

Audit and Standards Committee

27 April 2020

Title: Information Governance Annual Report	
Report of the Chief Operating Officer	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
Report Author: Danielle Bridge Complaints and Information Manager	Contact Details: Tel: 020 8277 2111 E-mail: Danielle.Bridge@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Natalia Monvoisin; Head of Customer Contact	
Accountable Strategic Leadership Director: Claire Symonds, Chief Operating Officer	
Summary <p>The report provides insight into the work undertaken by the Feedback Team. It incorporates information relating to complaints, members casework, Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SAR)</p> <p>This report aims to detail how as a council we perform against our performance targets in relation to complaints and members casework and how after reviewing them we identify and implement service improvements.</p> <p>Legislation dictates that an annual separate report is developed and published for Care and Support. A copy of this can be found at Appendix A</p>	
Recommendation: <p>The Audit and Standards Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.</p>	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Feedback Team are responsible for monitoring and tracking all complaints, members casework, Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests which are submitted. This report focuses on complaints and members casework as this is where we can gather the most insight into how we can not only improve our services but learn from our residents and members.
- 1.2 All casework is tracked on the Council's complaints handling system I-Casework. This system was implemented in January 2016. Due to organisational changes, monitoring can only be compared between 2018 and 2019. The figures shown in this report are for calendar years.

1.3 The council has a number of information governance processes which are managed by the Feedback Team. The four main processes are set out below providing timescales and expected performance.

Complaints – The Council encourages complaints and has a corporate process which allows residents to complain about services. This process has two stages, in the first stage, which many raise through our on line form, we aim to respond within 10 working days.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the answer, they receive at stage one they may within 28 days of the response ask for a review. The aim is to respond to a request for a review within 30 working days and if this target cannot be met a progress report will be sent.

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the response they can approach the [Ombudsman](#) or the [Housing Ombudsman Service](#) if the complaint is about housing.

The performance target for all complaints is currently to answer 90% within the timeframes described

In addition to this process, there are certain services where there is a statutory complaints process that has to be followed and these are for complaints regarding:

- [adult social care services](#)
- [children's social services](#)
- [a school](#)
- [a councillor](#)
- [report fraud](#)

Members Casework – Both elected members of parliament and councillors are able to submit casework from their residents. This casework has a 10-working day target for a response. The performance target is currently to respond to 90% within this time frame.

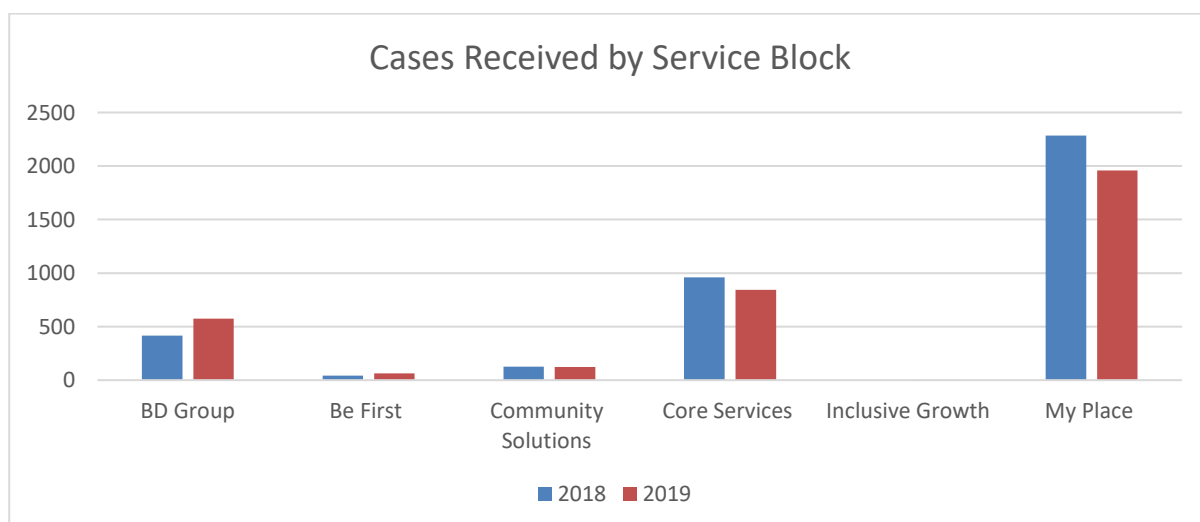
Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulations – Under the Freedom of Information Act, the council has to make available to applicants' information which is held. This Act does allow for the council, if necessary, to apply exemptions to certain requests. The timeline for dealing with requests is currently 20 working days. The performance target for FOI's and EIR's is set by the Information Commissioners Office and they currently expect that 95% of requests are dealt within these time frames.

Subject Access Requests – Under the General Data Protection Regulations the council have to allow for any information which is held on a person to be made available to them upon request. Once a request is received, we have one calendar month to provide all relevant information. The performance target for SAR's is 90% within this timeframe.

2. Corporate Complaints

- 2.1 The Local Authority as an organisation must provide a procedure which enables our residents to raise concerns with us directly about the services which are offered by the Local Authority and our partnership companies. We welcome complaints as a way in which we improve our services and publicise the complaints process through our website
- 2.2 Whilst reviewing the data which is included in this report it is important to note the number of services we provide to our residents and consider the number of complaints alongside this information. For example, we pick up 77,136 bins per week and this generated 1,260 complaints over the year, We Fix who look after the Council's housing stock received 574 complaints but completed 81,301 jobs. This translates to 0.7% of jobs generating a complaint.
- 2.3 The data below shows complaints received by service. This does not include Care and Support complaints, legislation dictates that an annual separate report is developed and published for these services and a copy of this can be found at Appendix A
- 2.4 For 2019, the number of complaints decreased minimally (7%) from that received in 2018 and although this is positive, it does indicate that there is more work to be done in order that the residents feel that the Local Authority are improving services. 78% of complaints were answered with within timescale. This is below the corporate target of 90%

Stage 1 Complaints Received		
	2018	2019
BD Group	417	574
Be First	42	64
Community Solutions	125	123
Core Services	959	845
Inclusive Growth	0	2
My Place	2,283	1,958
Total	3,826	3,566

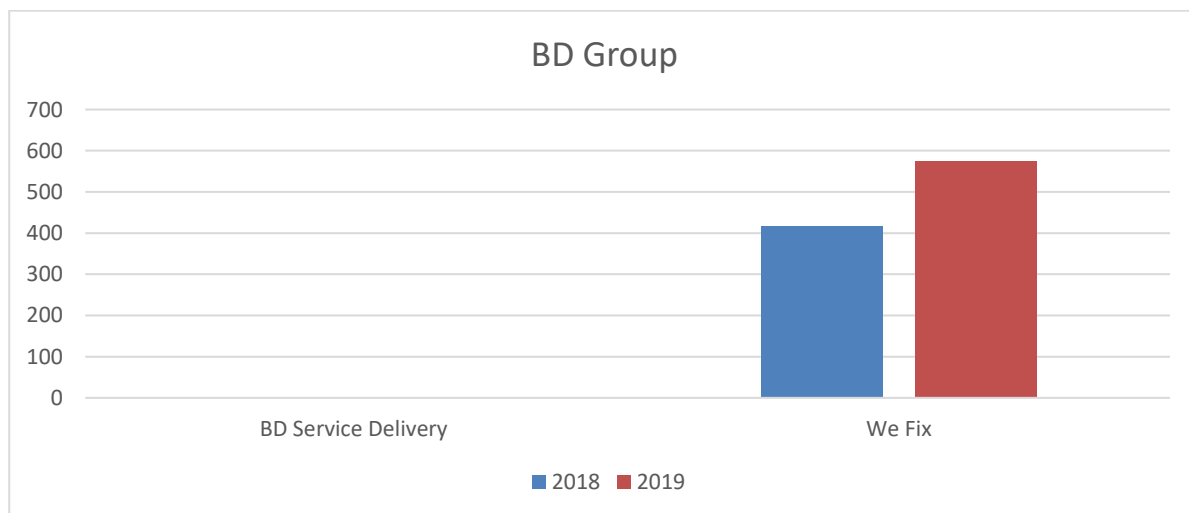


2.5 The table below shows the outcome for each complaint received which has been responded to. The upheld complaints provide a good basis for us to consider how we can improve services offered. You will note that the figure below differs from our overall complaints total. This is due to a small number of complaints still remaining open and therefore no outcome can be provided.

Outcomes from Complaints		
Upheld	2,066	59%
Not Upheld	799	23%
Partly Upheld	444	12%
Resolved at first point of contact	15	0.4%
Withdrawn	204	5.6%
TOTAL	3,528	

3. BDTP

Stage 1 Complaints Received BD Group		
	2018	2019
BD Service Delivery	0	0
We Fix	417	574
Total	417	574



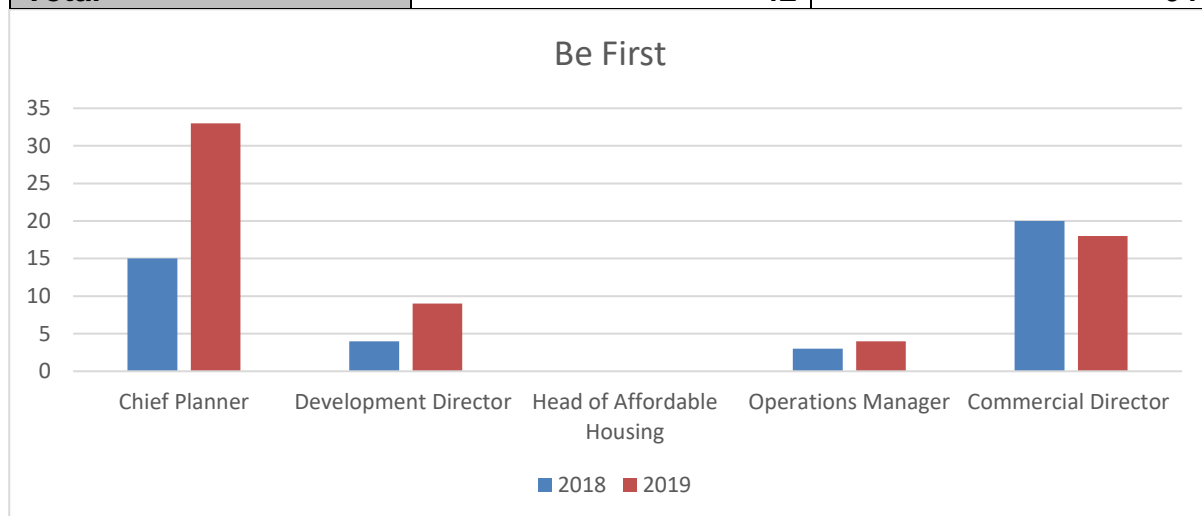
3.1 BDTP offers paid services to schools including catering and cleaning as well as repairs and maintenance. Within the services they provide, We Fix undertakes housing repairs for the council's housing stock.

3.2 In the main, the complaints received relate to works not being completed within timescale, follow up jobs not being followed through and dissatisfaction with workmanship. Work has been done to develop an improvement plan with WeFix to address the repeated issues. They are seeking to increase the resource to audit works undertaken by operatives and sub-contractors. A decision has also been made that operatives when attending jobs will if necessary, contact the work planning section direct to arrange any follow on works whilst still at the address. This will assist in making sure that follow up jobs are being actioned. As stated in 2.2 the number of complaints received as a proportion of the number of repairs completed is very small.

- 3.3 The council does not record complaints which relate to the other services which are provided by the rest of the BD Group.
- 3.4 Of those complaints received for We Fix 56.4% were completed within timescale.
- 3.5 In terms of case outcomes, 13.7% were not upheld, 17.4% partly upheld, 0.5% resolved at first point of contact, 62.7% upheld and 5.5% withdrawn.

4. Be First

Stage 1 Complaints Received Be First		
	2018	2019
Chief Planner	15	33
Development Director	4	9
Head of Affordable Housing	0	0
Operations Manager	3	4
Commercial Director	20	18
Total	42	64

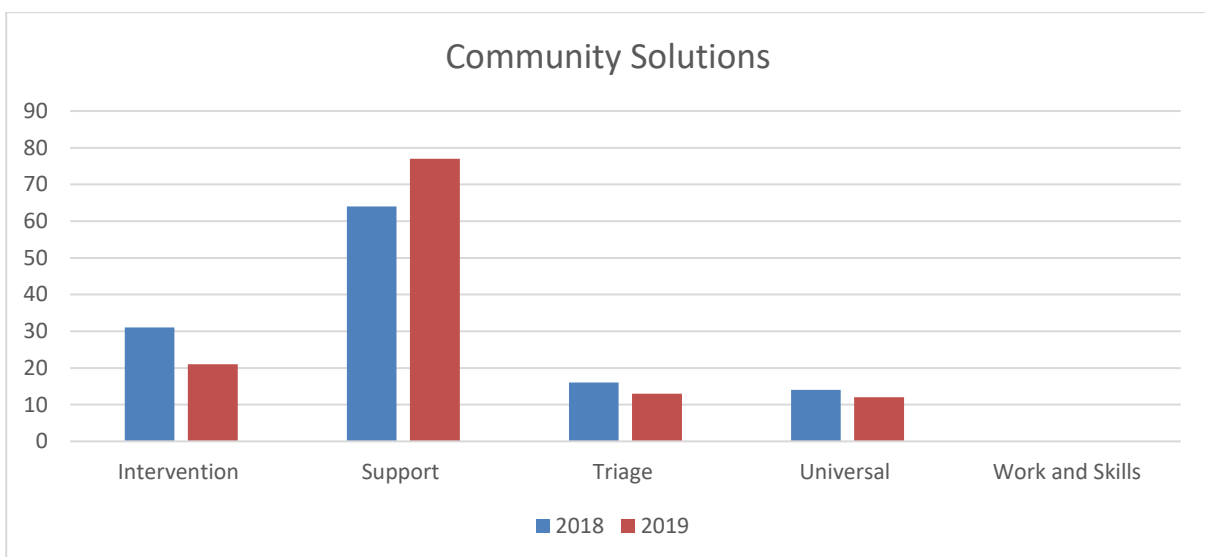


- 4.1 Be First offers a range of services including Building Control, Planning Applications, Regeneration of Council Stock and Regeneration of the Local Area.
- 4.2 From reviewing the complaints which have been submitted the main issue which is reported is delays within Building Control and issues with the Planning Portal.
- 4.3 The delays reported within building control relate to appointments not being carried out within the timeline expected by residents and completion certificates not being generated and sent to residents once assessments have been completed.
- 4.4 Be First have been aware of the issues which we were experiencing with the Planning Portal and have been identifying ways in which we could make this more reliable. If the Planning Portal not live, residents are concerned that objections to planning applications would not be registered. This was not the case and any objections were placed against the appropriate application and considered before permission granted or denied.

- 4.5 Of the complaints received for Be First 50% were answered within timescale.
- 4.6 In terms of the case outcomes 17.1% were not upheld, 12.5% partly upheld, 48.4% upheld and 12.5% withdrawn.

5. Community Solutions

Stage 1 Complaints Received Community Solutions		
	2018	2019
Intervention	31	21
Support	64	77
Triage	16	13
Universal	14	12
Work and Skills	0	0
Total	129	123

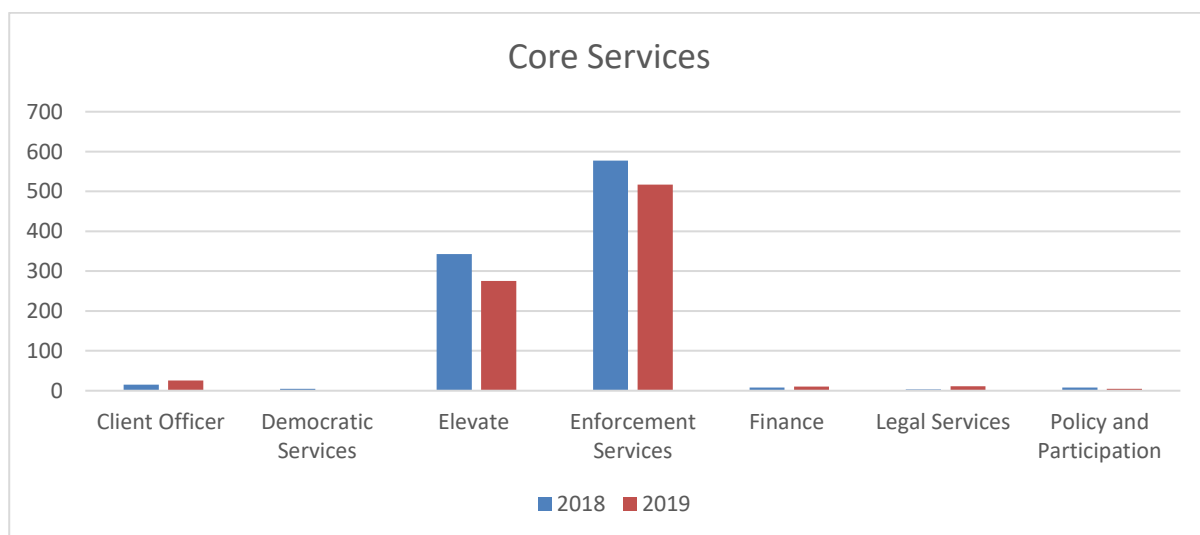


- 5.1 Community Solutions offers a range of services for our residents including maintaining housing allocations, tenancy sustainment, early intervention services and Home and Money Hub which offers valuable advice and support to those residents who require assistance.
- 5.2 From reviewing complaints within Community Solutions, the main issues which are reported relate to housing allocations and tenancy sustainment.
- 5.3 Tenancy sustainment relates to Anti-Social Behaviour between neighbours, residents complain that when issues are reported they are not dealt with as they would like.
- 5.4 Housing allocations and the time taken to get allocated is an ongoing theme and in the main relates to the wait for appropriate housing. Those who are applicable to bid for housing will raise concerns that when bidding they are not being successful and complain that they are having to wait extended periods of time.
- 5.5 Of those complaints received within Community Solutions 68.2% were answered within timescale.

5.6 In terms of case outcomes 41.4% were not upheld, 18.6% partly upheld, 21.1% upheld and 13.8% withdrawn.

6. Core Services

Stage 1 Complaints Received Core Services		
	2018	2019
Client Officer	15	26
Democratic Services	5	1
Elevate	343	275
Enforcement Services	577	517
Finance	8	10
Legal Services	3	11
Policy and Participation	8	5
Total	975	845



- 6.1 Core Services are a grouping of a number of services which are used by our residents. These include enforcement services, Elevate, Registrars and the contact centre.
- 6.2 Core services also maintain oversight of the leisure contract. It should be noted that in the main complaints about the leisure centre are directed to SLM and Everyone Active who have their own complaints procedure. SLM provide to the Local Authority an overview of how many complaints are generated against the number of visits which are recorded. For 2019 they recorded 1,666,973 visits and 494 complaints made this equals a complaint rate of 0.03%.
- 6.3 For Enforcement Services, the complaints generated in the main relate to parking services. A large number of complaints raise concerns with Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's). These allege that letters have not been generated and when they need assistance with either challenging or paying for a notice the resident is unable to speak directly with someone from parking services. Work is being undertaken to ensure that the appropriate advice and support can be provided via our contact centre.

- 6.4 Elevate provide a number of services covers services from the Contact Centre to collection of Council Tax. Complaints surrounding Council Tax are the largest volume. The complaints cover issues which relate to arrears, setting up payment plans and disagreement with charge received.
- 6.5 Of those complaints received in Core Services 83.3% were answered within timescale.
- 6.6 In terms of case outcomes, 48.4% were upheld, 12.6% partly upheld, 0.3% resolved at first point of contact, 27.4% not upheld and 10% withdrawn.

7. Inclusive Growth

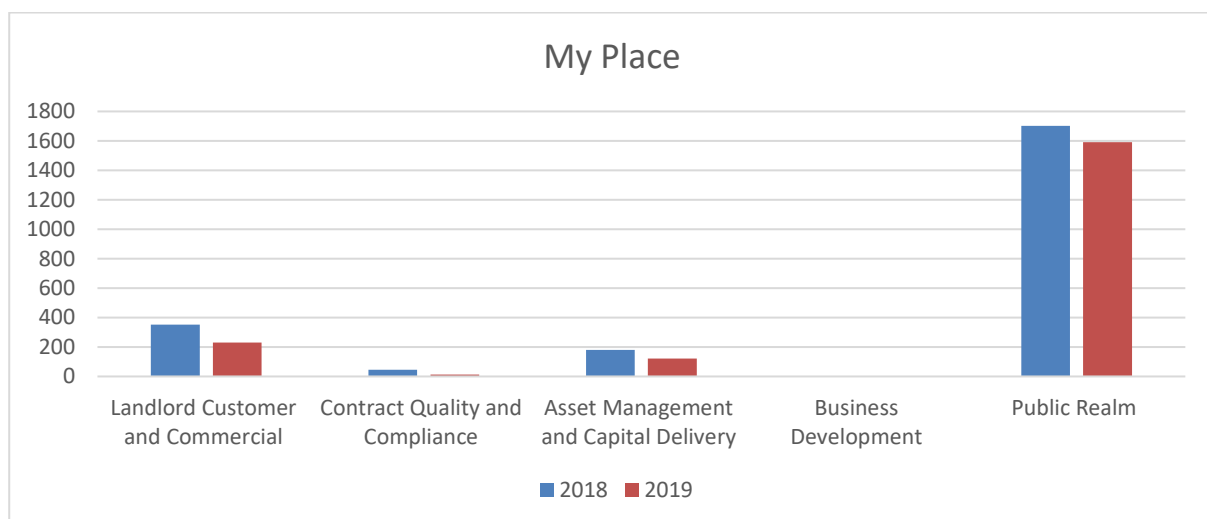
Stage 1 Complaints Received Inclusive Growth		
	2018	2019
Place Shaping and Regeneration Strategy	0	2
Housing and Asset Strategy	0	0
Enterprise Job and Skills	0	0
Commissioning and Programmes	0	0
Total	0	2



- 7.1 Inclusive Growth has 3 key priorities which they continue to work towards. Develop our aspirational and affordable housing offer, shape great places and strong communities through regeneration and encourage enterprise and enable employment and as a commissioning function they do not directly deliver services.
- 7.2 Although the work inclusive growth undertakes has a direct impact on the Authority and the residents in the main the work is placing focus on strategy and achieving our borough vision. As this is not a customer facing service they receive few complaints.
- 7.3 Of the two complaints which were received in this area 50% were answered within timescale.
- 7.4 The case outcomes 50% were not upheld with 50% upheld.

8. My Place

Stage 1 Complaints Received My Place		
	2018	2019
Landlord Customer and Commercial	353	230
Contracts Quality and Compliance	46	12
Asset Management and Capital Delivery	180	122
Business Development	2	2
Public Realm	1,702	1,592
Total	2,283	1,958

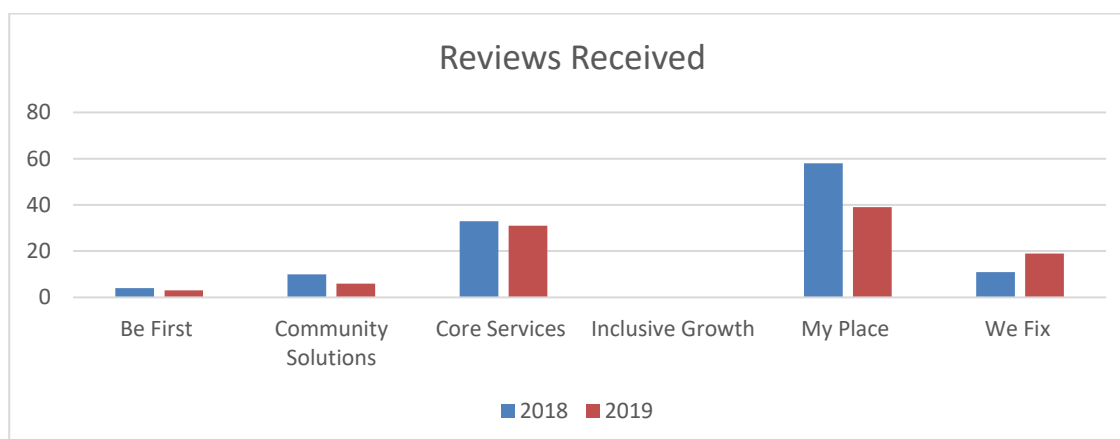


- 8.1 My Place is responsible for maintaining a large range of services which are used by our residents. They manage and provide all Public Realm services which include refuse collections, street cleansing as well as highways and landlord services for our tenants.
- 8.2 it is not surprising and in line with other authorities that My Place receives the most complaints.
- 8.3 We have reviewed the number of complaints which are received and 81% of these complaints relate to Public Realm. These teams offer services which are used by all tenants within the Borough.
- 8.4 When we review the data for 2019 the main themes of complaints relate to refuse collections, replacement bins and street cleansing. This is a re-occurring issue and one which the Local Authority continues to invest time and resources into finding solutions to rectify the issues moving forward.
- 8.5 Of those complaints received in My Place 82.5% were answered within timescale.
- 8.6 In terms of case outcomes, 12.6% were not upheld, 10.5% partly upheld, 0.4% resolved at first point of contact, 72.3% upheld and 3.1% withdrawn.

9. Reviews (Stage 2)

- 9.1 The Local Authority strives to undertake a full investigation into complaints. But on occasion complainants will feel that more could have been done. As such the Local Authority offers a review. The reviews are undertaken by the Feedback Team as an independent service to ensure that a thorough investigation has been provided.
- 9.2 In the main the responses which are sent to residents provide satisfactory resolution to the initial complaint submitted. Only 3% of cases were reviewed in 2019.

Reviews Received		
	2018	2019
Be First	4	3
Community Solutions	10	6
Core Services	33	31
Inclusive Growth	0	0
My Place	58	39
We Fix	11	19
Total	116	98



10. Local Government Ombudsman

- 10.1 In relation to Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Complaints an annual report is shared with the Local Authority which is produced directly by the LGO. This report highlights how many cases were received and the decisions made on those cases. For further information on these are published at the following link www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/london-borough-of-barking-dagenham/annualletters/
- 10.2 From the cases which were submitted to the LGO the table below shows those cases which were received, and the decisions reached. Of the 121 cases submitted to the LGO only 16 cases required detailed investigations.

Decisions Made	
Incomplete or Invalid	3

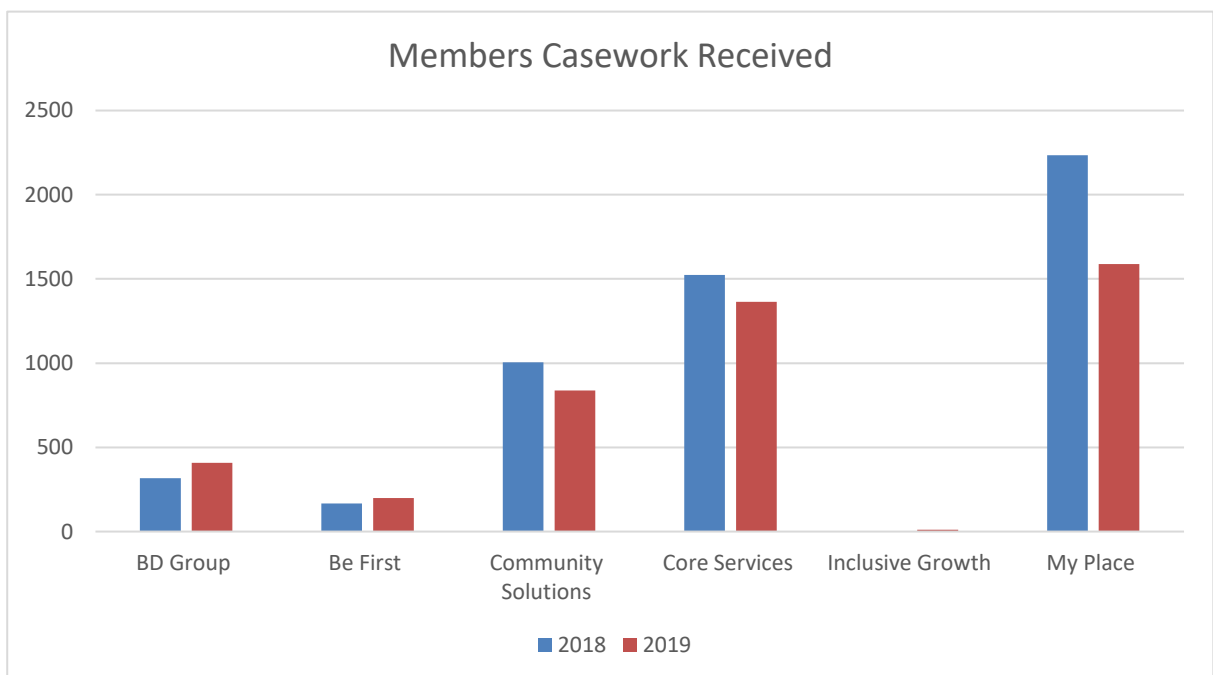
Advice Given	9
Referred back for Local Resolution	53
Closed After Initial Enquires	40
Detailed Investigations	
Not Upheld	5
Upheld	11
Total	121

11. Members Casework

11.1 There is a comprehensive members casework system in place to answer Councillors and Members of Parliament queries and concerns. We aim to respond to 90% of these cases in 10 working days

11.2 A noticeable decrease in casework can be noted within 2019. 93% of case work was answered within timescale.

Members Casework Received		
	2018	2019
BD Group	316	409
Be First	166	199
Community Solutions	1,004	838
Core Services	1,523	1,364
Inclusive Growth	4	10
My Place	2,234	1,588
Total	5,247	4,408



11.3 Member case work, in the main, mirrors the issues which are reported by our residents directly to services.

- 11.4 One significant increase in members casework is enquires submitted for Community Solutions. The cases submitted relate to housing allocations and the wait for appropriate housing.
- 11.5 We continue to try and work proactively with the elected members to ensure that we address the issues which are being raised with them.

12. Learning from corporate complaints

- 12.1 Complaints are a valuable source of information which can help to identify recurring or underlying problems and improvements. All complaints will be taken into account as part of all service's continuous improvement cycle. Equally the council can also identify where there is a need to amend policies and procedures, as well as improving customer communication. Data integrity can also be improved from complaints where our residents can point out information that is lacking, erroneous or out of date.
- 12.2 A sample of positive improvements the Council has made in response to feedback is set out below:

You said that	We have
Our Street Cleansing Service was not meeting expectations.	Remodelled the service which is offered to residents taking into consideration the complaints and members data to ensure that key areas were identified and dealt with.
Process for refund payments taking too long to issue and deal with.	We have implemented GovPay across services allowing them to handle customer issues and provide refunds instantly.
Information surrounding replacement bins not being correct.	Continued web content update to provide relevant information to residents about timescales for replacement bin requests.
Not being able to review online reports which have been made to find resolutions.	Web service updated to allow for customers to chase online reports made for existing reports.
Reporting issues on website took too much time to work through all the pages.	We implemented reporting which allows for reports to be made without the need for My Account.
Too many options included when phoning the council.	IVR system has been updated to reduce the options available keeping those that are most valuable to the residents.
Incorrect information on website in relation to collection days.	Improved collection day search accuracy and functionality. Including the addition of more flats.
Inaccurate information present on the website relating to bin collections.	Implemented web form allowing customers to report missing or inaccurate collection day information.
Information sharing regarding Housing Application status not being provided.	IVR options changed to enable information to be shared relating to

	application backlog. Web accompanying content updates being provided.
Communication around the removal of larger bins being offered not customer facing.	Consultation with waste service and removal of bin request option (larger bin request)
Delays in ascertaining current status of service requests when calling the contact centre.	Enhanced contact centre chase process eform with integrations to two LOB systems allowing them to read the latest content of each report.

13 Benchmarking Data

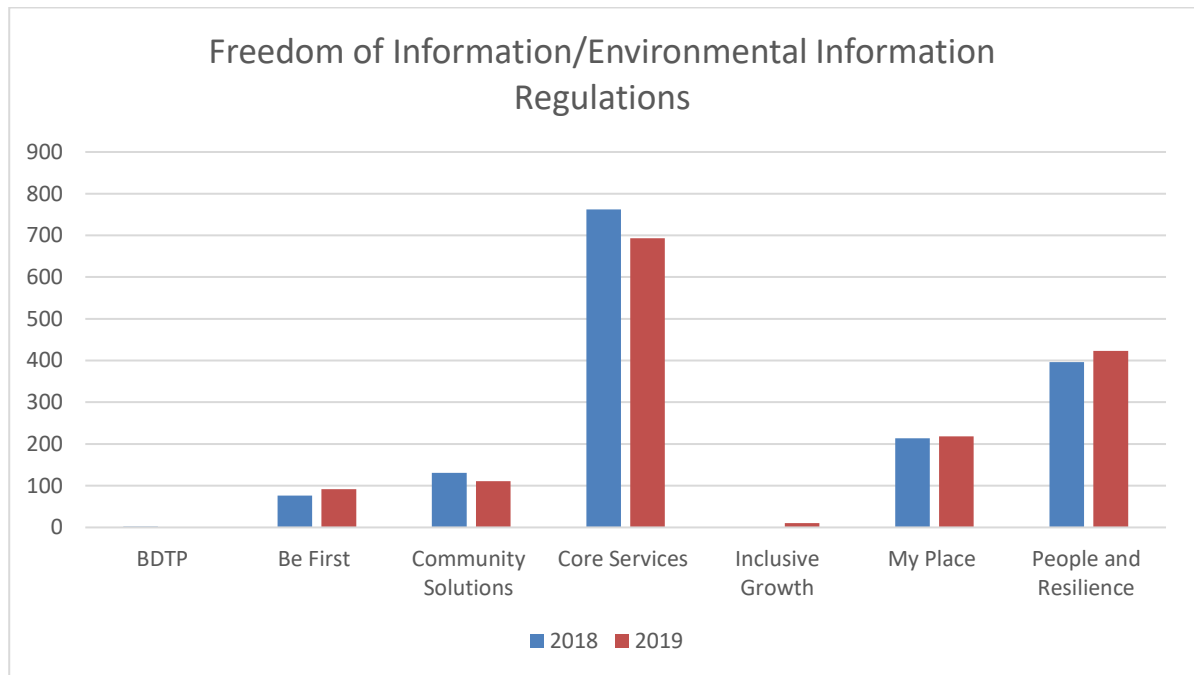
- 13.1 We have approached several boroughs and have asked for information to be shared with us in regard to levels of complaints and those services which are the largest generators. The information which has been shared relates to a quarter 2 within 2019.
- 13.2 The purpose behind this exercise was to establish if the issues which generate the most communication with residents are mirrored within other London Local Authorities. This exercise provided context that the issues which we face are not unusual and in fact all Boroughs aside from Havering report that refuse concerns are the biggest generator of communication alongside Housing Repairs and parking.

Local Authority	Total – July, August and September
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Population 211,998	611 Complaints
London Borough of Havering Population 257,810	562 Complaints
London Borough of Lambeth Population 321,984	1,108 Complaints
London Borough of Waltham Forest Population 271,200	1,536 Complaints
London Borough of Ealing Population 372,000	1,619 Complaints

14. Freedom of Information Requests

Freedom of Information/EIR Received		
	2018	2019
BDTP	2	0
Be First	76	92
Community Solutions	131	111
Core Services	762	693
Inclusive Growth	0	10
My Place	214	218

People and Resilience	396	423
Total	1,581	1,547

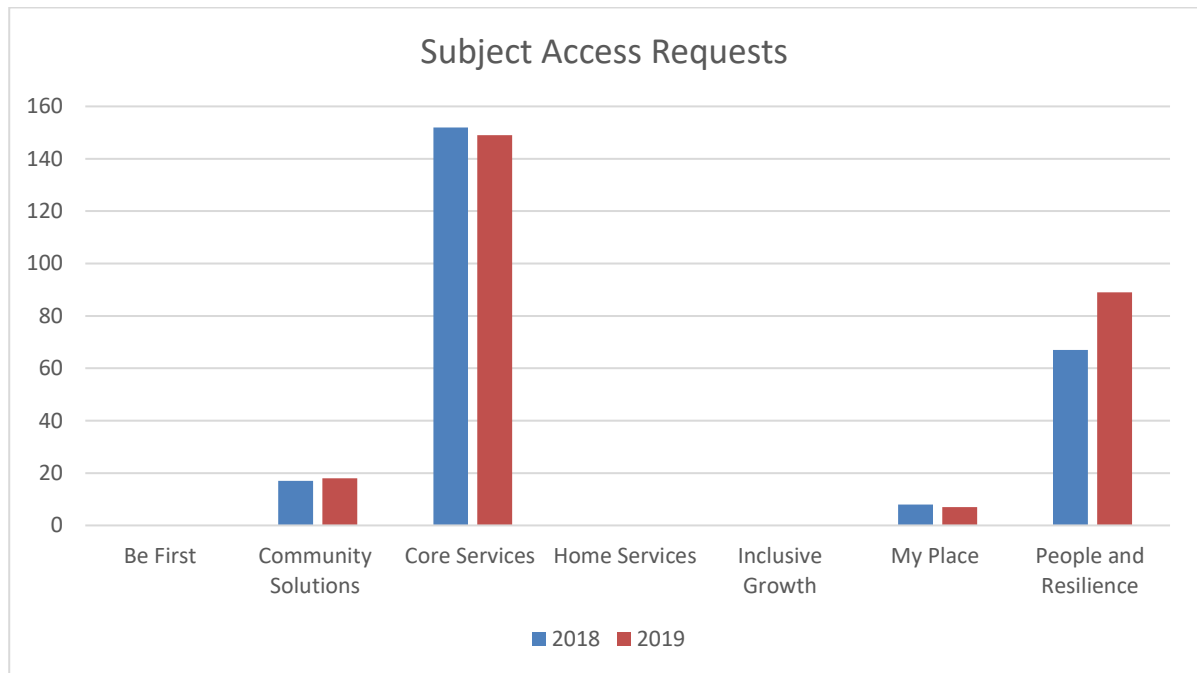


- 14.1 In line with the Information Commissioners Office guidance, the council now publish all FOI and EIR's which have been responded on the Council's website. Most FOI and EIR's relate to Enforcement Services, People and Resilience and NNDR.
- 14.2 Enforcement services deal with a high volume which relate to FPN's, dog fouling, private sector licensing and flytipping. Whilst People and Resilience's requests fall to transactional information such as number of children who are supported via services, number of Early Education Health Care Plans and our timescales.
- 14.3 During the calendar year Internal Audit have reviewed the service for both Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations. This audit provided limited assurance and has recommended several actions to complete in order to improve the services which are offered.
- 14.4 Of those FOI and EIR's received 89.7% were completed within timescale.

15. Subject Access Requests

Subject Access Requests Received		
	2018	2019
BDTP	0	0
Be First	0	0
Community Solutions	17	18
Core Services	152	149
Inclusive Growth	0	0
My Place	8	7

People and Resilience	67	89
Total	244	263



15.1 The area of which receives the most Subject Access Requests remains CCTV. These requests relate to images which are required by residents, insurance companies and solicitors. The second highest level of requests remains People and Resilience. This directorate will deal with requests from families and children who have been in the care of the council. These request can be time consuming and require a review of many thousand pages of documents.

15.2 Of those Subject Access Requests received 96.1% were completed within timescale.

16. Financial Implications

16.1 None.

17. Legal Implications

17.1 None.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None.

List of appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Annual Social Care Complaints and Education Complaints Report 2018/19