

Local Government
OMBUDSMAN

**The Local Government Ombudsman's
Annual Letter
Rossendale Borough Council
for the year ended
31 March 2008**

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) provides a free, independent and impartial service. We consider complaints about the administrative actions of councils and some other authorities. We cannot question what a council has done simply because someone does not agree with it. If we find something has gone wrong, such as poor service, service failure, delay or bad advice, and that a person has suffered as a result, the Ombudsmen aim to get it put right by recommending a suitable remedy. The LGO also uses the findings from investigation work to help authorities provide better public services through initiatives such as special reports, training and annual letters.

Annual Letter 2007/08 - Introduction

This annual letter provides a summary of the complaints received about Rossendale Borough Council and comments on the authority's performance and complaint-handling arrangements.

I hope that the letter will assist you in improving services by providing a useful perspective on how some people who are dissatisfied experience or perceive your services.

Two attachments form an integral part of this letter: statistical data covering a three year period and a note to help the interpretation of the statistics.

Complaints received

Volume

As the attached statistical information shows, I received 23 complaints about your Council in 2007/08. This number is broadly comparable with the previous year.

Character

By far the greatest number of complaints continues to be in relation to planning matters which account for 70% of the total. I draw no conclusions from this as the numbers concerned are so low.

Liaison with the Local Government Ombudsman

My office continues to enjoy a good relationship with your Council's liaison officers who provide timely responses to our initial enquiries. My staff find your liaison officers helpful and approachable, demonstrating a real commitment to service improvement and complaint handling.

As the statistical information shows, the average response time has fallen from 41.1 days in 2006/07 to 22.8 in 2007/08. These times are very good and well within the requested 28 days. The average would have been 17.7 days but for a planning complaint that took 69 days on which to respond. I thank your Council for its continued cooperation in this as it helps my staff reduce the time it takes to respond to complaints, ensuring a better service for our complainants.

In addition to liaison about specific complaints, I was very pleased to attend a Council meeting to respond to questions about my report of 2006/07. One of my Assistant Ombudsmen also attended a Scrutiny Committee meeting for the same purpose. We found these meetings to be constructive and provided the opportunities for wider dialogue about complaint handling and service improvement. It was especially helpful because it was shortly after major changes to your own complaints procedures. It also demonstrated a determination and commitment by your Council (members and officers) to continue to improve services and complaint handling.

Decisions on complaints

Reports and local settlements

We will often discontinue enquiries into a complaint when a council takes or agrees to take action that we consider to be a satisfactory response – we call these local settlements. In 2007/08 the Local Government Ombudsmen determined 27% of complaints by local settlement (excluding 'premature' complaints - where councils have not had a proper chance to deal with them - and those outside our jurisdiction). If an investigation is completed I issue a public report.

I did not issue any reports about your Council. Three complaints were determined by local settlement. These covered three different service areas. While I did not find evidence of major systemic failure,

two common themes emerged; poor initial complaint handling and poor communication. It is important that these are considered in the appropriate context. Two of the complaints were received in the previous year and so had not been through the Councils revised complaints procedures and since those complaints were received your Council has made significant changes such as revised procedures in your Planning Department. The third complaint determined by local settlement was more recent and raised no general issues to suggest it was anything more than an isolated case.

Other findings

In total, I made 18 decisions on complaints about your Council. This number differs slightly from the number of complaints received as it includes complaints currently still under investigation. As you can see from the statistical information, four of these were premature, one was outside my jurisdiction and of the 13 other decisions, six resulted in a finding of no maladministration.

Your Council's complaints procedure and handling of complaints

The number of complaints I investigate about your Council is small and does not provide sufficient data for meaningful conclusions to be drawn. However, the feedback from the complaints I have investigated suggests that the new procedures are having a positive effect. This is something your Council may wish to consider in the context of its own complaint handling data.

Training in complaint handling

Part of our role is to provide advice and guidance about good administrative practice. We offer training courses for all levels of local authority staff in complaints handling and investigation. A detailed evaluation of the training provided to councils over the past three years shows very high levels of satisfaction. We will customise courses to meet your Council's specific requirements and provide courses for groups of staff from different smaller authorities. Participants benefit from the complaint-handling knowledge and expertise of the experienced investigators who present the courses.

I enclose information on the full range of courses available together with contact details for enquiries and any further bookings.

LGO developments

We launched the LGO Advice Team in April, providing a first contact service for all enquirers and new complainants. Demand for the service has been high. Our team of advisers, trained to provide comprehensive information and advice, has dealt with many thousands of calls since the service started.

The team handles complaints submitted by telephone, email or text, as well as in writing. This new power to accept complaints other than in writing was one of the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, which also came into force in April. Our experience of implementing other provisions in the Act, such as complaints about service failure and apparent maladministration, is being kept under review and will be subject to further discussion. Any feedback from your Council would be welcome.

Last year we published two special reports providing advice and guidance on 'applications for prior approval of telecommunications masts' and 'citizen redress in local partnerships'. Feedback on special reports is always welcome. I would particularly appreciate information on complaints protocols in the governance arrangements of partnerships with which your Council is involved.

Conclusions and general observations

I welcome this opportunity to comment on our experience of complaints about the Council over the past year. I hope that you find the information and assessment provided useful when seeking improvements to your Council's services.

**Anne Seex
Local Government Ombudsman
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
YORK
YO30 5FZ**

June 2008

Enc: Statistical data
Note on interpretation of statistics
Leaflet on training courses (with posted copy only)

LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORT - Rossendale BC

For the period ending 31/03/2008

Complaints received by subject area	Benefits	Housing	Other	Planning & building control	Public finance	Transport and highways	Total
01/04/2007 - 31/03/2008	0	0	2	16	3	2	23
2006 / 2007	0	4	2	15	0	2	23
2005 / 2006	1	3	5	23	2	1	35

Note: these figures will include complaints that were made prematurely to the Ombudsman and which we referred back to the authority for consideration.

Decisions	Ml reps	LS	M reps	NM reps	No mal	Omb disc	Outside jurisdiction	Premature complaints	Total excl premature	Total
01/04/2007 - 31/03/2008	0	3	0	0	6	4	1	4	14	18
2006 / 2007	2	8	0	0	10	5	1	10	26	36
2005 / 2006	6	4	0	0	4	4	5	4	23	27

See attached notes for an explanation of the headings in this table.

Average local authority response times 01/04/2007 to 31/03/2008

Response times	FIRST ENQUIRIES	
	No. of First Enquiries	Avg no. of days to respond
01/04/2007 - 31/03/2008	10	22.8
2006 / 2007	11	41.1
2005 / 2006	13	52.0

Types of authority	<= 28 days %	29 - 35 days %	> = 36 days %
District Councils	56.4	24.6	19.1
Unitary Authorities	41.3	50.0	8.7
Metropolitan Authorities	58.3	30.6	11.1
County Councils	47.1	38.2	14.7
London Boroughs	45.5	27.3	27.3
National Park Authorities	71.4	28.6	0.0

Notes to assist interpretation of the LGO's local authority statistics 2007/08

1. Complaints received

This information shows the number of complaints received by the LGO, broken down by service area and in total within the periods given. These figures include complaints that are made prematurely to the LGO (see below for more explanation) and that we send to the council to consider first. The figures may include some complaints that we have received but where we have not yet contacted the council.

2. Decisions

This information records the number of decisions made by the LGO, broken down by outcome, within the periods given. **This number will not be the same as the number of complaints received**, because some complaints are made in one year and decided in the next. Below we set out a key explaining the outcome categories for 2007/08 complaints.

MI reps: where the LGO has concluded an investigation and issued a formal report finding maladministration causing injustice.

LS (local settlements): decisions by letter discontinuing our investigation because the authority has agreed to take some action which is considered by the Ombudsman as a satisfactory outcome for the complainant.

M reps: where the LGO has concluded an investigation and issued a formal report finding maladministration but causing no injustice to the complainant.

NM reps: where the LGO has concluded an investigation and issued a formal report finding no maladministration by the council.

No mal: decisions by letter discontinuing an investigation because we have found no, or insufficient, evidence of maladministration.

Omb disc: decisions by letter discontinuing an investigation in which we have exercised the Ombudsman's general discretion not to pursue the complaint. This can be for a variety of reasons, but the most common is that we have found no or insufficient injustice to warrant pursuing the matter further.

Outside jurisdiction: these are cases which were outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

Premature complaints: decisions that the complaint is premature. The LGO does not normally consider a complaint unless a council has first had an opportunity to deal with that complaint itself. So if someone complains to the LGO without having taken the matter up with a council, the LGO will usually refer it to the council as a 'premature complaint' to see if the council can itself resolve the matter.

Total excl premature: all decisions excluding those where we referred the complaint back to the council as 'premature'.

3. Response times

These figures record the average time the council takes to respond to our first enquiries on a complaint. We measure this in calendar days from the date we send our letter/fax/email to the date

that we receive a substantive response from the council. The council's figures may differ somewhat, since they are likely to be recorded from the date the council receives our letter until the despatch of its response.

4. Average local authority response times 2007/08

This table gives comparative figures for average response times by authorities in England, by type of authority, within three time bands.

Average complaint response times by service area

Appendix C

Service Area Comparisons

Service Area	2006/07			2007/08		
	Total complaints	% of total	Average days to deal	Total complaints	% of total	Average days to deal
Development Control	73	35.9	16.1	57	30.2	11.5
Street Scene & Neighbourhoods	46	22.6	6.2	45	23.8	3.4
Capita - Benefits	12	5.9	4.5	12	6.3	2.8
Capita - Call Centre	2	1.0	4.5	3	1.6	9.3
Capita - Council Tax	19	9.3	5.7	23	12.2	5.2
Capita - Council Tax Recovery	2	1.0	4.5	10	5.3	3.8
Capita - One Stop Shop	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.5	8.0
Corporate	5	2.5	14.4	4	2.1	9.3
Customer Services & e-Government	2	1.0	6.5	5	2.6	7.6
Environmental Health	4	2.0	37.8	3	1.6	3.3
Licensing	0	0.0	0.0	5	2.6	3.0
Property Services	0	0.0	0.0	4	2.1	8.0
Facilities Management	13	6.4	11.3	2	1.1	36.0
Forward Planning	1	0.5	8.0	1	0.5	2.0
Legal	0	0.0	0.0	2	1.1	10.5
Communications	0	0.0	0.0	2	1.1	5.0
Finance	2	1.0	1.0	3	1.6	0.7
Parking	4	2.0	9.5	2	1.1	6.5
Human Resources	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.5	13.0
Private Sector Renewal	5	2.5	7.6	1	0.5	4.0
Committee Services	11	5.4	11.0	3	1.6	8.3
Building Control	2	1.0	7.0	0	0.0	0.0
Total	203	100.0	11.0	189	100.0	7.0

Key

exceeds 10 day target

Complaints received not for RBC:

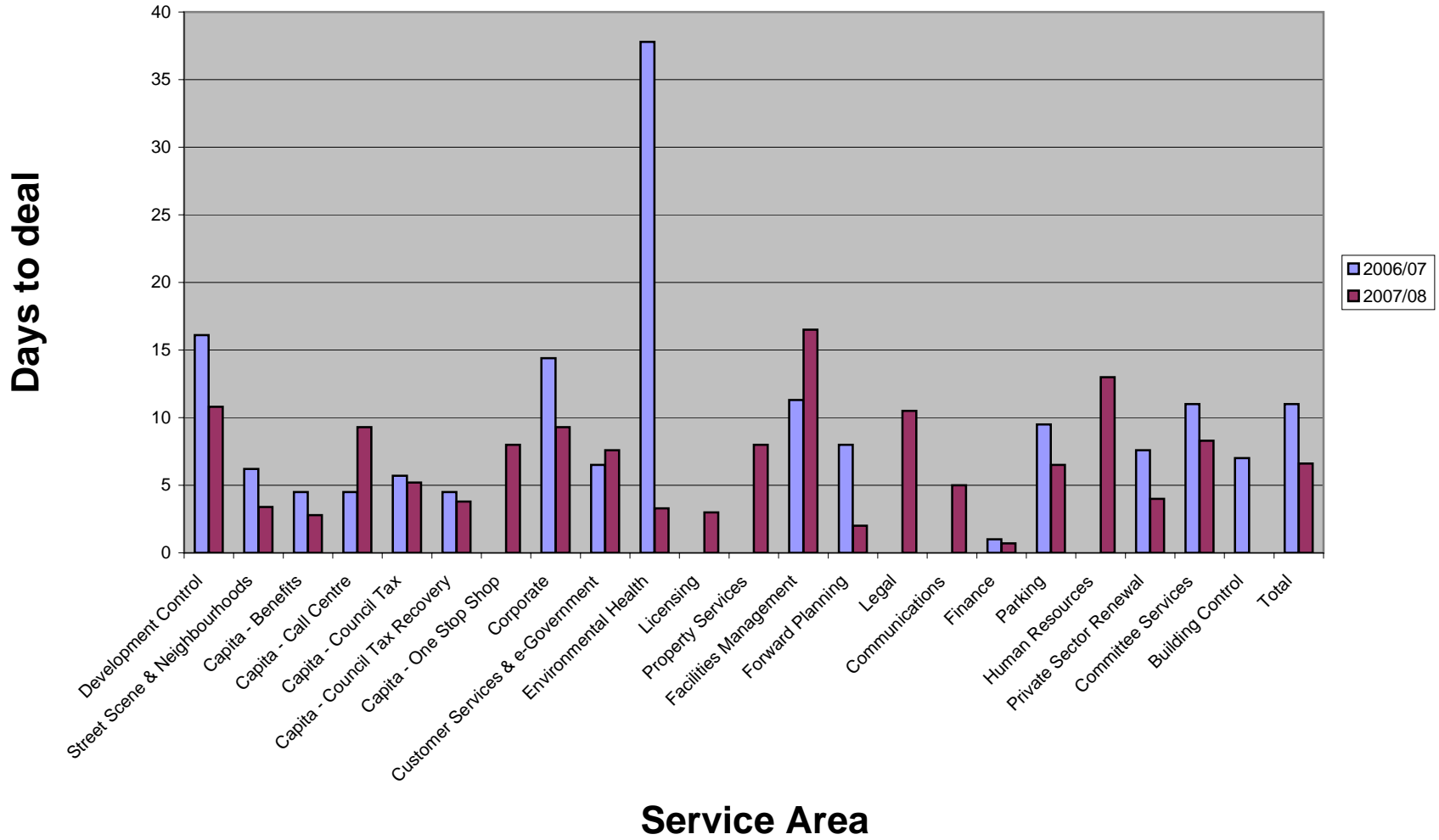
Greenvale Homes	0			1	
Lancashire Highways	4			4	
Rossendale Leisure Trust	1			1	
Rossendale Transport	1			0	
Overall total	209			195	

Justified/ Unjustified Analysis

Service Area

	Development Control	Street Scene & Neighbourhoods	Capita - Benefits	Capita - Call Centre	Capita - Council Tax	Capita - Council Tax Recovery	Corporate	Customer Services & e-Government	Environmental Health	Licensing	Property Services	Facilities Management	Forward Planning	Legal	Communications	Finance	Parking	Human Resources	Private Sector Renewal	Committee Services	Total	
Justified	30	19	8	2	10	-	-	2	1	-	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	-	-	1	-	83
Unjustified	27	26	4	1	13	10	1	2	4	3	4	3	-	-	1	1	-	2	1	-	3	106
Total	57	45	12	3	23	10	1	4	5	3	5	4	2	1	2	2	3	2	1	1	3	189

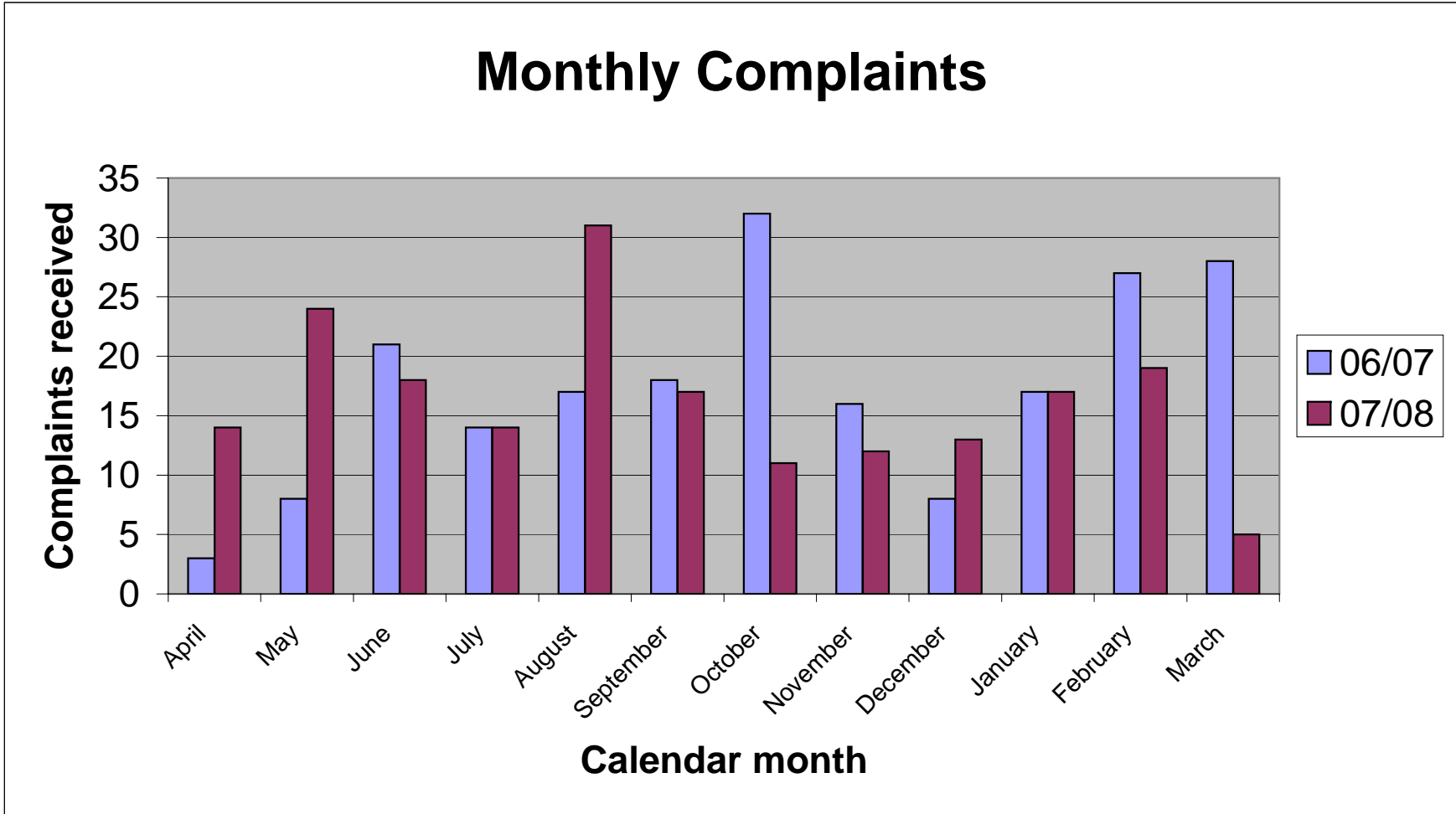
Average days to deal with complaints



Monthly comparison of complaints received

Monthly Comparisons

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total
06/07	3	8	21	14	17	18	32	16	8	17	27	28	209
07/08	14	24	18	14	31	17	11	12	13	17	19	5	195



DC Complaints 2007/08

Development Control

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
499	10/04/2007	13/04/2007	3	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
502	11/04/2007	11/05/2007	21	letter	3	Unjustified	
506	17/04/2007	14/05/2007	18	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
507	18/04/2007	26/04/2007	6	letter	7	Unjustified	
510	25/04/2007	22/05/2007	18	e-mail	3	Justified	
512	27/04/2007	21/05/2007	15	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
514	03/05/2007	11/05/2007	6	letter	1	Unjustified	interim sent
515	03/05/2007	17/05/2007	9	letter	2	Justified	interim sent
524	15/05/2007	07/06/2007	16	telephone	3	Unjustified	
526	17/05/2007	01/06/2007	10	letter	1	Unjustified	
533	25/05/2007	14/06/2007	13	e-mail	2	Justified	
536	04/06/2007	27/06/2007	17	e-mail	3	Justified	
539	05/06/2007	25/06/2007	14	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
547	21/06/2007	06/07/2007	11	letter	7	Justified	
548	22/06/2007	18/07/2007	18	letter	3	Justified	
556	09/07/2007	20/07/2007	9	e-mail	3	Justified	interim sent
558	09/07/2007	23/07/2007	10	feedback form	1	Unjustified	
559	11/07/2007	13/07/2007	2	e-mail	3	Justified	
560	16/07/2007	19/07/2007	3	e-mail	6	Justified	
562	16/07/2007	20/07/2007	4	letter	3	Justified	
563	19/07/2007	26/07/2007	5	telephone	3	Justified	
564	23/07/2007	24/07/2007	1	e-mail	3	Justified	
571	02/08/2007	16/08/2007	10	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
583	16/08/2007	26/09/2007	28	e-mail	7	Justified	
584	30/08/2007	05/09/2007	4	e-mail	2	Unjustified	interim sent
586	20/08/2007	29/08/2007	6	letter	1	Justified	
587	20/08/2007	29/08/2007	6	letter	1	Justified	
588	20/08/2007	29/08/2007	6	letter	1	Justified	
589	20/08/2007	29/08/2007	6	letter	1	Justified	
590	21/08/2007	29/08/2007	5	letter	1	Justified	
591	21/08/2007	29/08/2007	5	letter	1	Justified	
592	22/08/2007	29/08/2007	4	telephone	1	Justified	
598	29/08/2007	14/09/2007	12	feedback form	1	Justified	
604	10/09/2007	21/09/2007	9	e-mail	3	Justified	
605	10/09/2007	27/09/2007	13	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
610	13/09/2007	18/10/2008	25	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
637	20/11/2007	07/12/2007	13	letter	3	Unjustified	
639	29/11/2007	03/12/2007	2	letter	1	Unjustified	
646	07/12/2007	12/12/2007	21	e-mail	7	Justified	interim sent
650	14/12/2007	07/01/2008	13	e-mail	3	Justified	
651	14/12/2007	04/01/2008	12	e-mail	3	Justified	
652	18/12/2007	27/12/2007	5	e-mail	3	Unjustified	interim sent
656	08/01/2008	23/01/2008	11	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
658	11/01/2008	25/01/2008	10	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
659	11/01/2008	25/01/2008	10	feedback form	7	Justified	
661	15/01/2008	07/02/2008	17	e-mail	4	Justified	
667	22/01/2008	30/01/2008	6	via Area Forum	1	Unjustified	interim sent
670	24/01/2008	28/01/2008	2	e-mail	3	Justified	

DC Complaints 2007/08

674	05/02/2008	20/02/2008	11	telephone	2	Unjustified	
677	05/02/2008	21/02/2008	12	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
683	13/02/2008	21/02/2008	6	telephone	2	Justified	
685	21/02/2008	18/04/2008	39	letter	1	Unjustified	
686	21/02/2008	30/05/2008	61	e-mail	3	Justified	open
689	25/02/2008	11/03/2008	11	e-mail	6	Unjustified	
692	07/03/2008	11/03/2008	2	feedback form	2	Unjustified	
695	18/03/2008	01/04/2008	8	letter	3	Unjustified	
696	31/03/2008	18/04/2008	14	letter	1	Unjustified	
Total days			654				

Average days to deal

11.5

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	15	26.3%
	2 - poor communication	6	10.5%
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	27	47.4%
	4 - complaint against a named officer	1	1.8%
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	2	3.5%
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	6	10.5%
	Total	57	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	8	7
2 - poor communication	3	3
3 - delayed response/lack of response	14	13
4 - complaint against a named officer	1	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	1	1
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	4	2
Total	31	26

Street Scene and Neighbourhoods Complaints 2007/08

StreetScene and Neighbourhood Services

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
500	10/04/2007	20/04/2007	8	feedback form	3	Unjustified	
504	17/04/2007	19/04/2007	2	letter	7	Unjustified	
508	19/04/2007	20/04/2007	1	e-mail	3	Justified	interim sent
518	08/05/2007	29/05/2007	14	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
521	11/05/2008	18/05/2007	5	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
529	22/05/2007	24/05/2007	2	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
530	22/05/2007	30/05/2007	5	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
535	30/05/2007	12/06/2007	9	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
537	04/06/2007	18/06/2007	10	letter	1	Justified	
538	05/06/2007	06/06/2007	1	letter	4	Justified	
542	11/06/2007	28/06/2007	13	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
543	19/06/2007	21/06/2007	2	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
565	18/07/2008	20/07/2007	2	e-mail	7	Justified	
567	27/07/2007	02/08/2007	4	letter	2	Justified	
576	07/08/2007	08/08/2007	1	e-mail	7	Justified	
580	14/08/2007	17/08/2007	3	feedback form	1	Unjustified	
581	15/08/2007	17/08/2007	2	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
582	15/08/2007	17/08/2007	2	feedback form	3	Justified	
593	22/08/2007	23/08/2007	1	e-mail	3	Justified	
595	13/08/2007	17/08/2007	4	letter	7	Unjustified	
597	28/08/2007	31/08/2007	3	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
599	04/09/2007	05/09/2007	1	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
600	04/09/2007	04/09/2007	0	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
601	04/09/2007	05/09/2007	1	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
602	04/09/2007	05/09/2007	1	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
603	05/09/2007	05/09/2007	0	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
606	10/09/2007	21/09/2007	9	email	7	Justified	
607	10/09/2007	19/09/2007	7	email	7	Justified	
615	25/09/2008	26/09/2007	1	e-mail	3	Justified	
619	08/10/2007	12/10/2007	4	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
620	10/10/2007	10/10/2007	0	e-mail	3	Justified	
630	06/11/2007	12/11/2007	4	feedback form	1	Unjustified	
631	08/11/2007	09/11/2007	1	letter	3	Unjustified	
632	12/11/2007	13/11/2007	1	feedback form	7	Justified	
635	15/11/2007	20/11/2007	3	e-mail	6	Unjustified	
642	05/12/2007	06/12/2007	1	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
648	11/12/2007	19/12/2007	6	telephone	7	Unjustified	
649	14/12/2007	18/12/2007	2	feedback form	7	Justified	
654	04/01/2008	09/01/2008	3	letter	3	Justified	
655	07/01/2008	11/01/2008	4	e-mail	7	Justified	
660	14/01/2008	15/01/2008	1	feedback form	4	Unjustified	
663	16/01/2008	17/01/2008	1	letter	3	Justified	
680	12/02/2008	20/02/2008	6	e-mail	7	Justified	
688	25/02/2008	27/02/2008	2	e-mail	7	Justified	
690	25/02/2008	27/02/2008	2	telephone	7	Unjustified	
Total days			155				

Average days to deal

3.4

Street Scene and Neighbourhoods Complaints 2007/08

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	3	6.70%
	2 - poor communication	1	2.20%
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	10	22.20%
	4 - complaint against a named officer	2	4.40%
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.00%
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	1	2.20%
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	28	62.20%
	Total	45	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	1	2
2 - poor communication	1	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	7	3
4 - complaint against a named officer	1	1
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	1
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	9	19
Total	19	26

Capita - Benefits Complaints 2007/08

Capita - Benefits

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
505	17/04/2007	20/04/2007	3	feedback form	3	Justified	
509	20/04/2007	24/04/2007	2	letter	2	Justified	
519	09/05/2007	14/05/2007	3	feedback form	1	Unjustified	
523	15/05/2007	17/05/2007	2	letter	1	Unjustified	
549	22/06/2007	22/06/2007	0	feedback form	1	Unjustified	
561	16/07/2007	19/07/2007	3	letter	7	Justified	
574	06/08/2007	10/08/2007	4	telephone	2	Justified	
579	14/08/2007	17/08/2007	3	e-mail	1	Justified	
609	11/09/2007	13/09/2007	2	feedback form	3	Unjustified	
647	11/12/2007	21/12/2007	8	letter	7	Justified	
662	15/01/2008	17/01/2008	2	letter	2	Justified	
672	31/01/2008	04/02/2008	2	e-mail	3	Justified	
Total days			34				

Average days to deal

2.8

Complaint type:

1 - technical/legal/regulatory	4	33.3%
2 - poor communication	3	25.0%
3 - delayed response/lack of response	3	25.0%
4 - complaint against a named officer	0	0.0%
5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	2	16.7%
Total	12	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	1	3
2 - poor communication	3	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	2	1
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	2	-
Total	8	4

Capita - Call Centre Complaints 2007/08

Capita - Call Centre

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
513	02/05/2007	21/05/2007	13	letter	7	Justified	
614	21/09/2007	05/10/2007	10	telephone	2	Unjustified	
673	01/02/2008	08/02/2008	5	e-mail	4	Justified	
Total days			28				

Average days to deal **9.3**

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	0.0%
	2 - poor communication	1	33.3%
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	0.0%
	4 - complaint against a named officer	1	33.3%
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	33.3%
	Total	3	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	1
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	1	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	-
Total	2	1

Capita - Council Tax Complaints 2007/08

Capita - Council Tax

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
517	04/05/2007	10/05/2007	3	e-mail	4	Justified	
520	10/05/2007	17/05/2007	5	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
528	18/05/2007	01/06/2007	10	feedback form	1	Justified	
531	22/05/2007	24/05/2007	2	feedback form	3	Justified	
541	08/06/2007	14/06/2007	4	feedback form	7	Justified	
550	25/06/2007	26/06/2007	1	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
552	26/06/2007	03/07/2007	5	letter	7	Justified	
557	09/07/2007	13/07/2007	4	feedback form	2	Unjustified	
568	31/07/2007	01/08/2007	1	feedback form	7	Justified	
575	07/08/2007	08/08/2007	1	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
577	08/08/2007	03/09/2007	17	letter	1	Unjustified	
585	17/08/2007	22/08/2007	3	letter	2	Unjustified	
596	28/08/2007	29/08/2007	1	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
616	28/09/2007	08/10/2007	6	letter	7	Unjustified	
617	01/10/2007	26/10/2007	19	letter	7	Justified	
618	04/10/2007	10/10/2007	4	letter	2	Unjustified	
657	09/01/2008	15/01/2008	4	letter	7	Unjustified	
678	11/02/2008	12/02/2008	1	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
679	12/02/2008	21/02/2008	7	e-mail	1	Unjustified	
682	13/02/2008	15/02/2008	2	letter	7	Unjustified	
684	14/02/2008	20/02/2008	4	letter	7	Justified	
691	26/02/2008	14/03/2008	13	e-mail	2	Justified	
694	13/03/2008	18/03/2008	3	telephone	3	Justified	
Total days			120				

Average days to deal

5.2

Complaint type:

1 - technical/legal/regulatory	3	13.1%
2 - poor communication	4	17.4%
3 - delayed response/lack of response	4	17.4%
4 - complaint against a named officer	1	4.3%
5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	11	47.8%
Total	23	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	1	2
2 - poor communication	1	3
3 - delayed response/lack of response	2	2
4 - complaint against a named officer	1	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	5	6
Total	10	13

Capita - CTax Recovery Complaints 2007/08

Capita - Council Tax Recovery

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
566	25/07/2007	25/07/2007	0	letter	1	Unjustified	
611	18/09/2007	26/09/2007	6	letter	2	Unjustified	
612	18/09/2007	26/09/2007	6	e-mail	2	Unjustified	
613	21/09/2007	01/10/2007	6	letter	7	Unjustified	
626	29/10/2007	02/11/2007	4	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
628	02/11/2007	06/11/2007	2	Ombudsman referral	2	Unjustified	
633	13/11/2007	14/11/2007	1	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
634	14/11/2007	16/11/2007	2	letter	7	Unjustified	
641	03/12/2007	05/12/2007	2	e-mail	1	Unjustified	
665	16/01/2008	29/01/2008	9	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
Total days			38				

Average days to deal

3.8

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	2	20.0%
	2 - poor communication	3	30.0%
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	0.0%
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	0.0%
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	5	50.0%
	Total	10	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	2
2 - poor communication	-	3
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	5
Total	-	10

Capita - One Stop Shop Complaints 2007/08

Capita - One Stop Shop

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
553	05/07/2007	17/07/2007	8	letter	7	unjustified	

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	
	2 - poor communication	0	
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	100.0%
	Total	1	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	1
Total	-	1

Corporate Complaints 2007/08

Corporate

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
516	03/05/2007	10/05/2007	4	letter	5	Justified	
540	06/06/2007	18/06/2007	8	letter	7	Unjustified	
555	06/07/2007	16/07/2007	6	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
629	05/11/2007	30/11/2007	19	letter	7	Justified	
Total			37				

Average days to deal

9.3

Complaint type:

1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	0.0%
2 - poor communication	0	0.0%
3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	0.0%
4 - complaint against a named officer	0	0.0%
5 - complaint received via MP	1	25.0%
6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	3	75.0%
Total	4	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	1	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	2
Total	2	2

Customer Services and e-Government Complaints 2007/08

Customer Services and E-Government

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
522	14/05/2007	25/05/2007	9	letter	1	Unjustified	
532	23/05/2007	08/06/2007	11	e-mail	4	Unjustified	
546	21/06/2007	26/06/2007	3	letter	7	Unjustified	
594	23/08/2007	12/09/2007	13	Ombudsman referral	5	Justified	
687	22/02/2008	26/02/2008	2	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
Total days			38				

Average days to deal

7.6

Complaint type:

1 - technical/legal/regulatory	1	20.0%
2 - poor communication	0	0.0%
3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	0.0%
4 - complaint against a named officer	1	20.0%
5 - complaint received via MP	1	20.0%
6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	2	40.0%
Total	5	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	1
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	1
5 - complaint received via MP	1	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	2
Total	1	4

Environmental Health Complaints 2007/08

Environmental Health

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
525	16/05/2007	21/05/2007	3	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
572	02/08/2007	08/08/2007	4	feedback form	7	Unjustified	
666	18/01/2008	23/01/2008	3	telephone	1	Unjustified	
Total days			10				

Average days to deal

3.3

Complaint type:

1 - technical/legal/regulatory	1	33.3%
2 - poor communication	0	0.0%
3 - delayed response/lack of response	1	33.3%
4 - complaint against a named officer	0	0.0%
5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	33.3%
Total	3	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	1
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	1
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	1
Total	-	-

Licensing Complaints 2007/08

Licensing

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
534	25/05/2007	29/05/2007	1	feedback form	4	Justified	
545	20/06/2007	20/06/2007	0	e-mail	1	Unjustified	
578	10/08/2007	10/08/2007	0	e-mail	1	Unjustified	
623	15/10/2007	29/10/2007	10	telephone	4	Unjustified	interim sent
664	16/01/2008	22/01/2008	4	telephone	1	Unjustified	
Total days			15				

Average days to deal

3.0

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	3	60.0%
	2 - poor communication	0	0.0%
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	0.0%
	4 - complaint against a named officer	2	40.0%
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	0	0.0%
	Total	5	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	3
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	1	1
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	-
Total	1	4

Property Services Complaints 2007/08

Property Services

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
608	29/08/2007	07/09/2007	7	letter	1	Justified	
625	03/10/2007	03/10/2007	0	letter	1	Unjustified	
640	03/12/2007	19/12/2007	12	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
653	19/12/2007	11/01/2008	13	letter	1	Unjustified	
Total days			32				

Average days to deal **8.0**

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	3	75.0%
	2 - poor communication	0	0.0%
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	0.0%
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	0.0%
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	25.0%
	Total	4	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	1	2
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	1
Total	1	3

Facilities Management Complaints 2007/08

Facilities Management

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
511	26/04/2007	30/04/2007	2	feedback form	7	Justified	
681	13/02/2008	27/05/2008	70	feedback form	7	Justified	still open
Total days			72				

Average days to deal **36.0**

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	
	2 - poor communication	0	
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	2	100.0%
	Total	2	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	2	-
Total	2	-

Forward Planning Complaints 2007/08

Forward Planning

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
527	18/05/2007	22/05/2007	2	e-mail	3	Justified	

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	
	2 - poor communication	0	
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	1	100.0%
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	0	
	Total	1	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	1	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	-
Total	1	-

Legal Complaints 2007/08

Legal

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
551	26/06/2007	10/07/2007	10	letter	1	Unjustified	interim sent
554	19/06/2007	04/07/2007	11	letter	2	Justified	
Total days			21				

Average days to deal

10.5

Complaint type:

1 - technical/legal/regulatory	1	50.0%
2 - poor communication	1	50.0%
3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	
4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
5 - complaint received via MP	0	
6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	0	
Total	2	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	1
2 - poor communication	1	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	-
Total	1	1

Communications Complaints 2007/08

Communications

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
573	02/08/2007	09/08/2007	5	telephone	7	Unjustified	
676	05/02/2008	12/02/2008	5	e-mail	7	Justified	
Total days			10				

Average days to deal **5.0**

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	
	2 - poor communication	0	
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	2	100.0%
	Total	2	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	1
Total	1	1

Finance Complaints 2007/08

Finance

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
621	15/10/2007	16/10/2007	1	e-mail	7	Justified	
622	15/10/2007	16/10/2007	1	e-mail	7	Justified	
624	18/10/2007	18/10/2007	0	e-mail	7	Justified	
Total days			2				

Average days to deal **0.7**

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	
	2 - poor communication	0	
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	3	100.0%
	Total	3	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	3	-
Total	3	-

Parking Complaints 2007/08

Parking

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
627	30/10/2007	30/10/2007	0	telephone	7	Unjustified	
693	12/03/2008	02/04/2008	13	letter	7	Unjustified	
Total days			13				

Average days to deal

6.5

Complaint type:

1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	
2 - poor communication	0	
3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	
4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
5 - complaint received via MP	0	
6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	2	100.0%
Total	2	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	2
Total	-	2

Human Resources Complaints 2007/08

Human Resources

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
636	15/11/2007	04/12/2007	13	feedback form	7	Unjustified	

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	
	2 - poor communication	0	
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	100.0%
	Total	1	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	1
Total	-	1

Private Sector Renewal Complaints 2007/08

Private Sector Renewal

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
638	26/11/2007	30/11/2007	4	telephone	7	Justified	

Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	
	2 - poor communication	0	
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	
	4 - complaint against a named officer	0	
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	100.0%
	Total	1	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	-
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	1	-
Total	1	-

Committee Services Complaints 2007/08

Committee Services

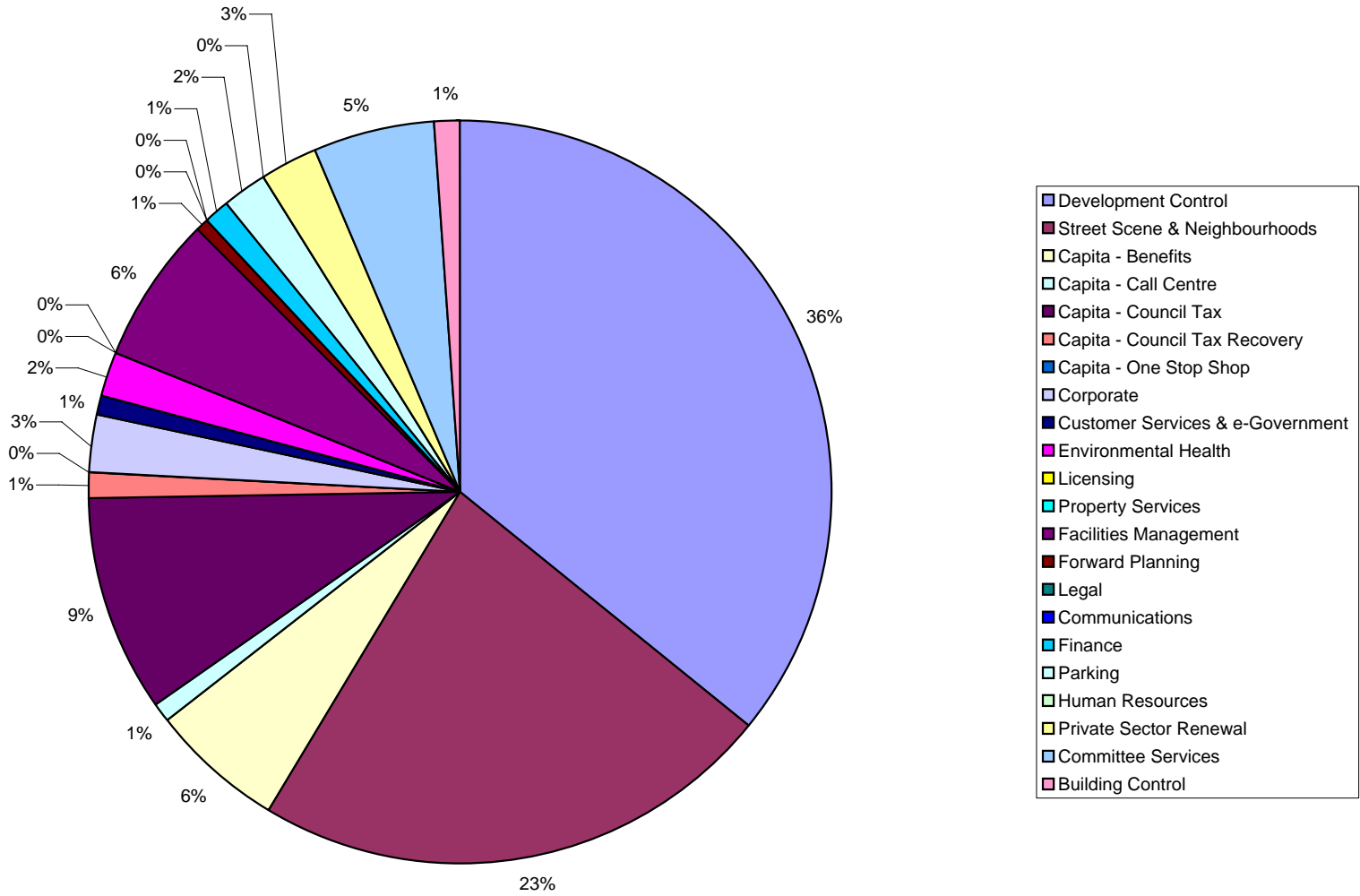
Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
669	24/01/2008	01/02/2008	6	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
671	24/12/2007	16/01/2008	14	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
675	05/02/2008	12/02/2008	5	feedback form	4	Unjustified	
Total days			25				

Average days to deal **8.3**

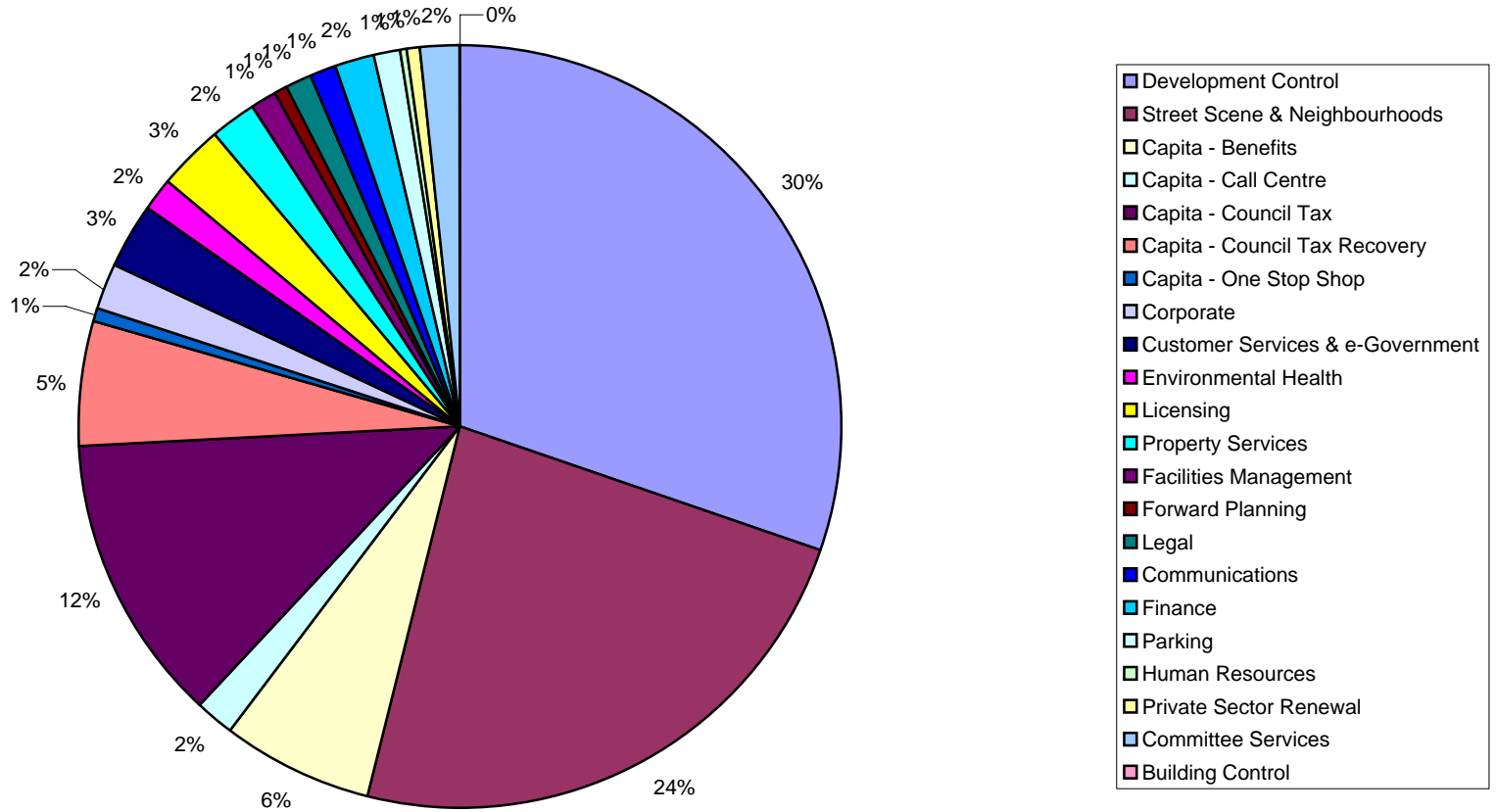
Complaint type:	1 - technical/legal/regulatory	0	0.0%
	2 - poor communication	0	0.0%
	3 - delayed response/lack of response	0	0.0%
	4 - complaint against a named officer	1	33.3%
	5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
	6 - complaint received via Councillor	0	0.0%
	7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	2	66.7%
	Total	3	

	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Unjustified</u>
1 - technical/legal/regulatory	-	-
2 - poor communication	-	-
3 - delayed response/lack of response	-	-
4 - complaint against a named officer	-	1
5 - complaint received via MP	-	-
6 - complaint received via Councillor	-	-
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	-	2
Total	-	3

Complaints by Service Area 2006/07



Complaints by Service Area 2007/08



Compliments Received by Service Area 2007/08

Directorate	Head of Service	Service Area	Compliments received during:			
			April - June 2007	July - September 2007	October - December 2007	January - March 2008
Chief Executive	Corporate			2	2	
	People & Organisational Development					
Deputy Chief Executive	Street Scene & Neighbourhood Services	Operations	1	1	2	3
		NEAT	4		1	4
		Environmental Health		1		3
		Community Safety				
	Customer Services & ICT	Capita - Council Tax Recovery				
		Capita - Council Tax				
		Capita - Call Centre				
		Capita - Benefits	1			
		Capita - OSS	3			1
		Land Charges				
		Communications			3	
		Customer Services				
		Community & Partnership				
Economic Regeneration & Strategic Housing	Private Sector Renewal	2				
	Parking					
Regulatory Services		Legal				1
		Licensing			1	2
		Development Control	4	3	1	1
		Building Control				
		Forward Planning				
Resources	Policy & Performance					
	Finance	Financial Services				
		Property Services		1	1	1
		Elections	1	2	3	
		Committee & Member Services	1			1
Total			17	10	14	17

Subject: Annual Review of Complaints
made against the Planning Unit: 1st
April 2007 – 31st March 2008

Status: For Publication

Report to: Performance Scrutiny Committee
Standards Committee
Full Council
Development Control

Date: 4th September 2008
22nd September 2008
24th September 2008
6th October 2008

Report of: Executive Director - Business and the Head of Customer Services and ICT

Portfolio

Holder: Finance and Resources

Key Decision: No

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the Ombudsman complaints and formal complaints received against the Planning Unit for the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Delivering Quality Services to Customers (Customers, Improvement)
- Delivering Regeneration across the Borough (Economy, Housing)
- Well Managed Council (Improvement, Community Network)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

Ombudsman Complaints

- 4.1 For the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008 the Local Government Ombudsman recorded 16 complaints against the Planning Unit. These figures do contain some complaints which we are not aware of yet, as they will initially be investigated by the Ombudsman before they are sent to us therefore there is a small discrepancy between the Ombudsman's figures and our own. A breakdown of the complaints can be found in Appendix 2.
- 4.2 The Local Government Ombudsman has recorded that they have closed 10 complaints against the Planning Unit for the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008 as follows (a breakdown of these can be found in Appendix 2):

No or little evidence of maladministration	4
Ombudsman's Discretion	3
Outside Ombudsman's Jurisdiction	0
Local Settlement	1
Maladministration	0
Premature	2

- 4.3 Since the publication of the annual letter 9 complaints were closed as 'little or no evidence of maladministration'.
- 4.4 Out of the 16 planning complaints received by the Ombudsman 4 (25%) were generated by the same individual. This complainant is the same individual that generated 17.5% of complaints through the Formal Complaints process (see information in 4.6). Out of the complaints received by this individual 3 have now been closed as "Outside Jurisdiction" and 1 is currently awaiting a decision by the Ombudsman.

Formal Complaints

- 4.5 During the 2007/08 year, a total of 57 formal complaints were recorded against the Planning Unit compared with 73 in 2006/07, a reduction of 22% (see Appendix 1). On average these complaints were dealt with in 11.5 working days compared with an average of 16.1 working days in 2006/07. Whilst this performance is still below the target of 10 working days, it does represent a very significant improvement year on year.

In April 2007 a system of categorisation was introduced for all formal complaints received by RBC and the analysis of Planning Unit complaints over the year is as follows:

1. Technical/legal/regulatory	15 (26.3%)
2. Poor communication	6 (10.5%)
3. Delayed response/lack of response	27 (47.4%)

- 4. Complaint against a named officer 1 (1.8%)
- 5. Complaint received via MP 0 (0%)
- 6. Complaint received via Councillor 2 (3.5%)
- 7. Complaint re RBC policy or procedure 6 (10.5%)

4.6 It must be noted that from the 57 planning complaints received in 2007/08 17.5% were generated by one individual and 10.5% by another individual. The details of multiple planning complainants can be seen in Appendix 1.

4.7 Of the 57 complaints received, 31 (54.4%) were accepted as justified, with 26 (45.6%) determined as unjustified. The breakdown of justified/unjustified complaints by type is as follows:

Type		Justified	Unjustified	Total
1	Technical/legal/regulatory	8	7	15
2	Poor communication	3	3	6
3	Delayed response/lack of response	14	13	27
4	Complaint against a named officer	1	-	1
5	Complaint received via MP	-	-	-
6	Complaint received via Councillor	1	1	2
7	Complaint re RBC policy or procedure	4	2	6
Total		31	26	57

Improvements

4.8 The Council as a whole and the Planning Unit takes complaints very seriously. If the Local Government Ombudsman has raised concerns about procedures and systems within the Planning Unit, these concerns are taken on board and improvements are implemented.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5.2 The Council does however face the risk of financial penalty should the Ombudsman find against the council in any existing or future complaints.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 The Council treats all complaints very seriously and we learn from any situations where we get things wrong. The Ombudsman had commented that some planning complaints are missing our complaint procedure during the period we are processing applications. It is important to consider how many complaints have been upheld and not just to focus on numbers. The Council is continually improving in Planning and the way we deal with our customers.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

7.1 There are no Human Resources implications.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter contains significant improvements on the 2006/07 letter. Although the number of complaints remains the same, the Council's response times have improved significantly. According to the Ombudsman , *'the statistical information shows, the average response time has fallen from 41.1 days in 2006/7 to 22.8 in 2007/8. These times are very good and well within the requested 28 days.'* The average response times specifically for the planning department is 26.9 which is also within the requested 28 days (data in Appendix 2).

8.2 The Council recognises that the majority of complaints (both Ombudsman and Formal) are in respect of the Planning Department. Much of this can be attributed to the fact that planning is, and always will be, an emotive and contentious issue and the subject of the most complaints.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 That Members note the content of the report and the improvements carried out within the Planning Unit.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 None.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

Contact Officer	
Name	Caroyln Sharples
Position	Committee and Member Services Officer
Service / Team	Democratic Services
Telephone	01706 252422
Email address	carolynsharples@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Formal Complaints Data - Planning 01/04/07 to 31/03/08
Appendix 2	Ombudsman Data - Planning 01/04/07 to 31/03/08

Appendix 1

Complaint number	Date received	Date closed	Days to respond	Method of complaining	Type of complaint	Justified / Unjustified	Comments
499	10/04/2007	13/04/2007	3	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
502	11/04/2007	11/05/2007	21	letter	3	Unjustified	
506	17/04/2007	14/05/2007	18	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
507	18/04/2007	26/04/2007	6	letter	7	Unjustified	
510	25/04/2007	22/05/2007	18	e-mail	3	Justified	
512	27/04/2007	21/05/2007	15	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
514	03/05/2007	11/05/2007	6	letter	1	Unjustified	interim sent
515	03/05/2007	17/05/2007	9	letter	2	Justified	interim sent
524	15/05/2007	07/06/2007	16	telephone	3	Unjustified	
526	17/05/2007	01/06/2007	10	letter	1	Unjustified	
533	25/05/2007	14/06/2007	13	e-mail	2	Justified	
536	04/06/2007	27/06/2007	17	e-mail	3	Justified	
539	05/06/2007	25/06/2007	14	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
547	21/06/2007	06/07/2007	11	letter	7	Justified	
548	22/06/2007	18/07/2007	18	letter	3	Justified	
556	09/07/2007	20/07/2007	9	e-mail	3	Justified	interim sent
558	09/07/2007	23/07/2007	10	feedback form	1	Unjustified	
559	11/07/2007	13/07/2007	2	e-mail	3	Justified	
560	16/07/2007	19/07/2007	3	e-mail	6	Justified	
562	16/07/2007	20/07/2007	4	letter	3	Justified	
563	19/07/2007	26/07/2007	5	telephone	3	Justified	
564	23/07/2007	24/07/2007	1	e-mail	3	Justified	
571	02/08/2007	16/08/2007	10	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
583	16/08/2007	26/09/2007	28	e-mail	7	Justified	
584	30/08/2007	05/09/2007	4	e-mail	2	Unjustified	interim sent
586	20/08/2007	29/08/2007	6	letter	1	Justified	
587	20/08/2007	29/08/2007	6	letter	1	Justified	
588	20/08/2007	29/08/2007	6	letter	1	Justified	
589	20/08/2007	29/08/2007	6	letter	1	Justified	
590	21/08/2007	29/08/2007	5	letter	1	Justified	
591	21/08/2007	29/08/2007	5	letter	1	Justified	
592	22/08/2007	29/08/2007	4	telephone	1	Justified	
598	29/08/2007	14/09/2007	12	feedback form	1	Justified	
604	10/09/2007	21/09/2007	9	e-mail	3	Justified	
605	10/09/2007	27/09/2007	13	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
610	13/09/2007	18/10/2008	25	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
637	20/11/2007	07/12/2007	13	letter	3	Unjustified	
639	29/11/2007	03/12/2007	2	letter	1	Unjustified	
646	07/12/2007	12/12/2007	21	e-mail	7	Justified	interim sent
650	14/12/2007	07/01/2008	13	e-mail	3	Justified	
651	14/12/2007	04/01/2008	12	e-mail	3	Justified	
652	18/12/2007	27/12/2007	5	e-mail	3	Unjustified	interim sent
656	08/01/2008	23/01/2008	11	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
658	11/01/2008	25/01/2008	10	e-mail	3	Unjustified	
659	11/01/2008	25/01/2008	10	feedback form	7	Justified	
661	15/01/2008	07/02/2008	17	e-mail	4	Justified	

667	22/01/2008	30/01/2008	6	via Area Forum	1	Unjustified	interim sent
670	24/01/2008	28/01/2008	2	e-mail	3	Justified	
674	05/02/2008	20/02/2008	11	telephone	2	Unjustified	
677	05/02/2008	21/02/2008	12	e-mail	7	Unjustified	
683	13/02/2008	21/02/2008	6	telephone	2	Justified	
685	21/02/2008	18/04/2008	39	letter	1	Unjustified	
686	21/02/2008	30/05/2007	61	e-mail	3	Justified	
689	25/02/2008	11/03/2008	11	e-mail	6	Unjustified	
692	07/03/2008	11/03/2008	2	feedback form	2	Unjustified	
695	18/03/2008	01/04/2008	8	letter	3	Unjustified	
696	31/03/2008	18/04/2008	14	letter	1	Unjustified	
Total days			654				

Average days to deal

11.47

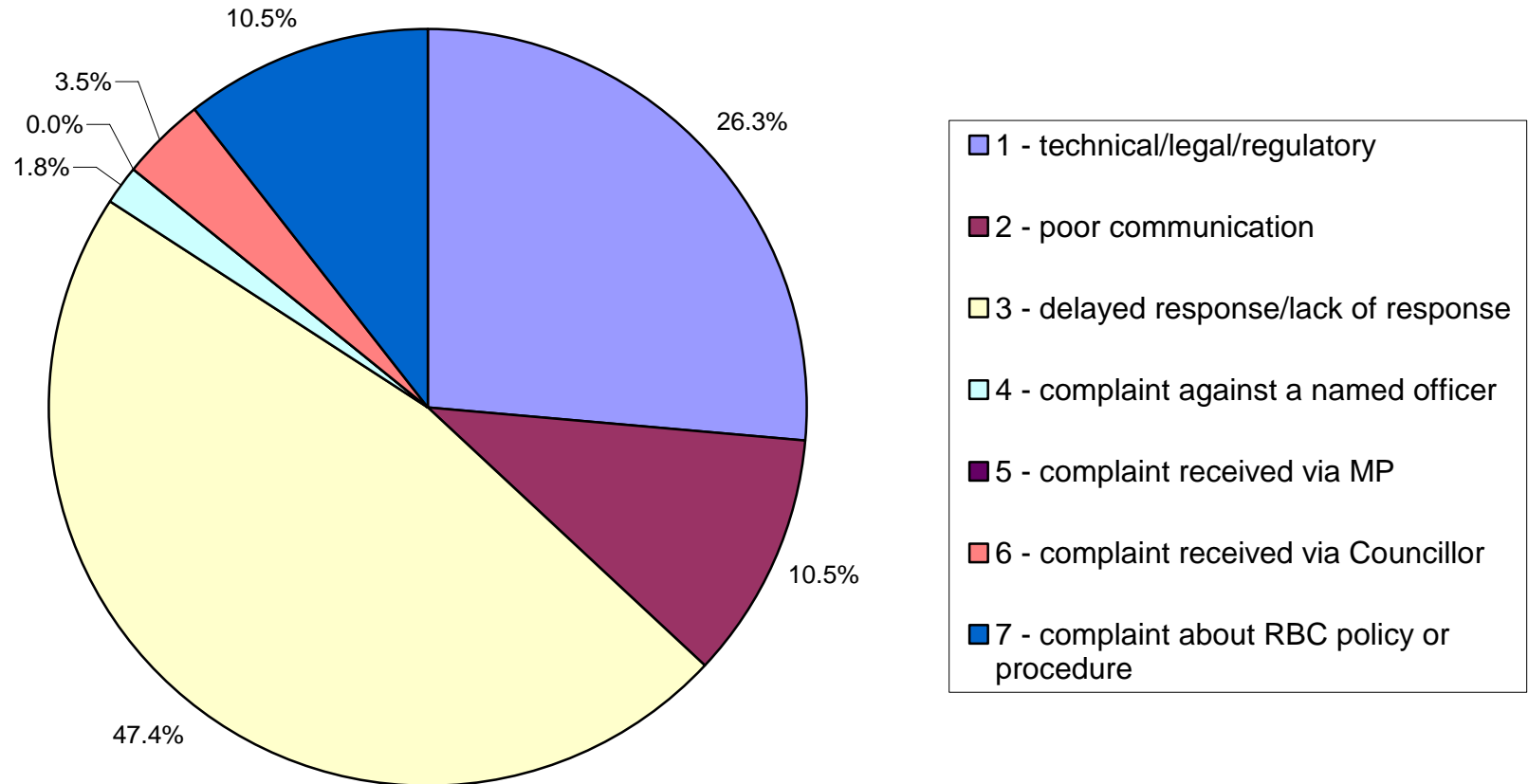
Complaint type:

1 - technical/legal/regulatory	15	26.3%
2 - poor communication	6	10.5%
3 - delayed response/lack of response	27	47.4%
4 - complaint against a named officer	1	1.8%
5 - complaint received via MP	0	0.0%
6 - complaint received via Councillor	2	3.5%
7 - complaint about RBC policy or procedure	6	10.5%
Total	57	

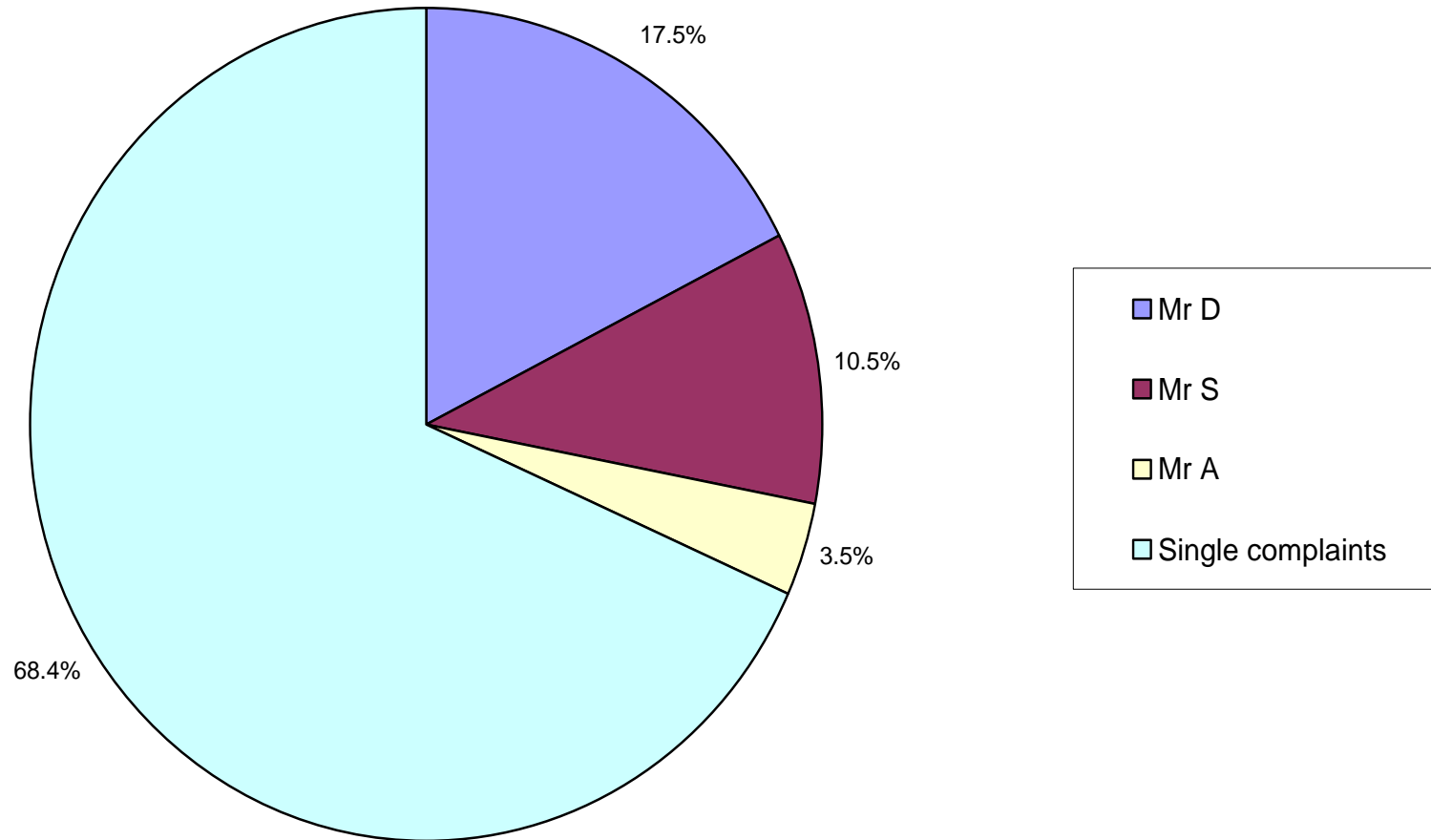
Multiple Planning Complainants

Mr D	10	17.5%
Mr S	6	10.5%
Mr A	2	3.5%
Single complaints	39	68.4%

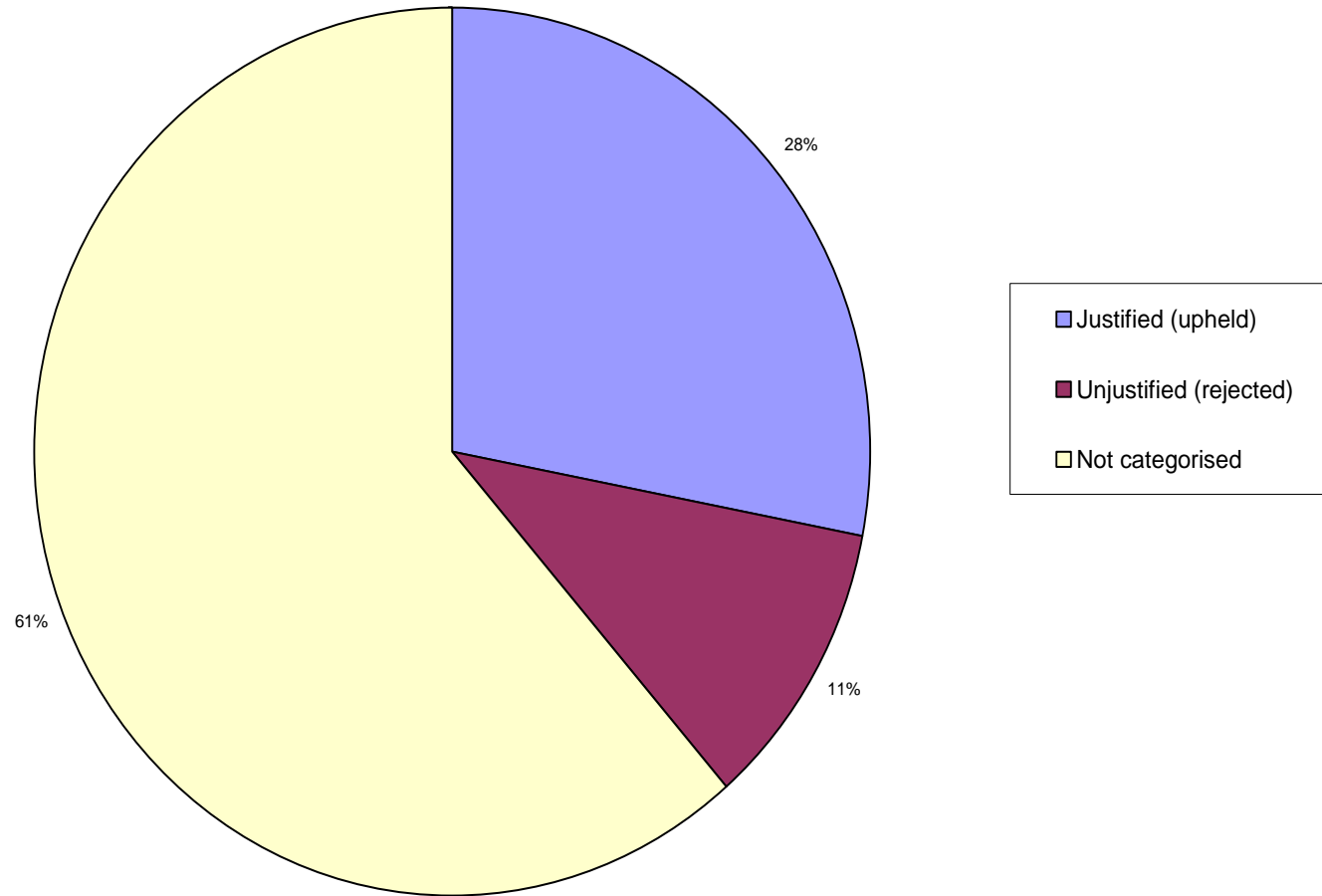
DC Complaints by Type April 2007 - March 2008



DC Complaints by Customer April 2007 - March 2008



DC Complaints justified/unjustified/not categorised



Ombudsman Data in Relation to Planning

**Planning Complaints Received by the Ombudsman
(including premature complaints) 01/04/07 to 31/03/08**

Reference	Date Received	Decision Made	Category	Outcome
07C16966	12/03/2008	20/03/2008	Enforcement	Premature Complaints
07C02721	30/05/2007	06/12/2007	Applications	No or insufficient evidence of maladministration
07C06751	11/07/2007	14/08/2007	Applications	Ombudsman's Discretion
07C09812	17/10/2007	31/03/2008	Applications	No or insufficient evidence of maladministration
07C11981	29/11/2007	06/12/2007	Applications	Premature Complaints
07C12095	03/12/2007	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Ombudsman's Discretion in 08/09 report
07C12858	18/12/2007	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Ombudsman's Discretion in 08/09 report
07C12905	17/12/2007	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Ombudsman's Discretion in 08/09 report
07C13057	21/12/2007	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Ombudsman's Discretion in 08/09 report
07C13058	21/12/2007	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Ombudsman's Discretion in 08/09 report
07C15161	07/02/2008	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Outside Jurisdiction in 08/09 report
07C15223	07/02/2008	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Outside Jurisdiction in 08/09 report
07C15401	12/02/2008	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Ombudsman's Discretion in 08/09 report
07C15719	15/02/2008	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	Will be recorded as Outside Jurisdiction in 08/09 report
07C15773	19/02/2008	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	
07C17483	17/03/2008	Open as at 31/03/08	Applications	

*Ombudsman complaints are already included in the Rossendale complaints figures as they will have been pursued through our complaints system as part of the Ombudsman investigation process.

Ombudsman Decisions Made 01/04/07 to 31/03/08

Reference	Date Received	Decision Made	Category	Outcome
06C00449	12/04/2006	15/06/2007	Applications	Local settlement
05C06562	27/07/2005	18/05/2007	Enforcement	No or insufficient evidence of maladministration
06C10679	23/10/2006	10/05/2007	Applications	No or insufficient evidence of maladministration
07C02721	30/05/2007	06/12/2007	Applications	No or insufficient evidence of maladministration
07C09812	17/10/2007	31/03/2008	Applications	No or insufficient evidence of maladministration
06C12130	16/11/2006	15/05/2007	Applications	Ombudsman's Discretion
06C10751	23/10/2006	22/06/2007	Applications	Ombudsman's Discretion
07C06751	11/07/2007	14/08/2007	Applications	Ombudsman's Discretion
07C16966	12/03/2008	20/03/2008	Enforcement	Premature Complaints
07C11981	29/11/2007	06/12/2007	Applications	Premature Complaints

Planning response times to first enquiry letters 01/04/07 to 31/03/08

Reference	Date Received by Ombudsman	Date Enquiry Sent to Council	Date Response Received	Time Taken/ Days	Category
06C12130	16/11/2006	14/03/2007	13/04/2007	30	Applications
07C02721	30/05/2007	11/07/2007	27/07/2007	16	Applications
07C09812	17/10/2007	16/11/2007	24/01/2008	69	Applications
07C12095	03/12/2007	06/02/2008	26/02/2008	20	Applications
07C12858	18/12/2007	06/02/2008	26/02/2008	20	Applications
07C12905	17/12/2007	06/02/2008	26/02/2008	20	Applications
07C13057	21/12/2007	06/02/2008	26/02/2008	20	Applications
07C13058	21/12/2007	06/02/2008	26/02/2008	20	Applications

First Enquiries Total:	8
Average number of days to respond:	26.9