following a Safe & Well visit by one of our staff.

He said that the individual was “very efficient, professional, polite and kind, and was an excellent representative of the Service”. The individual had explained the problem with the smoke alarm and replaced it with another, for which the gentleman was “most grateful”.

Thanks from Wrekin Housing Group

We received the following thanks from a member of the Wrekin Housing Group, Fire Safety team, following incident 116897. This incident was attended by Newport, Shrewsbury, Telford, Tweedale and Wellington crews, along with Operations and Safety Officers. This was a house fire which began in one of the houses in the terrace and spread to others. Both the Aerial Ladder Platform and the Incident Command Unit were in use.

“I just wanted to pass on my compliments to the incident commanders at the house fire at Lawnswood, Malinslee. They acted very professionally and provided regular accurate safety updates throughout the day with what was a very challenging multi agency and multi resident situation. A credit to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service”.

75th Anniversary celebrations

We received a thank you card, along with a donation to The Fire Fighters Charity, from a gentleman who had seen the banner advertising the Service's 75th Anniversary. He commented “Great public service given heroically. You have my full admiration”.

Our Fire Crime and Arson Officer was complimented following a recent community visit.

“I just wanted to extend my gratitude for your visit to make sure the home my son and I are living in is fire safe. The extra time you took to talk me through a few areas I hadn't even considered was really appreciated. Thank you again so much”.

Thanks following flooding incident on 3 October 2023

Fire Control received a call from a householder in Telford, following a flooding incident, who wanted to pass on his sincere thanks to Green Watch Telford for helping him in his time of need. He said that they couldn't have done any more for him and he was eternally grateful.

Compliment following Safe & Well visit

A member of the Ludlow crew conducted a Safe & Well visit last week to vulnerable people in Ludlow and fitted two smoke alarms.

The householder rang in saying that he and his wife would like to praise the individual for his politeness and patience, and for thoroughly answering all their questions.

Summary of Complaints received between 2020/21 and 2023/24

Type of Complaint	Total 20/21	Outcomes		Total 21/22	Outcomes		Total 22/23	Outcomes		Total 23/24	Outcomes	
Damage to property	0	0	Substantiated	1	1	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated	3	2	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Poor driving behaviour	4	0	Substantiated	5	2	Substantiated	5	1	Substantiated	5	2	Substantiated
		3	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		2	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service	15	3	Substantiated	10	1	Substantiated	8	4	Substantiated	8	3	Substantiated
		5	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated
		6	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated		3	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated
		1	Withdrawn		2	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		1	Withdrawn
Failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection / procedure	5	1	Substantiated	7	2	Substantiated	10	4	Substantiated	8	4	Substantiated
		1	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		4	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated
		2	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated
		1	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Environmental	0	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	1	1	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Anonymous Total		2 24		2 23		0 27		1 25				