

Summary of Compliments and Complaints 2009/10 to 2011/12

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report advises Members of summary details regarding the compliments and complaints received during 2011/12, with comparisons to 2009/10 and 2010/11.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

3 Background

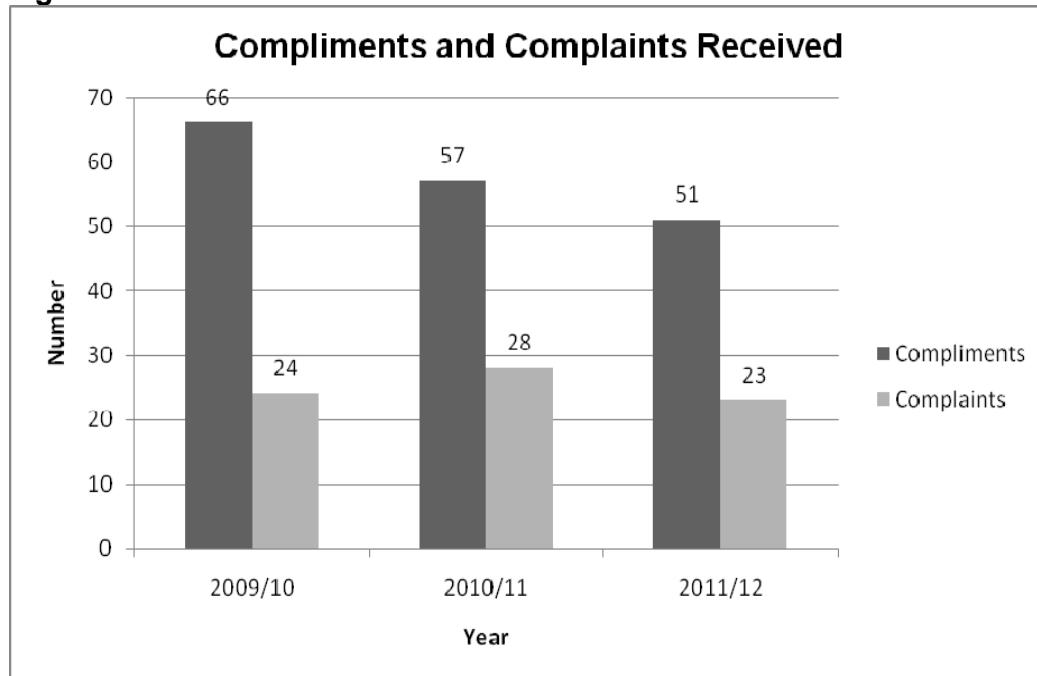
The Fire Authority's vision and strategic aims stress a commitment to providing high quality services to the community of Shropshire. The Service takes seriously both compliments and complaints made about the quality, nature or delivery of the services provided. Comments are also used to review the effectiveness of the provision of these services. 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 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12

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

Figure 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 on to Headquarters.

The number, and moreover variety, of compliments received make it difficult to categorise and benchmark specific areas of performance over a given period of time. The Committee considered this issue previously and determined that such analysis would be of little benefit, when balanced against the resource implications.

The appendix provides a breakdown of complaints received. There are no nationally prescribed categories for recording of complaints, but to facilitate local benchmarking between the periods 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 complaints received have been segregated into five key areas.

The five key areas are:

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

Of the 23 complaints lodged during 2011/12, 6 were fully upheld, 3 were partially upheld, 10 were overturned and 4 were either withdrawn or the Service was unable to take any further action in relation to the complaint. In effect, less than 30% of alleged complaints were found to be proven.

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 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.

Appeals

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. No appeals against the outcome of a complaint have been made to either the Chief Fire Officer or the Local Government Ombudsman during 2011/12.

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

Complaints Surveys

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 Figure 2 (overleaf). The survey seeks complainants' views on several areas concerning the management of the investigation.

Although return rates for surveys appear to be low, it should be noted that surveys are not sent to all complainants. This may be due to the nature of complaints received, which can make it inappropriate for a follow-up survey to be sent or, in some cases, because the complaint has been dealt with via another department, such as Fire Safety or by an external agency, such as Severn Trent Water. There are also instances where the survey has not been sent out within the appropriate timeframe.

Figure 2

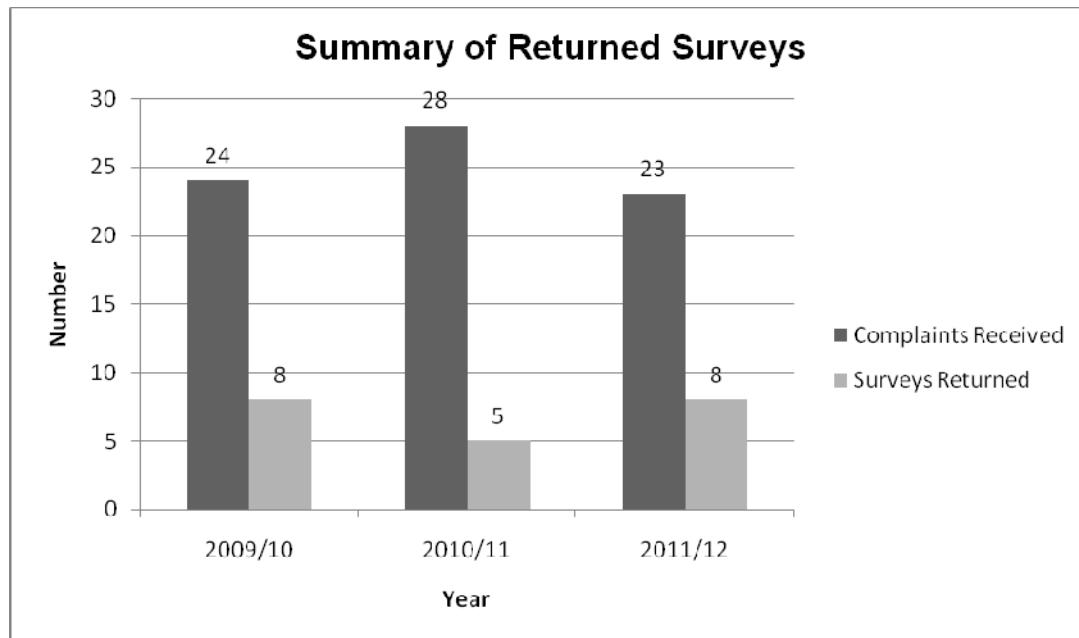
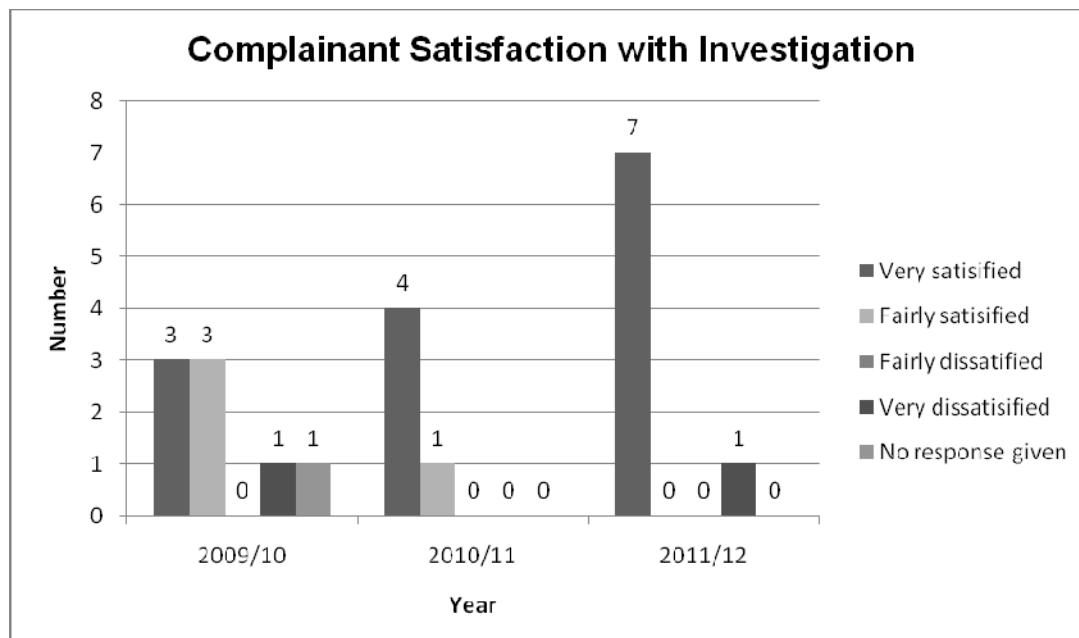


Figure 3 (below) summarises the respondents' overall satisfaction with the manner in which their complaints have been dealt with.

Figure 3



6 Complaints Procedure Review

The review of the Complaints Procedure is still to be completed although work has begun on it. It is unlikely that the review will result in any major changes to the Procedure itself but rather that it will tighten up areas that have been identified as issues, for example ensuring that all relevant departments are informed about complaints when they are received.

7 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

10 Appendix

Summary of Complaints received 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12.

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Appendix to report 10 on
 Summary of Compliments and Complaints 2009/10 to 2011/12
 Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
 Audit and Performance Management Committee
 14 June 2012

Summary of Complaints Received 2009/10 to 2011/12

Type of Complaint	Total 2009/10	Outcomes		Total 2010/11	Outcomes		Total 2011/12	Outcomes	
Damage to property	5	3	Complaints upheld	2	1	Complaints upheld	3	2	Complaints upheld
		0	Complaints partially upheld		0	Complaints partially upheld		0	Complaints partially upheld
		0	Complaints overturned		1	Complaints overturned		1	Complaints overturned
		2	Complaints withdrawn ¹		0	Complaints withdrawn		0	Complaints withdrawn
Poor driving behaviour	8	2	Complaints upheld	8	4	Complaints upheld	3	1	Complaints upheld
		0	Complaints partially upheld		0	Complaints partially upheld		1	Complaints partially upheld
		5	Complaints overturned		3	Complaints overturned		0	Complaints overturned
		1	Complaints withdrawn		1	Complaints withdrawn		1	Complaints withdrawn
Conduct prejudicial to the reputation of the Service	5	1	Complaints upheld	4	0	Complaints upheld	5	0	Complaints upheld
		0	Complaints partially upheld		1	Complaints partially upheld		1	Complaints partially upheld
		3	Complaints overturned		2	Complaints overturned		4	Complaints overturned
		1	Complaints withdrawn		1	Complaints withdrawn		0	Complaints withdrawn
Failure to deal correctly with an incident / inspection	3	2	Complaints upheld	4	1	Complaints upheld	5	3	Complaints upheld
		0	Complaints partially upheld		1	Complaints partially upheld		0	Complaints partially upheld
		1	Complaints overturned		2	Complaints overturned		2	Complaints overturned
		0	Complaints withdrawn		0	Complaints withdrawn		0	Complaints withdrawn
Other	3	1	Complaints upheld	9	3	Complaints upheld	7	0	Complaints upheld
		0	Complaints partially upheld		0	Complaints partially upheld		1	Complaints partially upheld
		1	Complaints overturned		1	Complaints overturned		3	Complaints overturned
		1	Complaints withdrawn		5	Complaints withdrawn		3	Complaints withdrawn
Anonymous²		1			1			0	
Total		24			28			23	

¹ For 2011/12 complaints, this figure includes those instances where the Service has been unable to take any further action, for example due to a lack of information / evidence.

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