



Voice of the Customer Report

Quarter 2 2023/24

July 2023 – September 2023

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Introduction

This Voice of the Customer report covers the quarter 2 period from July 2023 to September 2023.

It contains information on all customer feedback received including compliments, comments and complaints broken down by director service area. Information on upheld complaints is included along with learning and improvement actions that have been identified through customer feedback received, customer satisfaction survey responses and complaint investigations that have taken place.

There is a section that covers complaints that have been referred to, investigated and decided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The report also includes information on customer satisfaction, analysing satisfaction levels and the responses that have been received for customer satisfaction surveys sent out to recent users of the main customer facing services.

There is a section at the end of the report that covers customer demand data across various contact channels including telephone calls received by the customer contact centre, face to face contact, website usage, service requests received, and payments received.

In comparison to 2022/23 during quarter 2 customer demand increased overall but the amount of customer feedback received has remained the same.

Customer satisfaction has increased overall in comparison to the previous year, a 2022 research article by the Office of National Statistics reported that public confidence and trust in public services is increasing. [Trust in government, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/articles/economy/trust-in-government-uk-2022)

For more information or to discuss this report further please contact:

Natalie Kostiuk – Customer Experience Manager

Natalie.kostiuk@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Please send any customer feedback received to – experience@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Customer Feedback and Demand Overview

	2023/24	2022/23	Difference
Compliments	306	298	▲ 8
Comments	14	25	▼ 11
Complaints	48	48	No Change
Upheld Complaints	14 (29%)	12 (25%)	▲ 2 (4%)
Average response time	6.3 days	6.8 days	▼ 0.5 days
Customer Satisfaction	81%	70%	▲ 11%
Telephone Calls (Contact Centre)	19,251	16,685	▲ 2,566
Website Users	116,923	92,889	▲ 24,034
Visitors to the Guildhall	9,741	7,074	▲ 2,667

In [Appendix 1](#) you can find a table that shows a breakdown of customer feedback received by each individual service (Compliments, Comments and Complaints).

Compliments

The number of compliments received has increased slightly compared to the previous year. The main customer facing services received the highest number of compliments as they deal with a larger number of customers daily (waste services, planning, development, trees and conservation and customer services).

More detail on compliments received by each service is included later in this report.

Complaints

The number of complaints received has remained the same as the previous year.

Waste services received the highest number of complaints.

It should be noted that Planning and Development, Trees and Conservation, a service that historically receives complaints on a regular basis did not receive any complaints during quarter 2.

More detail on complaints received by each service is included later in this report.

Average response time for complaints

In quarter 2 the average complaint response time increased slightly compared to the previous year from 6.3 days to 6.8 days. The target for response is 21 calendar days.

In August 2023, one complaint took 24 calendar days from receipt to the response being sent, this complaint took longer to investigate due to officer annual leave and the amount of information that needed to be gathered for a full investigation to take place.

Upheld complaints

Fault was identified in 14 of the 48 complaints that were investigated, 14 complaints were upheld in quarter 2 which is a small increase compared to the previous year.

Where fault has occurred the issues have been examined to identify if any learning can take place or if any service improvements are required.

More detail on learning and improvement actions for individual services is included later in this report.

Comments

The number of comments received has decreased compared to the previous year.

Waste services received the highest number of comments.

More detail on comments received by each service is included later in this report.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has increased by 11% compared to the previous year.

Learning and Improvements

Learning and improvements that have been identified and implemented during quarter 2 are detailed in the sections below.

Customer Demand

There has been an increase in customer demand across the website and face to face services compared to the previous year. The number of visitors to the Guildhall has increased dramatically, and although most of the customers that attend in person are accessing services provided by our tenants, there is still an initial interaction with the WLDC Customer Services Team.

The number of service requests received has increased with online forms and telephone being the preferred methods of contact for 87% of customers.

There has been a decrease in the number of calls received by the contact centre (customer services, revenues (council tax) and benefits calls).

The number of payments received has increased and there has been a 4% increase in the number of self service payments compared to last year.

More information can be found in the [Customer Demand](#) section of this report.

Operational & Commercial Services

Ady Selby

	Compliments	Comments	Complaints	Upheld Complaints
Arts and Leisure	9	0	1	
Building Control	12	0	1	
Cemetery	0	0	0	
Crematorium	2	0	0	
Customer Experience	2	0	0	
Customer Services	32	0	3	3 upheld
Street Cleansing	9	0	0	
Waste Services	85	7	14	8 upheld
Totals	151	7	19	11 upheld

Compliments

Waste Services and Customer Services received a high number of compliments in quarter 2 which is to be expected as they are two of the main customer facing services.

Customers have complimented Waste Services on how easy it is to request a service, how quickly service requests are completed and the professionalism and friendliness of operatives when on duty.

Customers appreciate being kept informed and rate the service highly when we do what we say we are going to.

Customers have complimented Customer Services for their helpfulness, politeness, understanding and courtesy. Customers appreciate being listened to and shown empathy when they contact us and are thankful of the time and effort that customer services put in to assisting, advising and resolving their queries.

The Trinity Arts Centre has been complimented on how nice it is in comparison to other larger cinemas and several 5 star google reviews have been logged regarding friendly staff and how it's a great venue with value for money.

Building Control have received messages of thanks for being efficient and supportive, with customers praising officers for the advice they have provided.

Compliments for Street Cleansing include praise and appreciation for the work carried out in Caistor by the street cleaning operative and compliments have been logged from satisfaction survey comments where customers have praised the service for how quickly reported fly tipping has been removed.

The venue and staff at the Crematorium have been praised and a special thank you was received for officers that assisted when a family attended to scatter a loved one's ashes.

Complaints

A complaint received for Arts and Leisure in relation to the cleanliness of the Gainsborough Leisure Centre was investigated but not upheld as it was found that a regular cleaning schedule is undertaken daily.

A complaint regarding advice provided by the Building Control department was investigated but not upheld as it was found that the advice provided by them was accurate and correct.

The complaints received for Customer Services were all upheld as it was found that correct advice and explanation had not been provided to customers during calls about waste issues.

Complaints upheld for Waste Services included failed assisted collections, a failed bin lid repair, delayed collection of unwanted bins, delayed delivery of new bins and instances of inappropriate operative behaviour.

Comments

Comments that were received for Waste Services include comments on operative behaviour and driving standards, inconsistencies in waste collections, comments regarding the purchase of bins when moving into a WL property without bins, a suggested facility to drop off sharps rather than have them collected, and comments regarding waste policies and difficulties finding information on the website. Where required issues reported to us have been resolved and where suggestions for service improvement have been received these have been shared with the relevant service manager for consideration when future service reviews take place.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction surveys were sent to Waste Services and Street Cleansing customers. 362 responses were received for these services.

Low scores have been given for Waste Services with comments about delays in the service being received and customers having to contact us again when we haven't done what we said we would. Bulky collection costs have also been mentioned when customers were asked what could have been improved.

Low scores have been given for Street Cleansing when issues that have been reported have not been actioned, customers have requested better communication and updates when a service request has been completed.

Learning and Improvements

Waste Services – customer education

A comment received from a councillor regarding customer feedback and customer experience highlighted that customers need to be further educated in terms of what is accepted in which bin and stated that more communications would be beneficial going forward.

This was shared with relevant officers and has been implemented since the comment was received. The new waste collection calendars that are being produced

for 2024/25 have this information included, all properties will receive one of these calendars and more information has been shared on social media channels.

Waste Services – collection inconsistencies

Customer feedback received in various forms during quarter 2 has highlighted the need for waste crews to be reminded of the waste policies and that they need to be consistent across every property in the district in terms of contaminated bins.

This feedback was shared with the waste services supervisors to implement asap.

Street Cleansing – customer service request updates

Regular comments are received regarding customers not knowing if their request had been completed and not being kept up to date so better communication and updates are required for street cleansing customers. Since this feedback was received street cleansing service requests have been moved over to CRM and customers now receive updates and confirmation once the service request has been completed.

Customer Experience - misdirected customer feedback

There has been an increase recently in the number of customers submitting compliments for the Lincolnshire County Council Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) online to WLDC via the customer feedback page.

To try and stop this from happening the website page was amended so that it states that the HWRC is operated by LCC and not WLDC, extra information was added to the section regarding what LCC are responsible for, highways and potholes for example – including a link to the LCC website.

Customer Services

Individual officer training, coaching and mentoring has been carried out since complaints were received in quarter 2 to ensure that the correct advice is being provided to all customers.

Planning, Regeneration & Communities

Sally Grindrod-Smith

	Compliments	Comments	Complaints	Upheld Complaints
Communities	1	0	0	
Disabled Facilities Grants	3	0	0	
Energy	0	0	0	
Growth and Regeneration	8	1	1	1 upheld
Home Choices	16	0	4	1 upheld
Planning and Development, Trees and Conservation	68	1	0	
Tourism	1	0	0	
Wellbeing and Health	1	0	0	
Totals	98	2	5	2 upheld

Compliments

A high number of compliments were received for Planning and Development, Trees and Conservation in quarter 2 that related to the organisation of the planning committee that was held at the Epic Centre in July 2023 in relation to Guy Gibson's dog's grave at RAF Scampton.

Further compliments were received where customers have appreciated the advice provided by planning officers, the communication that has taken place and how quickly application decisions have been made.

Customers have thanked Home Choices for their support with housing advice and assistance with moving into a new property. Several messages of appreciation have been received for the support offered to Ukrainian families that have been relocated to the area.

Growth and Regeneration have received praise for events that have been held across the district including a talk at Gainsborough Library, Community Funding events and other Gainsborough Heritage Townscape Initiatives. Messages of thanks have also been received for support and advice provided to local businesses.

Other compliments received have praised work that has been carried out under the DFG process, shown gratitude for the Communities team support and advice with grant funding and praise for the Wellbeing and Health officer that chaired a recent multi action meeting.

Complaints

It should be noted that Planning and Development, Trees and Conservation did not receive any complaints during quarter 2.

A complaint received for Growth and Regeneration in relation to business advice provided by a third party on behalf of WLDC found that there had been some misunderstanding regarding what level of support would be offered via the arrangement, this had not been

made 100% clear at the time the arrangement was made, and there was confusion regarding what related to WLDC and what was a separate arrangement with the business advisor. To avoid this happening again in the future it was agreed that paperwork wording would be amended.

Home Choices received complaints regarding the quality of service and process followed, two complaints were received because customers were dissatisfied with the offers of temporary accommodation being made and another complaint was received as the customer was not happy with the way they had been spoken to. These complaints were not upheld.

A complaint was upheld for Home Choices as investigation found that an error had been made and a customer had not been called back as soon as they should have been. This was quickly rectified, and the customer received an apology.

Comments

A comment received for Planning and Development, Trees and Conservation related to issues with the time taken for call backs to be returned, in this instance the call was returned within 48 hours of the initial request.

A comment was also received for Growth and Regeneration to consider in relation to parking facilities in the Gainsborough town area for incoming visitors.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction surveys were sent to planning and development, trees and conservation customers. 33 responses were received in total.

High scores have been given with comments in relation to the quality of communication received, the professionalism of officers and the efficiency and promptness of responses and decisions being made.

Low scores have been given where customers felt that the communication could have been improved and where they felt thorough considerations had not taken place.

Learning and Improvements

Growth and Regeneration - business advice
<p>A complaint received and investigated in relation to business advice provided by a third party on behalf of WLDC found that improvements were required. The separation of what falls under WLDC and what the business advisor would be responsible for is needed for any new arrangements going forward.</p> <p>This has been discussed with the Economic Growth Team Leader who will ensure that more detailed paperwork is used in the future.</p>

Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services

Nova Roberts

	Compliments	Comments	Complaints	Upheld Complaints
Benefits	6	0	0	
Community Safety	1	0	0	
Environmental Protection	7	0	3	
Food, Health and Safety	1	0	0	
Housing Enforcement	0	0	0	
Licensing	11	0	3	
Local Land Charges	0	0	0	
Planning Enforcement	0	1	3	
Public Health Funerals	0	0	0	
Revenues (Council tax)	15	2	1	
System Development	5	0	0	
Totals	46	3	10	0 upheld

Compliments

Revenues (Council Tax) have received messages of thanks for officers that have been helpful and efficient and for providing a quick response. The team have been complimented on their listening skills and relief that they have provided customers through advice and support provided. One compliment received expressed how impressed the customer was with WLDC in comparison to other councils they had dealt with.

Licensing received several compliments through satisfaction survey responses including how easy the process was, how quickly responses were received, how approachable, knowledgeable and kind the officers were and how helpful the service had been.

Environmental Protection have been thanked for their help and advice and for listening and quickly responding to issues. Two longer thank you letters were received regarding how professionally officers had dealt with individual cases describing the officers as being supportive, unbiased, sensitive and personable.

Compliments have also been received regarding how helpful and supportive the benefits team have been to customers and how their assistance has helped take a weight off their mind. Compliments have been taken from customer satisfaction survey comments for the Systems Development team regarding how easy the website is to navigate and how good the online booking service for waste is.

Complaints

The complaints received for Environmental Protection were all in relation to noise investigations that had been carried out. The complainants felt that officers had not

thoroughly investigated the problems when deciding that there was no evidence of a statutory nuisance to act against. These complaints were not upheld as it was evident that full investigations and monitoring had taken place in line with the correct procedures.

The complaints received for Licensing all related to the same case, the complainants were not satisfied with the decision not to act in relation to reports received about a dog rescue facility. The complaints were not upheld as full investigations had taken place which had not identified any concern that warranted action being taken.

Planning Enforcement received complaints regarding decisions made not to act, investigations found that officers had fully considered and investigated all reports received but, in each case, there were no breaches identified that warranted action being taken. These decisions were made in line with the Corporate Enforcement Policy and the complaints received were not upheld.

Revenues (Council Tax) received a complaint regarding council tax liability, the complainant did not agree with what was stated as being owed. Investigation found that the calculations were correct, and no fault was identified so the complaint was not upheld.

Comments

A comment was received for Planning Enforcement regarding the impact of local building sites in local villages.

Comments received for Revenues (Council Tax) were regarding problems experienced when customers tried to pay council tax online, leading to them having to call the council for assistance. Following feedback received changes were made to the system to make it more straight forward and obvious on how you proceed to complete making a payment online.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction surveys were sent to Licensing, Planning Enforcement, Community Safety and Environmental Protection customers. 58 responses were received for these services.

High scores have been given with comments in relation to how approachable, knowledgeable, and helpful licensing officers are and how quickly Environmental Protection officers acted. Planning Enforcement have been praised for their quick response to reports received.

Low scores have been given with comments on customers not being kept up to date on the progress of cases, not being able to easily contact officers and how customers feel that proper investigations have not taken place across all the enforcement services.

Learning and Improvements

Outgoing and incoming calls to customers via teams

A complaint investigation required call logs to be examined, however this was not possible as it was identified that calls via teams could not be reported on.
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Further investigation is currently taking place in conjunction with the IT department to establish why the calls cannot be reported on to ensure that the issue is fixed going forward.

Planning Enforcement – customer education and awareness

A comment received from a councillor regarding planning enforcement and a recent training event that had taken place emphasised their surprise at what they had learnt. Finding that planning enforcement was not a statutory service and stating that there is a lot of misconception regarding what powers the council have and what they can, can't, will or won't deal with. The councillor felt that relaying some of this information to our residents would be helpful and would assist in managing some customers expectations.

This comment was shared with the Housing & Environmental Enforcement Manager who will ensure that wider education and awareness of enforcement services and the councils powers are communicated going forward.

Revenues (Council Tax) - Payments Online

Customer feedback received identified that some customers were finding it difficult to navigate the website to complete a payment online following some system updates that had recently been made.

The CSS Business Manager worked with the system provider to amend the system to make it more straight forward and obvious on how you proceed to complete making a payment online. This has been completed, tested and implemented.

Revenues (Council Tax) – customer enquiries

A complaint investigated regarding a council tax payment that had not been correctly allocated found that an administration error had been made when the customer sent a follow up email querying the matter. The email had accidentally been missed and not responded to or actioned.

This was discussed with the Senior Revenues Officer who has put extra measures in place with the officers that deal with incoming emails to ensure that this does not happen again in the future.

LGSCO Complaints

The one new complaint that was referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in quarter 2 was in relation to Planning Enforcement.

The LGSCO decided not to investigate the complaint because there was no evidence of fault by the Council.

More detail on the complaint can be found in the [LGSCO complaint](#) section of this report.

Corporate Services

Emma Foy

	Compliments	Comments	Complaints	Upheld Complaints
Communications Team	0	0	0	
Electoral Services	0	0	0	
Financial Creditors and Debtors	0	0	1	1 upheld
HR	0	0	0	
Member and Support Services	3	0	1	
PA and FOI Team	0	0	0	
Property Services	4	0	0	
Totals	7	0	2	1 upheld

Compliments

Member and Support services received compliments during quarter 2 for their part in organising the planning committee meeting that was held at the Epic Centre in July 2023. Comments were received regarding how accessible and inclusive the meeting was and how smoothly it went.

Property Services have received compliments and messages of thanks for helping a customer with a parking machine issue and for how quickly and well done works have been completed within the guildhall and around the district.

Complaints

A complaint was upheld for Financial Creditors and Debtors, the investigation found that a council tax payment had been manually allocated to an incorrect account due to an administration error. Learning actions were identified and are outlined below.

A complaint was received for Member and Support services regarding a public speaker at the Epic Centre planning committee meeting. The complaint was not upheld, no fault was identified as the speaker conformed to the requirements that were set out in the set criteria and rules.

Comments

No comments were received during quarter 2.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction surveys are not used for these services currently as they are mainly internal customer facing services.

Learning and Improvements

Finance – manual allocation of payments

A complaint investigated regarding a council tax payment that had not been correctly allocated found that an administration error had led to it being manually allocated to an incorrect account.

This was discussed with the Financial Services Manager who will ensure going forward that the process includes that the team check with Revenues colleagues before manually assigning the income to avoid this situation occurring again. It was also suggested that if early communication from both teams (Finance and Revenues (Council Tax)) is improved we can hopefully avoid this situation happening again in the future.

Chief Executive Ian Knowles

	Compliments	Comments	Complaints	Upheld Complaints
Internal Confidential Issues	0	0	1	
Management Team	0	0	0	
WLDC Council in General	3	0	0	
Totals	3	0	1	0 upheld

Compliments

Compliments that have been attributed to WLDC in general are all regarding the work that is ongoing to secure the future of RAF Scampton. Several services and many officers are involved in the process and people have taken the time to write in with their messages of support and gratitude.

Complaints

A complaint was received regarding the cost of officer travel abroad for research purposes. The complaint was not upheld as the travel in question was funded by a third party organisation and not WLDC.

Comments

No comments were received during quarter 2.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction surveys are not used for these services currently as they are not customer facing services.

Learning and Improvements

None identified.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaints

Complaints referred to the LGSCO during Qu2	1
Complaints investigated by the LGSCO during Qu2	0
Complaints not investigated by the LGSCO during Qu2	1
Complaints decided by the LGSCO during Qu2	0

During quarter 2 one new complaint was referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The complaint was in relation to Planning Enforcement, the customer was not satisfied with the council's decision not to act against their neighbour, who they claimed had breached planning rules. No action was taken by Planning Enforcement as no breach was identified when they investigated.

The LGSCO decided not to investigate the complaint because there was no evidence of fault by the Council.

Customer Satisfaction

Quarter 2	Surveys Sent	Responses received	Satisfaction Score
July	819	174	83%
August	807	150	77%
September	755	129	83%
Totals	2381	453	81%

There has been an increase in customer satisfaction compared to the previous quarter 2 period, satisfaction has increased by 11% from 70% to 81%.

The decrease in satisfaction last year was due to the implementation of the new recycling service, changes to the blue bin policy, new paper and card collections and change to a no side waste policy. Customer satisfaction was low whilst residents became used to the new arrangements, but it has increased since then.

During quarter 2 satisfaction surveys were sent to customers that had received a service from these departments: Waste Services, Street Cleansing, Licensing, Environmental Protection, Planning Enforcement and Planning and Development.

The 453 responses received in quarter 2 were made up of responses from these services:

Licensing	24
Planning and Development	33
Planning Enforcement	11
Environmental Health	23
Street Cleansing	44
Waste Services	318

The table below shows the number of 1 to 5 star ratings that were received. 4 and 5 star ratings are used to calculate the overall satisfaction score %.

Customers are asked to rate the service received from 1 Star (Poor) to 5 Stars (Excellent)

Number of 1 star ratings	42
Number of 2 star ratings	16
Number of 3 star ratings	28
Number of 4 star ratings	58
Number of 5 star ratings	309

If a customer rates the service received as 1-3 stars they are asked how their experience could have been improved, if a customer rates the service received as 4-5 stars, they are asked what we did well.

More detail on comments received through customer satisfaction surveys for each service is included in the sections above.

Customer Demand



- 3795 **service requests** were received in total
- This is an increase of 832 compared to last year
- Online forms and telephone were the preferred methods of contact for 87% of customers



- 9,741 customers attended the Guildhall for a **face to face service**
- 1,482 of these were WLDC customers, 8,259 were not but WLDC officers are still involved in the initial interaction with all guildhall visitors
- This is an increase overall of 2,667 compared to last year
- The increase has occurred in visitors for services provided by our tenants, Job Centre Plus (JCP) have been seeing more customers by pre arranged face to face appointments this year



- 16,685 **telephone calls** were received by the contact centre which includes customer services, revenues (council tax) and benefits
- 91% of them were answered, 9% were abandoned
- This is a decrease of 5,440 calls compared to last year when 22,125 calls were received by the contact centre



- The **WLDC website** had 116,923 users
- This is a big increase of 24,034 users compared to last year
- The main pages visited were Planning and Development, Waste, Council News and how to contact the Council
- This information is sourced from Google analytic reports



- 10,325 **Eforms** were submitted in total
- This is a decrease of 368 compared to last year
- 70% were completed by the customer themselves online
- The main services requested via Eforms were Waste, Revenues (Council Tax) and Customer Services



- 119,436 **payments** were taken in total
- This is an increase of 1,204 compared to last year
- After direct debits have been deducted it is calculated that 60% of the payments were made using self-service, 11% were processed by staff and 29% were automated payments
- Self-service payments have increased by just over 4% compared to last year

Appendix 1 – Customer Feedback by Service

	Compliments	Comments	Complaints	Upheld Complaints
Arts and Leisure	9	0	1	
Benefits	6	0	0	
Building Control	12	0	1	
Cemetery	0	0	0	
Communications Team	0	0	0	
Communities	1	0	0	
Community Safety	1	0	0	
Crematorium	2	0	0	
Customer Experience	2	0	0	
Customer Services	32	0	3	3 upheld
Disabled Facilities Grants	3	0	0	
Electoral Services	0	0	0	
Energy	0	0	0	
Environmental Protection	7	0	3	
Financial Creditors and Debtors	0	0	1	1 upheld
Food, Health and Safety	1	0	0	
Growth and Regeneration	8	1	1	1 upheld
Home Choices	16	0	4	1 upheld
Housing Enforcement	0	0	0	
HR	0	0	0	
Internal Confidential Issues	0	0	1	
Licensing	11	0	3	
Local Land Charges	0	0	0	
Management Team	0	0	0	
Member and Support Services	3	0	1	
PA and FOI Team	0	0	0	
Planning and Development, Trees and Conservation	68	1	0	
Planning Enforcement	0	1	3	
Property Services	4	0	0	
Public Health Funerals	0	0	0	
Revenues (Council tax)	15	2	1	
Street Cleansing	9	0	0	
System Development	5	0	0	
Tourism	1	0	0	
Waste Services	85	7	14	8 upheld
Wellbeing and Health	1	0	0	
WLDC Council in General	3	0	0	
Out of Scope	4	2	11	
Totals	306	14	48	14 upheld