

For general release:

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee

Date: 15th November 2004

Report of: Director of Strategy and Governance

Subject: Corporate Complaints Quarter 2, Environment

Ward(s) affected: All

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of complaints information about Environment for quarters 1, and 2 of 2004/05.
- 1.2 Information about numbers of compliments received from members of the public in relation to Environment is in section 3.7
- 1.3 The report summarises recommendations made to heads of service as a result of investigations into complaints in section 3.8

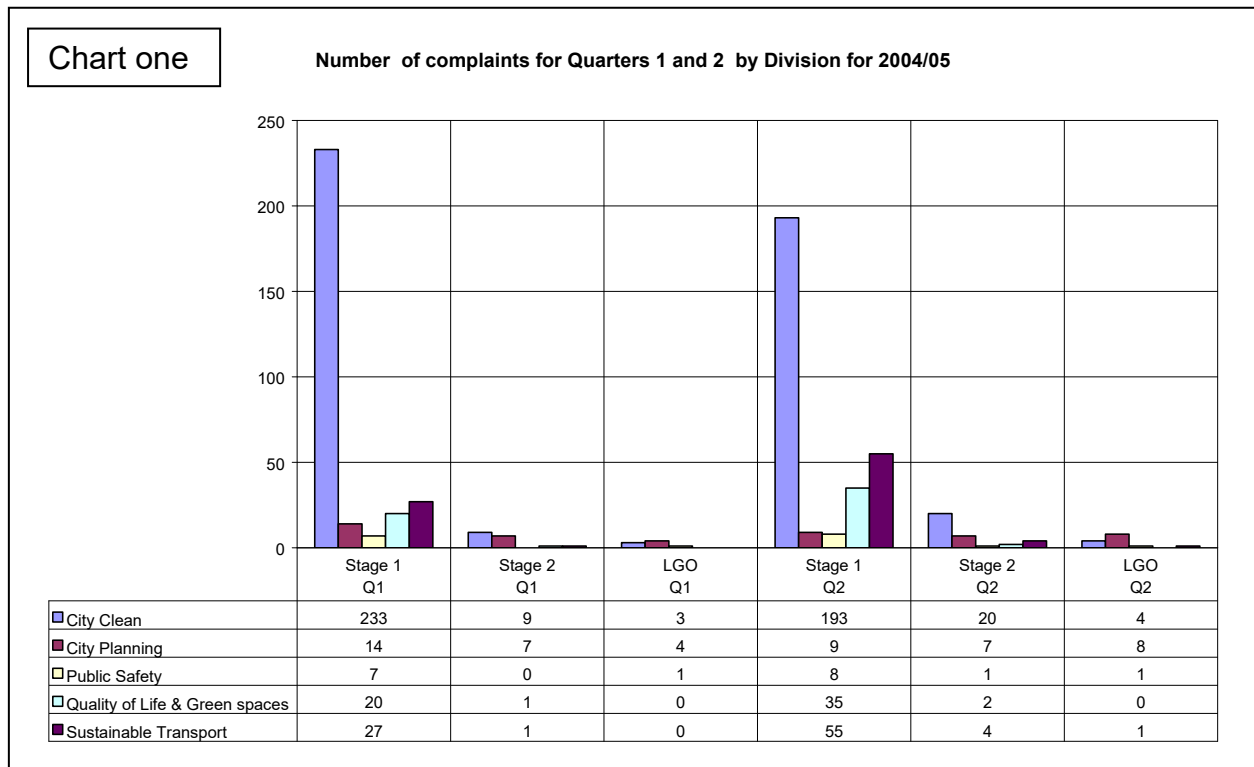
2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee is asked to note the report.

3. Information about Complaints and Compliments

- 3.1 This report gives comparative information about the numbers of complaints and compliments received by each division within Environment. Appendix 1 gives detailed information about numbers of complaints for each service within the Directorate. Appendix 2 gives a glossary of terminology used by the Local Government Ombudsman. Appendix 3 gives an overview of the complaints process.
- 3.2 A summary of the Ombudsman's decisions on complaints received by him is in section 3.4

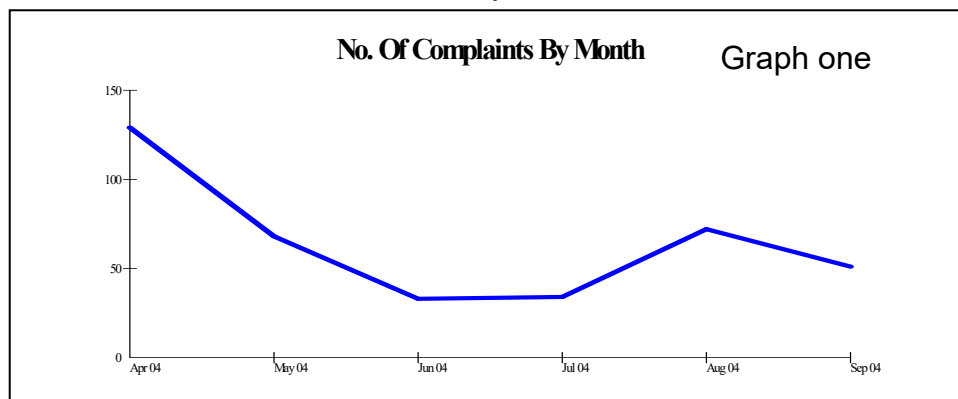
3.3 Numbers of complaints received in Quarters 1, and 2 in 2004/05



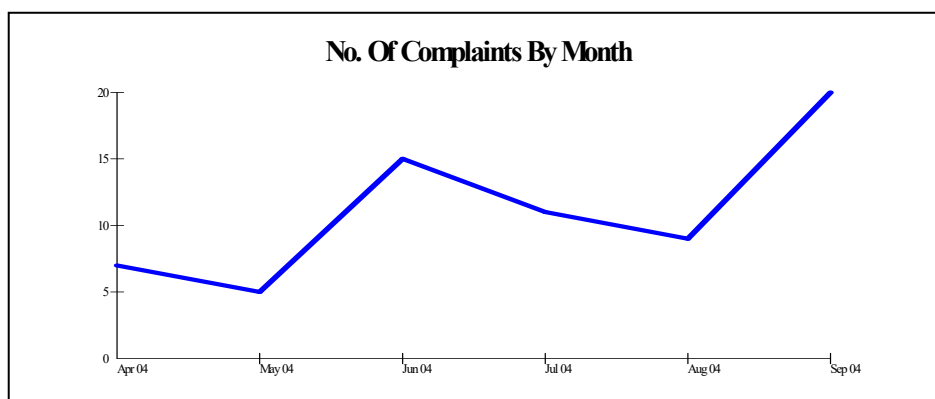
3.3.1 Chart 1 above show the number of complaints received by each division for each quarter at each stage of the complaint process.

3.3.2 A full listing of complaints received by each Service is in Appendix 1.

3.3.3 Quarterly results for City Clean show a reduction in total numbers of complaints. Graph one illustrates monthly numbers of complaints and indicates a general reduction of complaints since April. The peak at August correlates with the introduction of wheelie bins. The chart shows a reduction in complaints for September. This is likely to be a continuing trend as wheelie bins and kerbside collections are introduced across the city.

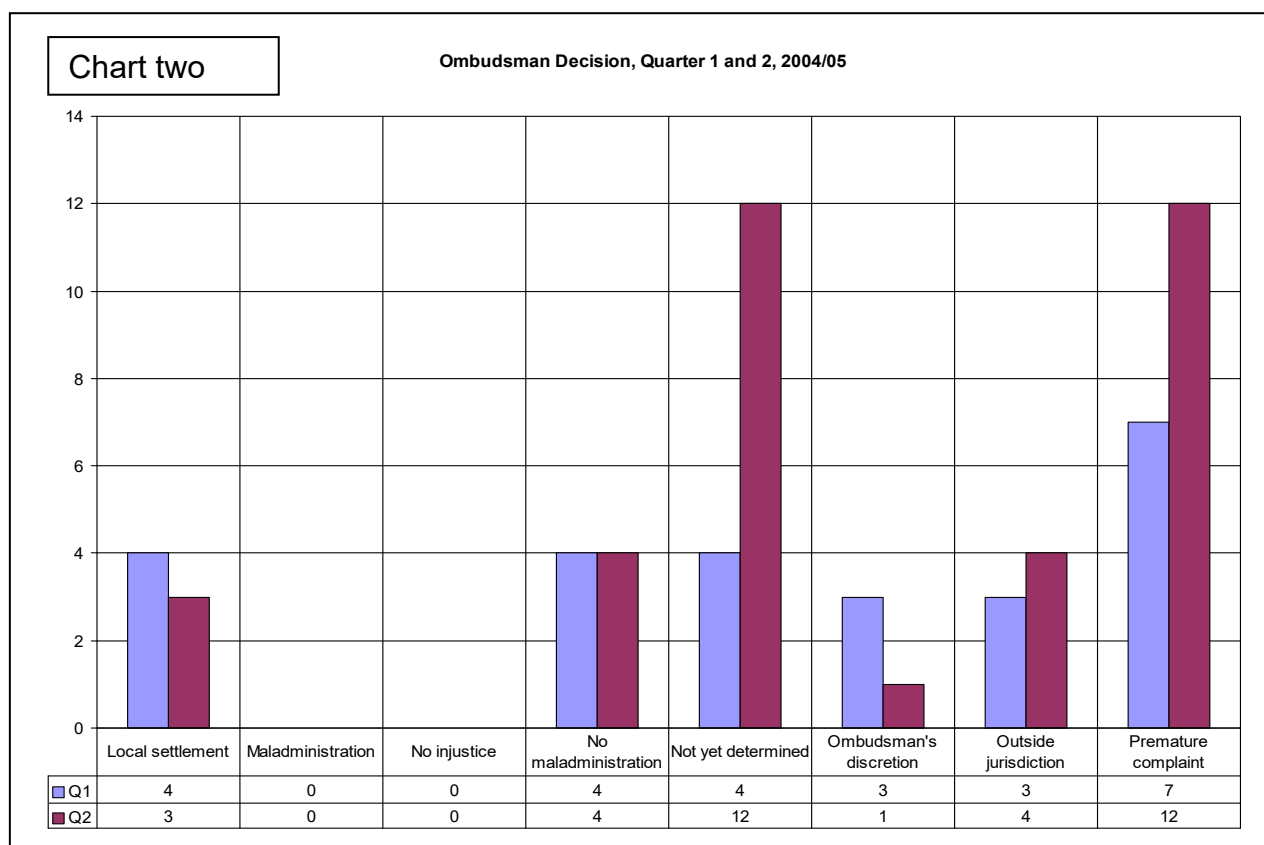


3.3.4 Complaints for Sustainable Transport have shown an increase in Quarter 2. Graph 2 below indicates monthly numbers of complaints increase in September. This may reflect customer dissatisfaction with increased on-street car-parking charges.



3.3.5 Changes in numbers of complaints between quarter 1 and 2 for the other divisions, i.e. City Planning, Public Safety, and Quality of Life & Green Spaces are either very small or cannot be attributed to any specific factors.

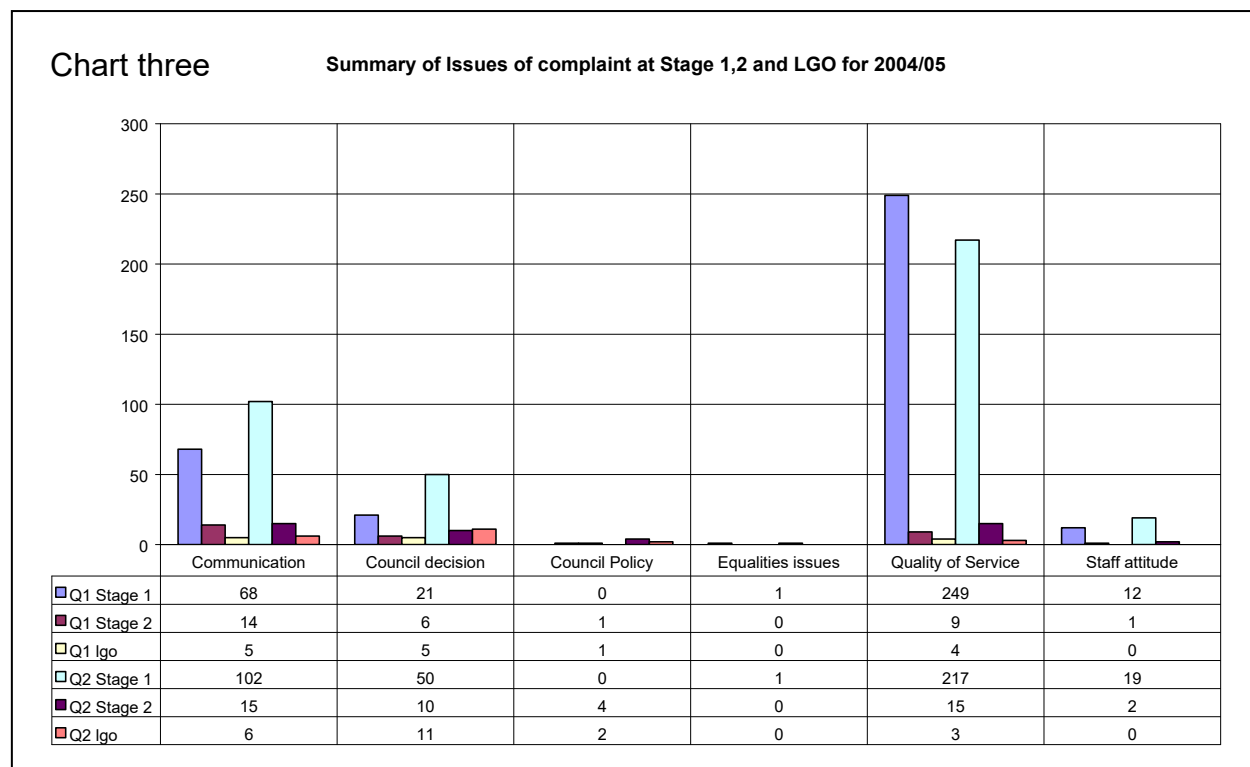
3.4 Summary of Ombudsman Investigations for quarter 1,2,



3.4.1 Chart two shows the Ombudsman advised a Local Settlement should be reached on 6 occasions during quarters 1 and 2, one settlement of £75 was made in

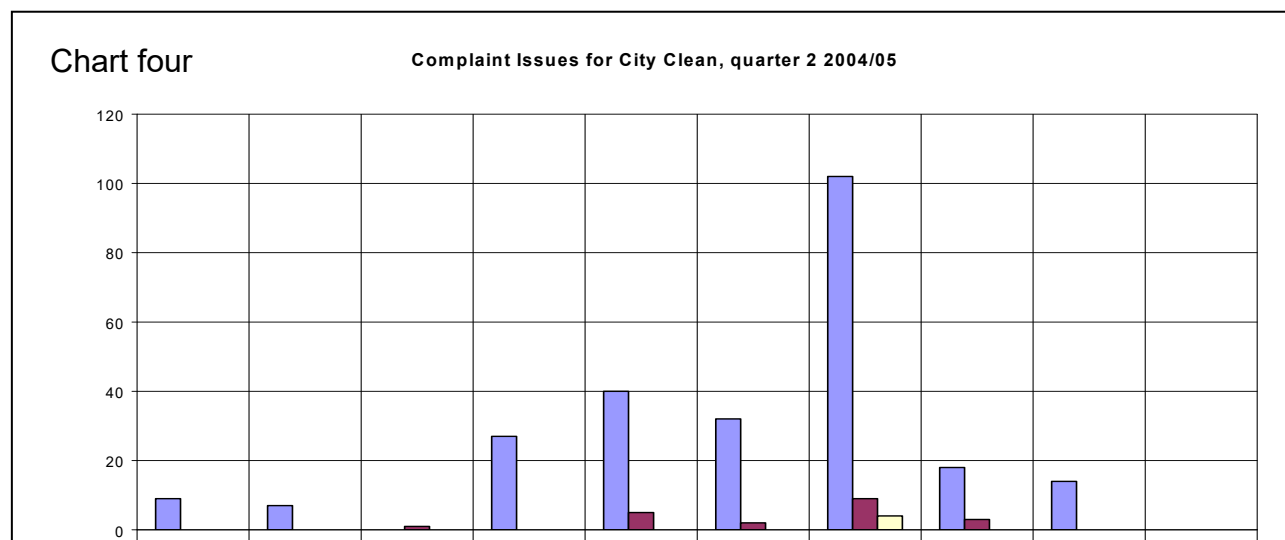
compensation. There have been no complaints where Maladministration or Injustice has been found. The Ombudsman used his discretion to close four investigations and 16 complaints have not yet been determined. There have been 26 investigations found to be either Premature or Outside the Jurisdiction of the Ombudsman.

3.5 Issues of Complaint for Quarters 1 and 2 in 2004/05



3.5.1 Chart three shows the issues of complaint being made about Environment during quarters 1 and 2. There has been a significant increase in complaints about communication issues and council decisions but fewer complaints about quality of service.

3.5.2 It is recognised that managers would prefer to receive information about specific categories of complaints relating to their services. Standards and Complaints have been working with City Clean to produce a set of issues that will provide this information.



3.5.3 Chart four shows that the main issue of complaint for City Clean is that refuse collections have been missed. A significant number of people then complain that they are unable to reach City Clean via the contact centre to report the missed collection.

City Clean customer service team are now aiming to respond to customers who report missed collections more rapidly than before. City Clean managers are working with crews to reduce numbers of missed collections and to ensure that missed collection are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Standards and Complaints Team and City Clean are ensuring that complainants receive a swift response and that issues of complaint are accurately recorded.

Details of correspondence performance are provided in section 3.6

3.6 Correspondence Performance

Stage 1 Correspondence Performance	Total replies	Average to reply (wk days):	Replied in 10 days:	Replied in 11 to 15 days:	Replied in 16 days +:	% holding letters sent
Environment Directorate Q1	292	18.2	89	45	158	3%
Environment Directorate Q2	221	8.5	158	33	22	7.30%
City Clean Q1	230	19.4	54	35	141	0%
City Clean Q2	157	9.3	109	28	16	4.50%
City Planning Q1	12	17	2	4	6	50%
City Planning Q2	6	14.6	2	1	3	50%
Public Safety Q1	7	6.4	7	0	0	n/a
Public Safety Q2	5	3.5	4	0	0	n/a
Quality of Life & Green Spaces Q1	20	15.2	11	3	6	0%
Quality of Life & Green Spaces Q2	23	9.1	17	1	3	0%
Sustainable Transport Q1	27	9.4	18	3	6	11%
Sustainable Transport Q2	40	6.9	32	3	4	0%

- 3.6.1 The target for replying to stage 1 complaints is 10 working days. If it is not possible to respond within 10 days the service manager responsible for the reply should send a holding reply to keep the complainant informed of progress.
- 3.6.2 Results for Environment show a significant overall improvement between quarter 1 and 2. The factor that has most influenced this is that response times by City Clean have reduced by more than 50%.
- 3.6.3 Every division has improved their average correspondence time between quarter 1 and quarter 2.
- 3.6.4 City Planning are to be congratulated for being the only division within the whole council who have sent holding replies as required by the complaints procedure. Public Safety should be recognised for not needed to send holding replies as all their complaints have been answered within 10 days.

3.7 Compliments

	Q1	Q2
City Clean	1	0
Development Control	4	4
Quality of Life & Green Spaces	0	2

- 3.7.1 It is likely that there is significant under reporting of compliments received by individuals and teams within the Environment Directorate. Reports of compliments is should be encouraged as it can help motivate staff and is an excellent source for learning about public perception of good practice.

3.8 Recommendations made to service teams

- 3.8.1 The following recommendations have been made to service heads within Environment as a consequence of complaints received.
 - ❑ Street cleaners to check a particular street every day where there are known problems and to take action as necessary.
 - ❑ Members of the public were reporting a lack of call backs from City Clean, additional resources have been identified to assist with this. Agreement reached with Standards and Complaints Team that response to complaints could be made by telephone or email to speed up reply times.
 - ❑ Refuse crews were advised not to park on zig-zag lines.
 - ❑ Cityclean to reword Stage 1 reply letters to better clarify distinction between domestic and bulky waste.

- ❑ Cityclean to review information on website regarding bulk waste.
- ❑ A disclaimer should be printed on parking permits stating the Council cannot be held responsible for additional parking costs incurred when a permit is transferred.
- ❑ Development Control to consider value of "mystery shopping" or other ways of monitoring a copy plans to ensure all information is included and is up to date.
- ❑ Development Control to review procedure for advising public of member's visits and for notifying neighbours of those visits.

Meeting/Date	Overview Scrutiny and Organisation Committee, 15 November 2004
Report of	Director of Strategy and Governance
Subject	Corporate Complaints Update
Wards affected	All

Financial implications None
Legal implications None

Corporate/Citywide implications None	Risk assessment Failure to identify complaint issues where there are recurring themes or emerging trends could result in unnecessarily high levels of dissatisfaction with council services among the public
Sustainability implications None	Equalities implications Equalities elements of complaints made to the Council to continue to be monitored and acted upon as issues arise.
Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder None	

Background papers None
Contact Officer Brian Foley, Standards and Complaints Manager, 293109

APPENDIX 1

The following table gives details of the numbers of complaints received by division and section within Environment.

	Quarter 1			Quarter 2		
	Stage 1	Stage 2	LGO	Stage 1	Stage 2	LGO
Refuse & Recycling	223	9	3	163	19	4
Recycling	10	0	0	30	1	0
Total for City Clean	233	9	3	193	20	4
Building Control	0	0	0	0	0	0
Development Control	14	7	4	9	7	8
Planning Strategy & Projects	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total for City Planning	14	7	4	9	7	8
Community Safety	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drug & Alcohol Team	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Health/Licensing	2	0	0	0	1	1
Community Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Animal Welfare	1	0	0	1	0	0
Food Safety	0	0	0	0	0	0
Health Safety & Licensing	0	0	0	1	0	0
Noise Abatement	2	0	1	3	0	0
Pollution Control	1	0	0	1	0	0
Operations	1	0	0	0	0	0
Abandoned Vehicles	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enforcement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trading Standards	0	0	0	2	0	0
Total for Public Safety	7	0	1	8	1	1
Countryside & Sustainability	4	0	0	2	0	0
Leisure	0	0	0	0	0	0
Client Contract Unit	2	0	0	2	1	0
King Alfred	0	0	0	0	0	0
Seafront & Events	0	0	0	3	0	0
Outdoor events	4	0	0	6	0	0
Sports Development	0	0	0	2	0	0
Parks Plans & Amenities	1	0	0	2	0	0
Pest Control	9	1	0	16	1	0
Traveller Liaison	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total for Quality of Life & Green Spaces	20	1	0	35	2	0
Highway Management	6	1	0	14	0	1
Traffic Signals & St. Lighting	7	0	0	7	0	0
Parking Management	9	0	0	28	4	0
Traffic & Road Safety	3	0	0	5	0	0
Transport Planning	1	0	0	0	0	0
Public Transport	1	0	0	1	0	0
Total for Sustainable Transport	27	1	0	55	4	1
Total for Environment	575	35	16	545	64	27

APPENDIX 2 - Glossary of terminology used by the Local Government Ombudsman

Local Settlement:

During the course of an investigation the Council takes or agrees to take some action, which the Ombudsman considers to be a satisfactory response to the complainant.

Maladministration:

Where there has been a fault in the way the Council has or has not done something.

For example:

- Took too long to do something
- Did not follow its own rules
- Broke its promise
- Did not make a decision in the correct way

No Injustice:

The Ombudsman will only investigate injustice as a result of Maladministration. Injustice might occur if:

- A person did not receive a service or benefit to which they were entitled
- A financial loss was incurred
- Distress or upset was caused

Ombudsman's discretion:

Cases are terminated at the Ombudsman's discretion if for example:

- The complainant wishes to withdraw the complaint
- The complainant decides to take court action
- No or insufficient injustice to justify continuing the investigation

Outside Jurisdiction:

The law does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate certain things, these can include:

- Personnel matters
- Internal management of schools
- Matters which affect all or most of the people living in a Council's area

Premature Complaints:

Complaints not accepted because the Council have not had a reasonable opportunity to deal with them first

APPENDIX 3 **An overview of the corporate complaints process**

Stage 1 – Problem Solving

The Lead Officer for the section about who the complaint has been made should respond to complainant within ten working days. If it is not possible to give a full reply within ten working days a holding reply should be given explaining who is dealing with the complaint and what action is being taken.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

If a complainant is still unhappy after the complaint has been dealt with at stage 1 they can ask for a further investigation to be carried out by the Standards & Complaints team.

The Standards and Complaints team aim to complete all Stage 2 investigations within 20 working days. When this is not possible, the Standards & Complaints Team will ensure the complainant is informed of progress.

Local Government Ombudsman

Any member of the public can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman at any time. A leaflet “How to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman” is available at main council reception desks or from the Standards & Complaints Team.

Standards and Complaints contact details: complaints@brighton-hove.gov.co.uk , or, www.brighton-hove.gov.uk, or, Brighton & Hove City Council, Standards & Complaints, FREEPOST SEA2560, Brighton Town Hall, Bartholomew Square, Brighton, BN11ZW or, freephone 0500 291229.

