

Summary of Compliments and Complaints 2006/07 to 2008/09

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

To advise Members of summary details regarding the compliments and complaints received during 2008/09, with comparisons to 2006/07 and 2007/08.

2 Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- a) note the contents of this report, and
- b) consider if more detailed analysis is required in respect of compliments.

3 Background

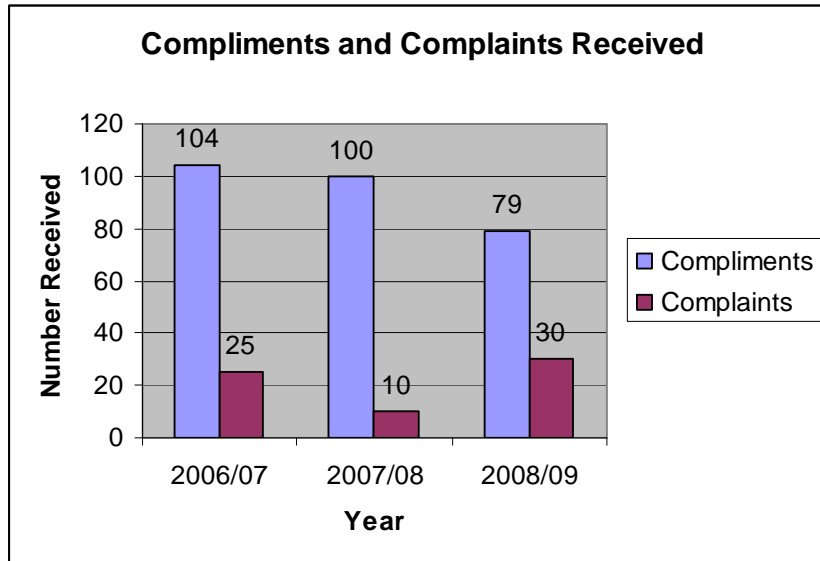
The Fire Authority's vision and strategic aims stress a commitment to providing high quality services to the community of Shropshire. The Service takes seriously both compliments and complaints made about the quality, nature or delivery of the services provided. Comments are also used to review the effectiveness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

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 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09

Table 1 (below) illustrates the number of compliments and complaints received over a three year period.

Table 1



Where appropriate, compliments are summarised and posted on the Service's website. All complimentary letters etc. received are made available to each meeting of the Fire Authority and also copied to those who have been acknowledged for good service within the correspondence received. It should be noted that the number of compliments received is far greater than those shown in Table 1. Those shown represent those addressed directly to the Chief Fire Officer or Headquarters. Many more compliments are sent direct to stations/watches/departments and are not always copied or passed onto Headquarters.

The number, and moreover variety of compliments received makes it difficult to categorise and benchmark specific areas of performance over a given period of time. Notwithstanding the latter, such analysis could of course be undertaken, but would incur additional resource implications. The Committee considered this issue during 2008 and determined that such analysis would be of little benefit when balanced against the resource implications.

Appendix A provides a breakdown of complaints received. There are no nationally prescribed categories for recording of complaints, but to facilitate local benchmarking between the periods 2005/06, 2007/08 and 2008/09 complaints received have been segregated into five key areas, namely:

- 1 Damage to property
- 2 Poor driving behaviour
- 3 Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service
- 4 Failure to deal correctly with an incident/inspection
- 5 Other

Of the 30 complaints lodged during 2008/09, 8 were fully upheld, 6 partially upheld, 8 overturned and 8 withdrawn. In effective, less than 50% of alleged complaints are found to be proven.

5 Management of Compliments and Complaints

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

In November 2007 the complaints procedure was subjected to an independent British Standards Institute (BSi) audit and has is now accredited to ISO 9001.

Complainants dissatisfied with the outcome of the inquiry undertaken are entitled to appeal to the Chief Fire Officer and/or the Chair of the Fire Authority. Should the complainant still remain dissatisfied, an appeal may be directed to the Local Government Ombudsman. During 2006/07 no known successful appeals were lodged.

Members are advised to note for information that a complaint dealt with during the current year (2009/10) has recently been escalated to the Ombudsman by the complainant, with the complainant's appeal rejected. The complainant in this instance has previously (2005) made representation to the Ombudsman (with that appeal similarly rejected), and has since 2004 lodged a total of four complaints and two requests for information from the Service.

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). It is not considered appropriate to publish the actions taken concerning individuals within this report.

Within 4 to 6 weeks from the completion of an investigation the complainant is forwarded a Complaint Satisfaction Survey form. The number of completed and returned survey forms is indicated in Table 2 (below). The Survey seeks complainants' views on several areas concerning the management of the investigation.

Table 2

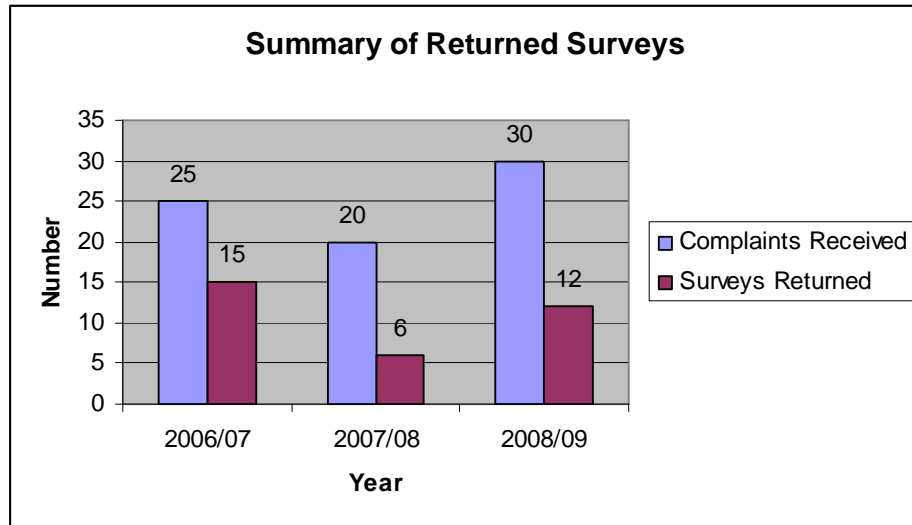
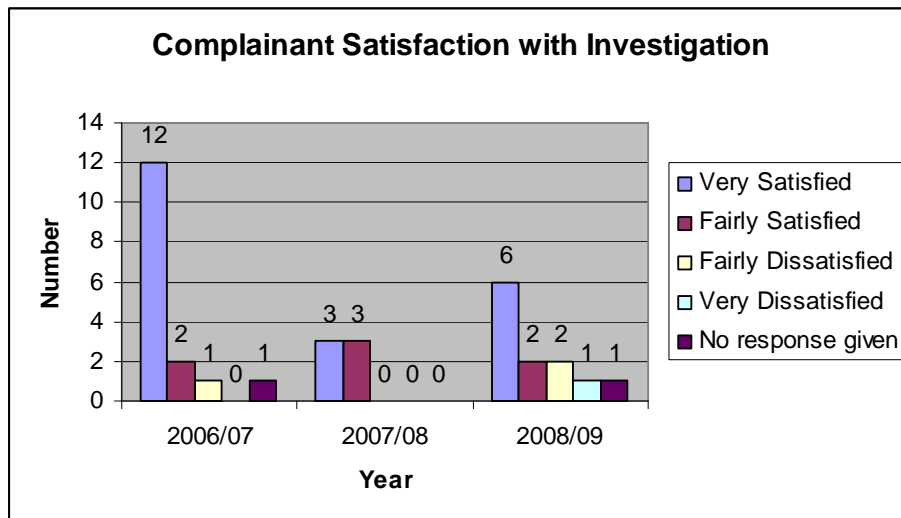


Table 3 (below) summarises the respondents' overall satisfaction with the manner in which their complaints have been dealt with.

Table 3



There are currently no arrangements or plans in place to publicise complaints on the Service's website in a similar manner to compliments. Notwithstanding the latter, this report and similar previous reports are posted on the Service's website, thus providing interested persons with a summary overview of complaints received. In addition, a summary of complaints received is provided for public viewing at each full meeting of the Fire Authority.

During 2008/09 the Service had approximately 900,000 interactions with the community. These interactions include the handling of and attendance at emergency calls, business and community fire safety activities and the accessing of the Service's website. There are of course many additional interactions with partners, suppliers, and auditors etc that are unrecorded. The number of complaints (30), as a percentage of the known interactions, amounts to 0.003%.

6 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

Upon completion of all complaint investigations complainants are forwarded an equality and diversity monitoring questionnaire. A summary of data collected through the monitoring form is provided in Appendix B. It should be noted that the monitoring form has been reviewed and amended for 2008/09 to include data collection in respect of sexual orientation.

All complaints together with the complaints' management process is reviewed on a monthly basis, at which time, any equality and diversity implications arising would result in a full impact assessment being undertaken to identify further areas for improvement.

No equality and diversity monitoring is undertaken in respect of compliments received.

9 Appendices

Appendix A

Summary of Complaints Received 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09

Appendix B

Summary of Results from Equality and Diversity Monitoring Survey

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk); the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balance Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings	*	Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	*
Financial		Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	

Summary of Complaints Received 2006/07 to 2008/09

Type of Complaint	Total 2006/07	Outcomes		Total 2007/08	Outcomes		Total 2008/09	Outcomes	
Damage to property	2	2	Complaints upheld	2	2	Complaints upheld	3	2	Complaints upheld
		0	Complaint partially upheld		0	Complaint partially upheld		0	Complaint partially upheld
		0	Complaints overturned		0	Complaints overturned		1	Complaints overturned
		0	Complaints withdrawn		0	Complaints withdrawn		0	Complaints withdrawn
Poor driving behaviour	10	7	Complaints upheld	9	7	Complaints upheld	9	2	Complaints upheld
		2	Complaints partially upheld		0	Complaints partially upheld		2	Complaint partially upheld
		1	Complaints overturned		2	Complaints overturned		2	Complaints overturned
		0	Complaints withdrawn		0	Complaints withdrawn		3	Complaints withdrawn
Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service	7	4	Complaints upheld	4	1	Complaints upheld	9	0	Complaints upheld
		0	Complaints partially upheld		1	Complaints partially upheld		3	Complaints partially upheld
		3	Complaints overturned		2	Complaints overturned		2	Complaints overturned
		0	Complaints withdrawn		0	Complaints withdrawn		4	Complaints withdrawn
Failure to deal correctly with an incident /inspection	4	2	Complaints upheld	3	1	Complaints upheld	6	3	Complaints upheld
		2	Complaints partially upheld		1	Complaints partially upheld			Complaints partially upheld
		0	Complaints overturned		0	Complaints overturned		2	Complaints overturned
		0	Complaints withdrawn		1	Complaints withdrawn		1	Complaints withdrawn
Other:	2	2	Complaints upheld	2	1	Complaints upheld	3	1	Complaints upheld
		0	Complaints partially upheld		0	Complaints partially upheld		1	Complaints partially upheld
		0	Complaints overturned		0	Complaints overturned		1	Complaints overturned
		0	Complaints withdrawn		1	Complaints withdrawn			Complaints withdrawn
Total:	25			20			30		
Anonymous*		2			5			0	

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

**Summary of equality and diversity monitoring data (complaints)
 2006/07, 2007/08 & 2008/09**

		Year		
		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Gender:	Male	6	3	6
	Female	2	2	5
Disabled:	Yes	1	1	1
	No	5	4	8
Ethnic/Cultural origin • White:	British	8	5	3
	English	5	5	7
	Scottish			
	Welsh			
	Other			
	Irish			
	Other white			
Ethnic/Cultural origin • Mixed:	White & Black Caribbean			
	White & Black African			
	White & Asian			
	Other mixed background			
Ethnic/Cultural origin • Asian or Asian British:	Indian			
	Pakistani			1
	Bangladeshi			
	Other Asian background			
Ethnic/Cultural origin • Black or Black British:	Caribbean			
	African			
	Other Black background			
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual			9
	Gay			
	Lesbian			
	Bisexual			
	Other			
Ethnic/Cultural origin • Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	Chinese			
	Other			
Religion:	None		1	
	Buddhist			
	Christian	5	3	8
	Hindu			
	Jewish			
	Muslim			1
	Sikh			
	other			1