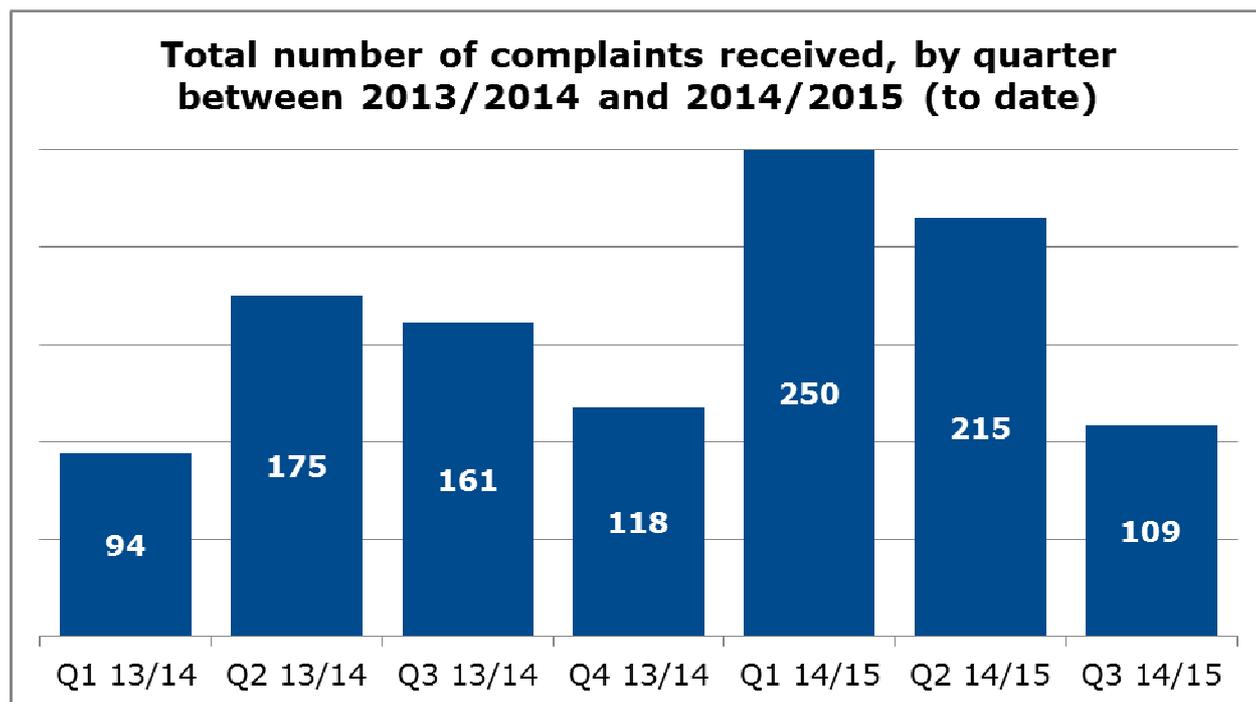


Quarter 3 Customer Feedback (complaints, compliments and social media) Report

1. Overall Performance

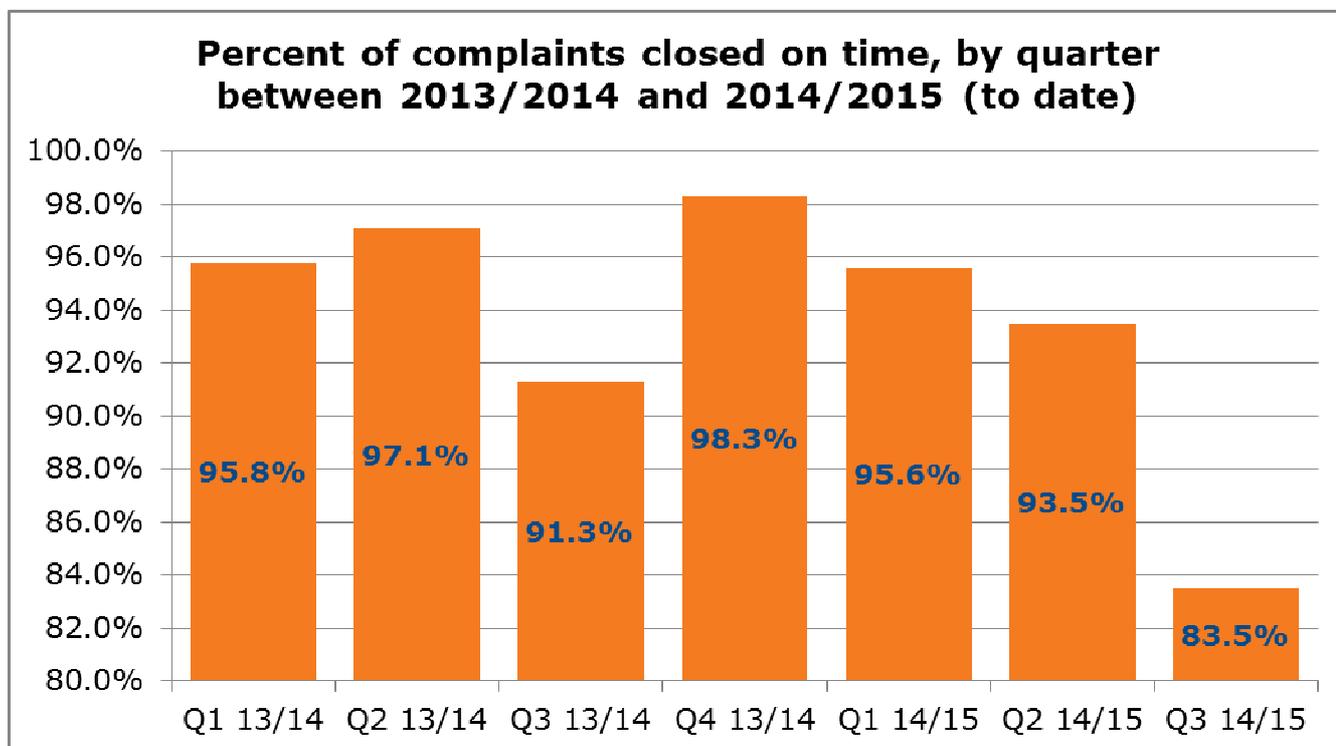
There were 109 complaints received in total this quarter. This is a drop in the volume of complaints received compared to quarter 2 of 2014/2015. This is also a drop in the volume of complaints received compared to quarter 3 of 2013/2014. The graph below shows the volumes of complaints received since quarter 1 of 2013/2014.



For comparison, a table comparing volumes of complaints received and the percentage of complaints that were answered on time, going back to quarter 1 of 2013/2014, can be found below.

	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Overall number of complaints received	13/14	94	175	161	118
	14/15	250	215	109	-
Percentage of complaints responded to on time	13/14	95.8%	97.1%	91.3%	98.3%
	14/15	95.6%	93.5%	85.3%	-

Despite the low number of complaints received overall, performance has declined in relation to complaints responded to within target time. The quarterly result of 83.5% of complaints closed on time is the second worst since 2009/10. A graph showing percentage of complaints closed within target time between Q1 of 2013/2014 to date can be found below.



The table on the following page illustrates the inconsistency of approach to complaints approaching their due date between different services. The Policy and Information Team now has a dedicated Complaints and FOI officer who should bring a more consistent approach to this side of complaint handling. The Policy and Information Team expect the situation to improve for the next quarter.

Planning Support are worthy of a special mention as although they closed 4 out of their 6 complaints late, it is clear that complainants have been engaged with, including telephone calls from the service manager. This is good practice and should be encouraged across the council.

The teams with complaints closed outside of target time, along with any explanatory notes, are detailed on the following page.

Service	Number of late complaints	Number of complaints received	Notes
Development Management	4	12	None of the customers kept updated on the progress of their complaint, and no apology for late response.
Environmental Enforcement	1	5	A complicated case involving a contractor, resulting in disciplinary action by the contractor. Customer kept updated on progress of the complaint.
Housing (Homelessness)	1	8	The customer was not updated and no apology for lateness. No reason was given in the complaint record for the complaint being closed late.
Housing (Register)	3	8	None of the customers were kept up to date with the progress of their complaint, and no apology for late response. One of these complaints was about a complicated immigration matter.
Parks and Leisure	2	5	None of the customers were kept up to date with the progress of their complaint, and no apology for late response.
Planning Enforcement	1	6	Customer was not kept up to date with progress of their complaint.
Planning Support	4	6	For one complaint, the complaint was closed by telephone on the day but a formal response not sent until after the deadline; one complaint was closed by telephone on the deadline and a follow up email detailing actions taken sent later on; one customer was responded to late but kept up to date with progress of the complaint and one complaint was closed late as the customer did not confirm whether they felt the matter was closed.
Private Sector Housing	2	2	None of the customers were kept up to date with the progress of their complaint, and no apology for late response

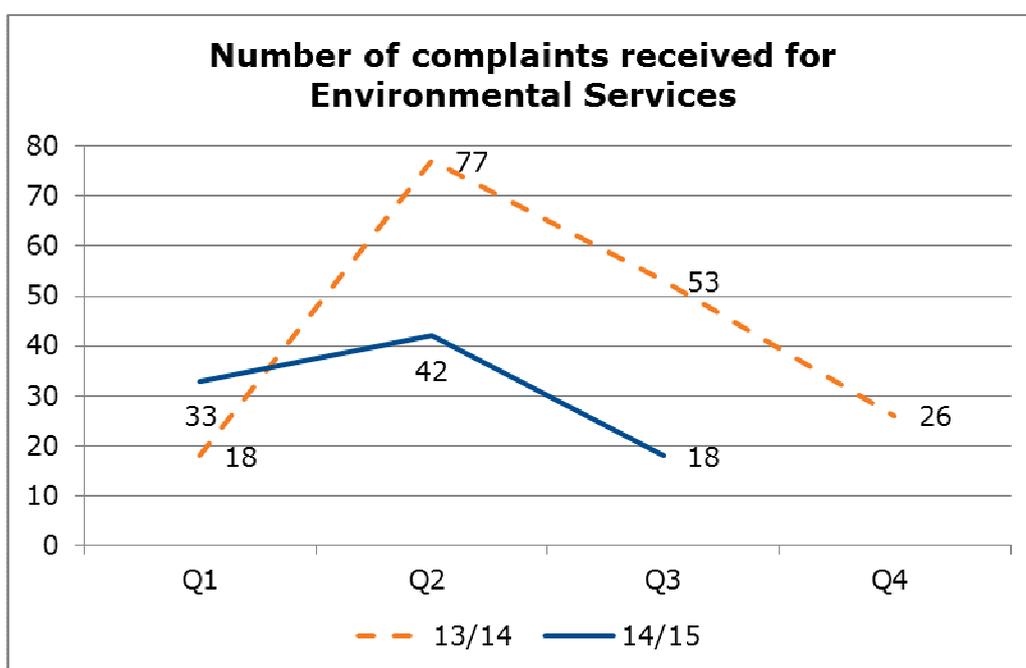
2. Complaints by Service

The decline since the previous quarter of complaints received across the council is also reflected in the complaints received for individual services. For example, all but one of the services that were highlighted as having a high number of complaints in quarter 2 (Environmental Services, Development Management, Parks and Leisure, Parking Services and Environmental Enforcement) have seen a drop in complaints received. The only service that hasn't seen a drop in volume of complaints received was Housing Options/Register, who received the same volume of complaints this quarter compared to the previous quarter. However for the purposes of this report, and because these teams are now managed separately, the complaints for Housing Options and Housing Register are now dealt with separately.

There were no services with particularly high numbers of complaints this quarter, but there were a few trends that could be noted in the complaints received by services.

Environmental Services

Environmental Services (including waste collection) received the most complaints this quarter (18 complaints received in total). A graph showing numbers of complaints received by quarter compared to 2013/2014 can be seen below.



As can be seen on the graph, Environmental Services received the fewest complaints since quarter 1 of 2013/2014. Of these 18 complaints, 15 were about waste collection.

Several improvements were made as a result of complaints for this service, including:

- A change in a web form to improve the way bulky collections are ordered online;
- More frequent collections from a block of flats once issues with capacity had been highlighted;
- An extra bin delivered for a different block of flats- again due to lack of existing capacity; and
- More frequent collections of dog waste from Grove Green as the bins were overflowing regularly.

Whilst these are small improvements, they can make a significant difference to residents' daily lives and this service should be commended for taking this feedback on board.

Revenues

There were three policy complaints this quarter about the long term empty premium. All of these complaints were made by residents who had to pay the premium as they had left their properties unoccupied and unfurnished for 2 years or more and were not eligible for statutory exemptions (e.g. a property subject to probate or the owner being in care or hospital). Two of these complainants previously had a Class A exemption applied for 12 months, as the properties were judged to be undergoing structural repairs/alterations. Unfortunately, for those properties that are undergoing major structural works (rather than those left empty but in a habitable state), there is not a lot of assistance the council can provide other than to work with the homeowners to spread the higher payments over a longer period. This suggests that the long term empty premium may have effects on the renovation of long term derelict homes or those in a poor state of repair. It is worth noting, however, that the council has an empty homes programme that can offer assistance to get long term empty properties back into use.

Housing (Homelessness)

Two complaints this quarter were about, or mentioned, accommodation at Aylesbury House-council owned temporary accommodation. Both complainants mentioned that there were problems with drug and alcohol use at the site. The response re-assured the complainant that their concerns had been looked into and that no evidence of drug use had been found at the site.

Development Management

Four complaints were received by Development Management about lack of contact from planning officers this quarter, two of which were upheld. However both of these complaints were against one officer, who was on sickness absence at the time. There were no other trends or common themes for the complaints received for Development Management this quarter.

Housing (Register)

Three complaints this quarter were about accommodation that had been offered to housing register applicants was not suitable, for various reasons. None of these complaints were upheld. One complaint, regarding an error in the bidding process, resulted in an ex gratia payment. This is covered in more detail in the section on remedies for justified complaints.

Planning Support

Mid Kent Planning Support received 6 complaints in total this quarter. Three of these were about the time taken to validate applications. All of these were justified- the responses apologised to customers, explained the reasons for delays and explained the actions being taken to improve performance.

One complaint was about how the website operated for planning applications, and suggested some changes to improve the site. These changes have now been implemented.

A full breakdown of complaints by service can be found on the following page.

Service	Number	On Time	Late	% on Time	Service	Policy	Staff	Time Taken	Lack of Contact	Discrimination
Benefits	3	3	0	100.0%	1	0	2	0	0	0
Building Control	2	2	0	100.0%	0	0	2	0	0	0
Corporate Property	1	1	0	100.0%	1	0	0	0	0	0
Customer Services	3	3	0	100.0%	3	0	0	0	0	0
Depot Operations	2	2	0	100.0%	0	0	2	0	0	0
Development Management	12	8	4	66.7%	4	1	1	2	4	0
Electoral Registration	3	3	0	100.0%	3	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Enforcement	5	4	1	80.0%	1	1	3	0	0	0
Environmental Services	18	18	0	100.0%	11	5	0	1	1	0
Housing (Homelessness)	8	7	1	87.5%	5	1	0	0	1	1
Housing Register	8	5	3	62.5%	5	3	0	0	0	0
Legal	1	1	0	100.0%	1	0	0	0	0	0
Licensing	1	1	0	100.0%	0	0	1	0	0	0
Parking Services	16	16	0	100.0%	6	4	6	0	0	0
Parks and Leisure	5	3	2	60.0%	3	1	0	1	0	0
Planning Enforcement	6	5	1	83.3%	5	0	0	1	0	0
Planning Support	6	2	4	33.3%	2	0	0	4	0	0
Private Sector Housing	2	0	2	0.0%	0	0	0	2	0	0
Revenues	7	7	0	100.0%	2	4	1	0	0	0
Total	109	91	18	83.5%	53	20	18	11	6	1

3. Compliments

Several teams received compliments during quarter 3 as shown in the table below:

Team	Number of compliments
Customer Services	2
Housing (Homelessness)	3
Depot	4
Parking Services	3
Revenues	1
Environmental Services	6
Communications	2
Parks and Leisure	1

A selection of quotes from the compliments received can be found below:

I am a KSTR worker with the community mental health team and had to support a client to attend the Maidstone Gateway to see Natalia (from the homelessness team) and I must say how courteous, professional she was in what was a very difficult situation for my client. She was a star, many thanks to her.

I have found the service given to me by the Maidstone Gateway team to be incredibly helpful and everybody has been very understanding.

Thanks @maidstonebc. Your social media team are always brilliant and deserve praise.

Warmlake Road was cleared after request. (Customer's name withheld) said the two men that did it did an absolutely excellent job and she has never seen the road so clear.

My email was responded to within 48 hours and my bins delivered within 9 days. Given this was over the Christmas break as well, I think this is great service and worthy of a 'thank you'!

4. Stage 2 Complaints

This quarter, the council received 34 stage 2 complaints. 30 of these complaints were responded to on time. The four that were responded to outside of the target time, all customers were kept up to date with the progress of the complaint and two were only a day late. A breakdown of stage 2 complaints by service and by number of justified complaints against each service can be found in the table below.

Service	Stage 2 Complaints	Number Justified
Benefits	1	0
Building Control	1	1
Community Safety	1	0
Customer Services	1	0
Development Management	9	2
Environmental Enforcement	1	0
Environmental Services	4	2
Housing (Register)	1	0
Licensing	1	1
Parking Services	2	1
Parks and Leisure	4	2
Planning Support	2	2
Private Sector Housing	1	0
Revenues	5	1
Total	34	12

Development Management received the most Stage 2 complaints this quarter (26.5% of total Stage 2 complaints received), however only two of these complaints were found to be justified at Stage 2. The volume of stage 2 complaint responses, and the percentage of those escalated to Stage 2 (75% of complaints escalated to stage 2 this quarter) suggests that the complaint responses at Stage 1 were not adequate.

Revenues also received a relatively high number of Stage 2 complaints this quarter. However two of the five complaints received were from those who have been classified Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent Complainants under our policy, and neither of these complaints were found to be justified. Two of the other Stage 2 complaints for Revenues were from complainants who were dissatisfied with having to pay the long term empty premium.

Comparative Statistics on stage 2 complaints can be found on the table below:

	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of stage 2 complaints received	13/14	23	16	39	17
	14/15	32	24	34	-
% of complaints escalated to stage 2	13/14	24.5	9.1	24.2	14.4
	14/15	12.8	11.1	31.1	-
% justified stage 2 complaints	13/14	47.8	37.5	41.0	23.5
	14/15	31.3	33.3	35.3	-

The number of stage 2 complaints received was towards the high side compared to previous quarters since q1 of 2013/2014. However the percentage of complaints escalated to stage 2 was very high- the highest result since q1 of 2013/2014. The percentage of justified stage 2 complaints was around the same level as the previous two quarters of this year.

5. Complaint Handling Satisfaction

Satisfaction with complaint handling was low this quarter (26.09%), but an improvement from quarter 2 when it was at 0%. Satisfaction with complaint handling over the last two financial years, starting in quarter 1 of 2013/2014, can be seen below. This is presented alongside the response rate for complaint satisfaction surveys.

	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Satisfaction rate	2013/2014	20.0%	40.0%	36.17%	41.67%
	2014/2015	54.39%	0.00%	26.09%	-
Response rate	2013/2014	10.6%	14.3%	29.2%	30.5%
	2014/2015	22.8%	8.1%	42.2%	-

As can be seen in the table above, the response rate has increased this quarter and is at the highest level for nearly 2 years. However the satisfaction rate itself was particularly low. Comparing the response rate to the satisfaction rate, it is clear there is little correlation between the two.

6. Payments, Refunds and Compensation

Payments, refunds and compensation paid as a result of complaints are listed in the table below, along with explanatory notes.

Service	Stage	Reason	Amount
Housing (Register)	1	Error in bidding process led to complainant missing out on a property	£150
Environmental Services	2	Missed sofa collection due to problems with information on a web form	£22.50
Total			£172.50

7. Social Media

Interactions on social media are gathered and classified by the Communications team. Everything with the word Maidstone in is logged, and classified by subject. Pictures are then made up on a monthly basis, using the names of the subject, with the larger the word the greater the number of mentions on social media. There is an overall summary provided below, along with the pictures for each of the months in the quarter.

Summary

- All three months had a large amount of mentions for Maidstone United as they made it through to the second round of the FA cup. Because of the volume of mentions for Maidstone United the October and November pictures have this topic excluded. If Maidstone United had been included in these pictures it would have been difficult to read the other topics
- Chris Smalling was also mentioned a lot during November. Again his name has not been included in the picture for this month as it would make it difficult to read other topics
- There were several reoccurring topics that seem to be popular every month, including nightlife, shopping, traffic, bus and trains

October

- Maidstone United made it into the first round proper of the FA Cup
- Jools Holland was filming at Maidstone Studios
- Katie Price did a book signing at WH Smith
- Michael Payne, father of Sarah Payne, passed away at the end of the month – he was living in Maidstone at the time
- Mote Park was named Britain's second favourite Park

November

- Maidstone United made it to the second round of the FA Cup
- Chris Smalling, who used to play for Maidstone United, got a red card and was sent off while playing for Manchester United
- Jools Holland was filming at Maidstone Studios, as was the new version of Catchphrase!
- Lucy Watson (Made in Chelsea) turned on the Christmas lights
- There was a bomb scare in the town centre
- The Next store at Junction 7 opened (feedback on social media when it first opened was negative)

December

- Maidstone United lost to Wrexham in the second round of the FA Cup
- Pat Lamb went missing on a night out in Maidstone on 12 December

October

MotePark
 MichaelPayne
 KatiePrice
 planning
 trains
 nightlife
 shopping
 museum
 bus
 GasLeak
 traffic
 MaidstoneStudios

November

Maidstone Studios
Lucy Watson
 Christmas Lights BombScare
 Remembrance Day Next shopping trains
 traffic **nightlife**

LibDem Conference

December

MaidstoneUnited

trains
nightlife
traffic
shopping

PatLamb

8. Methods of Contact

Methods of contact for complaints received this quarter can be found below:

	Email	Post	Telephone	Face to Face	Social Media
Number	49	16	35	9	0
%	44.9	14.7	32.1	8.3	0

In quarter 2, complaints were most likely to be received via email, with this method of contact making up nearly half of all complaints received by the council. There has been little change in the methods of contact used by complainants compared to the previous quarter, despite there being far fewer complaints that have been made. The table below gives comparative figures for methods of contact going back to quarter 1 of 2013/2014.

	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Email	13/14	34.0%	35.6%	29.2%	39.8%
	14/15	35.2%	44.7%	44.9%	-
Post	13/14	19.1%	27.5%	17.4%	10.2%
	14/15	6.4%	12.6%	14.7%	-
Telephone	13/14	29.8%	31.2%	47.8%	40.7%
	14/15	52.4%	34.9%	32.1%	-
Face to Face	13/14	11.7%	5.0%	5.0%	9.3%
	14/15	6.0%	7.9%	8.3%	-
Social Media	13/14	0.0%	0.6%	0.06%	0.0%
	14/15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-