



## London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

### OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Wards</b>
26 July 2011	Annual Complaints Review 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011	All

#### **SYNOPSIS**

The purpose of the report is to show the volume and types of complaints being made to the Council and how effectively the Council is managing these.

The report is being submitted to the Committee for review and comment.

#### **CONTRIBUTORS**

Lyn Anthony, Head of Executive Services

James Filus, Corporate Customer & Complaints Manager

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

To review the Annual Complaints Review and to comment on the recommendations.

#### **CONTACT**

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#### **NEXT STEPS**

The report will be published via the Council's website.

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2121 complaints were received during the reporting period across all three Stages of the complaints procedure. 1884 of these complaints were considered at Stage 1, 180 at Stage 2 and 57 at Stage 3.

The number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints for the previous reporting year is not known. 91 Stage 3 complaints were investigated by the Corporate Complaints Manager between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010; meaning that the number of Stage 3 complaints reduced by 37% this reporting year.

Complaints against H&F Homes accounted for 59% of the total complaints made across all three Stages of the complaints procedure. Finance and Corporate Services account for the second largest proportion of complaints at 14%.

60% of the complaints made concerned the delay or failure to provide a service or take action. The majority of these complaints concerned the Council's Repairs service and the Decent Homes programme.

55% of complaints made to the Council were either upheld or partially upheld. The remaining 45% of complaints were not upheld.

Across all services, 68% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within deadline. However, only 38% of Stage 2 complaints were replied to on time. Where complaints are independently investigated by the h&f InTouch team, 73% of complaints were responded to within deadline. Only 27.5% of the new complaints received by the Council were acknowledged.

Approximately 10% of the complaints made at Stage 1 were escalated to Stage 2 and 30% of these were escalated to Stage 3.

The Local Government Ombudsman made 103 enquiries of the Council during the reporting year. This is an increase on the 75 enquiries made in the previous year.

98 decisions were made by the Ombudsman during the reporting period. The Council 'locally settled' 31 complaints, which accounted for 32% of the decisions made. This is an increase from the 23% of 'local settlement' decisions in the previous year.

A total of £12,062.88 in compensation was recorded as being paid across all three Stages of the complaints procedure and in those complaints investigated by the Ombudsman. The largest proportion of compensation was paid by H&F Homes (65%) and most common reason for paying compensation were delay, distress and inconvenience.

The cost of recording, investigating and responding to complaints has been conservatively estimated as being £156,857.38.

Two of the four performance measures used to monitor the complaints procedure were achieved. The Council did not acknowledge or respond to 80% of the complaints made on time; however, 37% of customers stated that they were satisfied with the complaints procedure (which is in excess of the 30% target) and the Ombudsman did not issue any maladministration decisions against the Council

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the report is to show the volume and types of complaints being made to the Council and how effectively the Council is managing these.

## 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of the report, the following recommendations have been made:

1. It is **recommended** that the low proportion of complaints being acknowledged is addressed by services and efforts are made to improve on this. A monthly report on the number of complaints being acknowledged against the total received, by service, will now be produced and circulated by the h&f InTouch team until such time that performance increases and remains or exceeds consistently within the required 80%.
2. It is **recommended** that the low proportion of Stage 2 complaints being responded to on time is addressed by services and efforts are made to improve on this.
3. It is **recommended** that wherever a complaint is made regarding the delay in delivering a service, the service that lead to the complaint must be completed before the complaint is responded to. Where this is not practicable, a clear schedule for the service should be sent out to the customer, alongside confirmation of the name of the officer responsible for monitoring this schedule. This will assist in managing the complainant's expectations and ensure accountability.
4. It is **recommended** that where compensation is to be offered, the guidance from the Local Government Ombudsman is consulted and any offer is made in light of, and with specific reference within the response to the complainant, this guidance.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**  
**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Description of Background Papers</b>	<b>Name/Ext of holder of file/copy</b>	<b>Department/ Location</b>
1.	H&F Corporate Complaints First annual reportt	Lyn Anthony James Filus	Room 229