

## Summary of Compliments and Complaints 2021/22 to 2024/25

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Simon Hardiman  
Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Karen Gowreesunker Assistant Chief  
Fire Officer Corporate Services on 01743 260180.

### 1 Executive Summary

This report advises Members of summary details regarding the compliments and complaints received during 2024/25, with comparisons to the previous three years.

### 2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

### 3 Background

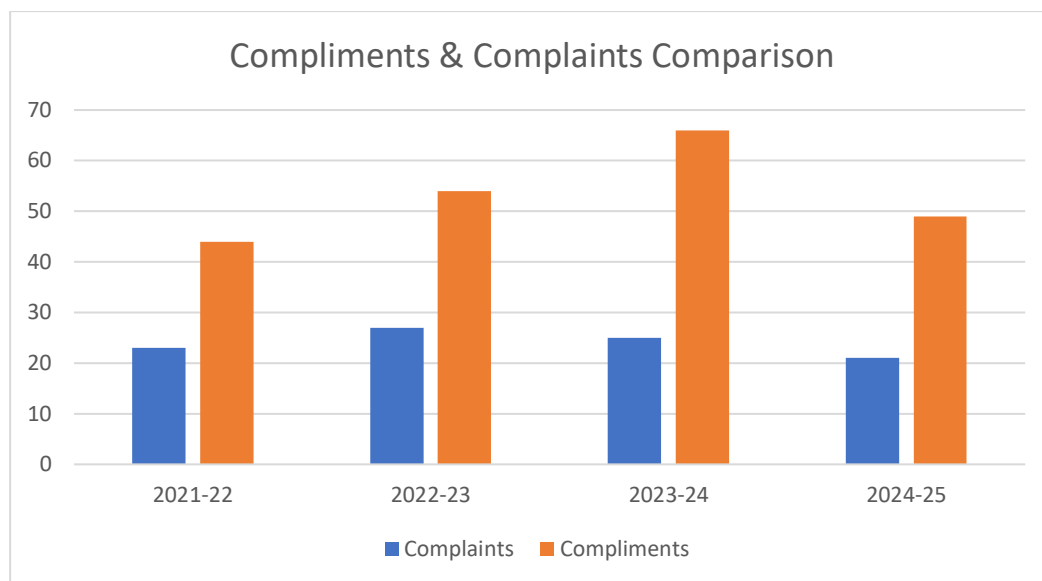
The Fire Authority's vision and strategic aims stress a commitment to providing high quality services to the community of Shropshire. The Service takes seriously both complaints and compliments made about the quality, nature or delivery of the services provided. Comments are also used to review the effectiveness 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 2021/22 to 2024/25

**Figure 1** (below) illustrates the number of compliments and complaints received in 2024/25, 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, the Service Management Team 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. There is a noticeable drop in the number of compliments recorded in 2024-25 as opposed to the previous two years.

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 2024/25, 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 2021/22 to 2024/25, complaints received have been categorised into six key areas.

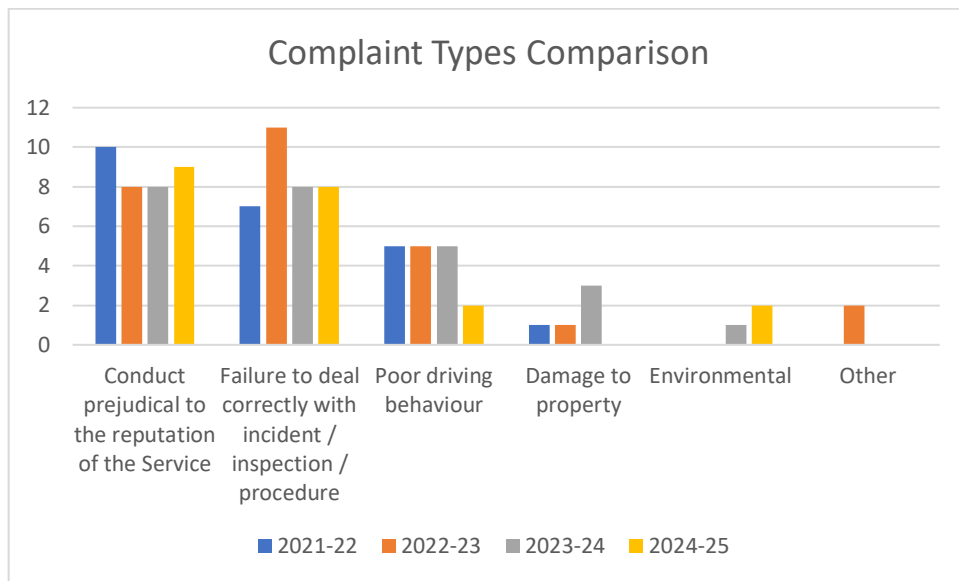
These are:

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

Of the 21 complaints lodged during 2024/25:

9 related to 'conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service'  
 8 related to 'failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection / procedure'  
 2 related to 'poor driving behaviour'  
 0 related to 'damage to property'  
 2 related to 'environmental'

**Figure 2**



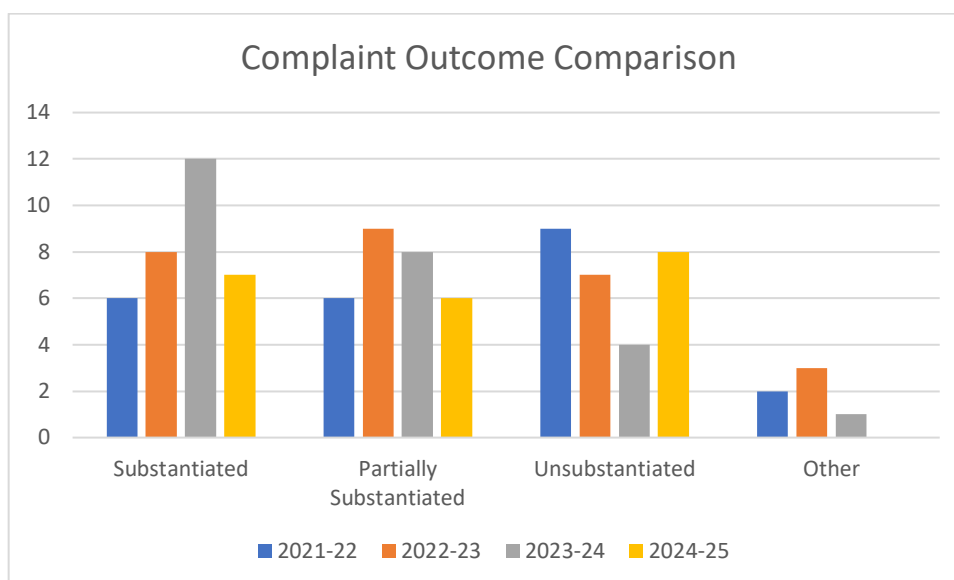
Of the 21 complaints lodged during 2024/25:

- 7 were substantiated
- 6 were partially substantiated
- 8 were unsubstantiated

62% of the complaints were either fully or partially substantiated. This was a decrease of 18% on the previous year (2023-24). The previous two years had seen an increase in the percentage of substantiated and partially substantiated complaints.

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 ie if the complaint was referred to a contractor.

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 the Service Management Team and 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 three occasions. The first occasion was in late May 2024 when the response was 8 working days late due to factors impacting the then Service's Complaints Officer's capacity. The second occasion was in February 2025 where the response was 3 working days overdue and the third occasion in March 2025 where the response was one working day overdue. This was a deterioration from the

previous year when there has been one instance of a response being a day late.

## **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 2024/25 there were no formal appeals to the Chief Fire Officer.

No appeals against the outcome of a complaint have been made to the Local Government Ombudsman during 2024/25.

## **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 the time taken for their role. This doubled the recorded time commitment to an average of 8.68 hours.

In 2024-25 the average time commitment recorded for the process was 6.79 hours. In the first quarter of 2024-25 there were capacity issues for the Executive Officer who had the role of Service Complaints Officer.

## **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 Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. An e-EQIA is not, therefore, required.

## **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 2024/25.

### **Appendix B**

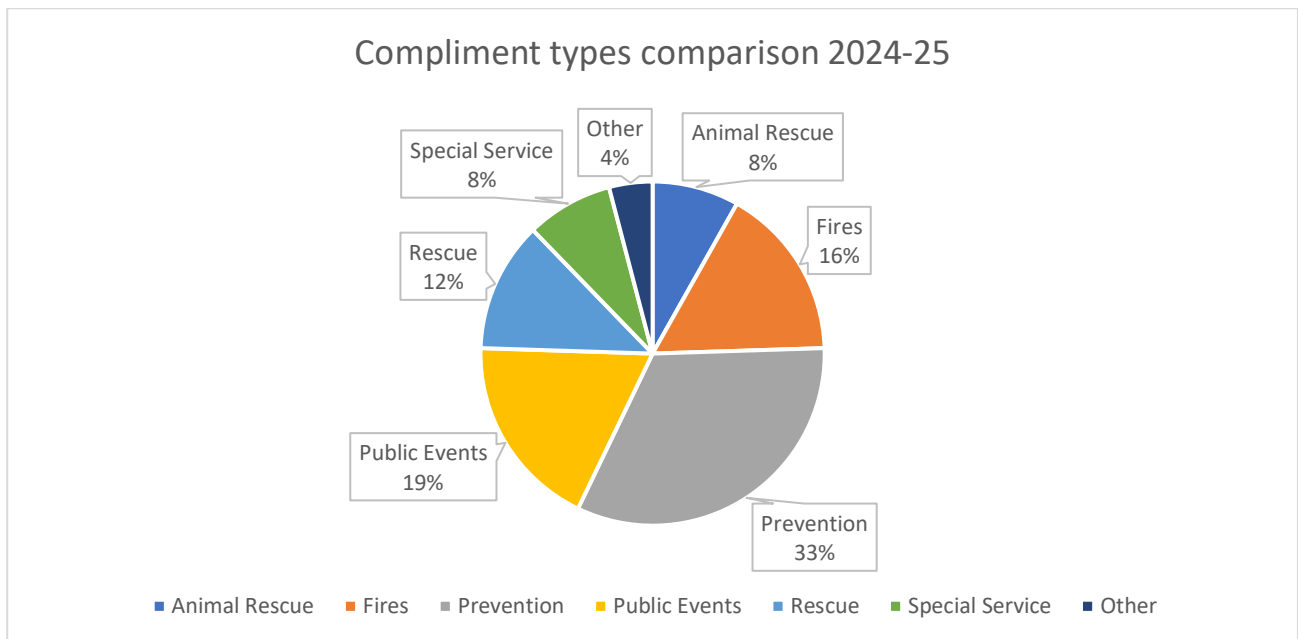
Summary of Complaints received between 2021/22 and 2024/25.

## **29 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.

## Summary of Compliments Received 2024/25

**Figure 4**



### Examples of Compliments Received

Below are some examples of compliments received during 2024/25. More can be viewed on the Service website via the following link:

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

#### **Thanks following kitchen fire and dog rescue on 27 April 2024.**

We received the following thanks after Incident 124502 attended by Red Watch Wellington, Red Watch Telford and an Ops Officer.

“I would like to thank the officers who attended a fire in my kitchen on Saturday. Thank you for saving my dog and my home. I stupidly emptied an ash tray into my bin not realising that there was a cigarette underneath that was not out properly. I no longer smoke in the house. Massive lesson learnt”

#### **Appreciation following assistance to the Police**

“I would just like to acknowledge and thank two off duty firefighters who administered first aid at a serious incident we attended on 23rd June at The Compasses public house in Ludlow. A man had been stabbed and they administered first aid until the ambulance arrived. Despite being off duty, they were highly professional and courteous to everyone throughout. Their swift response made a big difference”.

#### **Thank you following injury on Long Mynd**

I'm writing to thank your team for the wonderful service I received when on book my fibula, on Long Mynd, on 18 July.

I am 73 years old and was just completing a glorious walk when I slipped and heard a crack. Your team came very speedily. They were professional and friendly, and good fun - took my mind off what had just happened and waited with me until the ambulance came. I will be donating something to the fire charity. Please pass on my grateful thanks to the team.

#### **Compliment following animal rescue on 15 October 2024**

On 15 October, Blue Watch Shrewsbury were called to an animal rescue.

The owner contacted us to say "Many thanks to your team who persuaded Daisy, our cat, to get out of the engine of the car after she was spooked by the fire alarm".

### **Compliment following rescue**

"I would just like to say a huge thank you to all the Whitchurch Fire Brigade team who helped me out of a muddy field last Thursday, when I was stupid enough to get stuck in a bog. They were all brilliant, and their quick response was hugely appreciated. Please could you pass on my thanks to them"

### **Thank you following Fire Safety talk**

Following a Fire Safety talk at the Newport Naval Club, the MOTO Group wished to express their thanks to the Prevention Officer for a most interesting and informative meeting.

"Judging by the feedback afterwards, it was very well received and everyone had things to take home and put into practice from the issues raised. Thanks also for the leaflet to refer to".

### **Home Education Session**

The Service received the following complimentary feedback from a Home Education Session conducted by a firefighter from Red Watch Shrewsbury and West Mercia Police.

"We thoroughly enjoyed today's session, my 2 girls were engaged throughout and I got so much out of it myself. You all went to a lot of effort to explain everything in a detailed yet simple way, the children really took it all in. Each of you were extremely friendly and bubbly, going that extra mile even though you were to a tight time schedule.

We appreciate all that you do to educate young people and adults about the dangers that surround us. We so value your service to us and the wider community. We'd very much like to partake in any future events you have going on, especially home educating days. We have no negative feedback to give - only that we wished it was longer and we could have seen/done more Please pass on a huge thank you to everyone".

### **Helen Morgan MP for North Shropshire - appreciation following constituent's rescue from flood water on 30 September 2024**

(This incident was attended by crews from Wem and Baschurch, and an Operational Officer).

I am writing having received a letter from a constituent regarding an incident the Service attended at Prees. My constituent had got into serious difficulties in a flood, and was trapped in her car, which was filling with water, when the fire crew arrived. She writes: "Helen, they were wonderful. I was having a really bad panic attack but they calmed me down and when I was out of the water. They held my hand, lifted me gently and put me in the Commander's car.

Then they dried my feet and put warm socks on and some shoes. I can't begin to tell you how grateful I am for these young men looking after an old woman who is disabled". Having read her full account of the incident, it is clear that she was treated with great care and consideration by the crew that attended that day.

I would like to thank them for looking after her when she needed it, and also thank the crews across North Shropshire, who are there for us all at our darkest moments, walking into danger to help us escape it.



Summary of Complaints received between 2021/22 and 2024/25

Type of Complaint	Total 21/22	Outcomes		Total 22/23	Outcomes		Total 23/24	Outcomes		Total 24/25	Outcomes	
Damage to property	1	1	Substantiated	1	0	Substantiated	3	2	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Poor driving behaviour	5	2	Substantiated	5	1	Substantiated	5	2	Substantiated	2	0	Substantiated
		1	Partially substantiated		2	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		2	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service	10	1	Substantiated	8	4	Substantiated	8	3	Substantiated	9	3	Substantiated
		3	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated		2	Partially substantiated
		4	Unsubstantiated		3	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated		4	Unsubstantiated
		2	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		1	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection / procedure	7	2	Substantiated	10	4	Substantiated	8	4	Substantiated	8	2	Substantiated
		1	Partially substantiated		4	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated		3	Partially substantiated
		4	Unsubstantiated		2	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated		3	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Environmental	0	0	Substantiated	0	0	Substantiated	1	1	Substantiated	2	0	Substantiated
		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		0	Partially substantiated		1	Partially substantiated
		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		0	Unsubstantiated		1	Unsubstantiated
		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn		0	Withdrawn
Anonymous Total	2 23		0 27		1 25		2 21					