



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Overview and Audit Committee, 8 November 2023

Report title: 2022/23 Compliments, Concerns and Complaints

Lead Member: Councillor Adoh, People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance

Report sponsor: Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance

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Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the report be noted.

Executive summary:

The purpose of this report is to:

- Compare concerns, complaints, and compliments data across the three years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- Advise of any corrective action taken to reduce or remove problems that led to a complaint being made.
- Identify opportunities to improve public perception of the services Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service provides.

It includes details of the complaints that were upheld, corrective action taken to reduce or remove the problem and improve public satisfaction with the services we provide.

Financial implications: Whilst there are costs associated with investigating complaints, the cost associated with corrective action continues to be small as issues of liability are thoroughly investigated and, if appropriate, referred to the Authority's insurance provider. Reserves are held in the event of a serious incident occurring.

Risk management: The public are encouraged to report concerns or complaints and, if required, are given assistance to do so. Processes are in place to ensure that concerns and complaints are rigorously investigated, resolved as quickly as possible and, wherever possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant.

During the complaint investigation personal data is retained to enable the investigating officer to keep in contact with the complainant. A Data Protection Impact Assessment has been completed to ensure that no aspect of the

investigations is privacy intrusive. When the investigation is complete and sufficient time has passed to confirm no further action is required, all personal data is removed, and the anonymised data is retained to consider any patterns of risk. If a complaint is upheld and actions to prevent a similar incident occurring cannot be put in place immediately, the need for a risk treatment will be recorded in a project or department risk register and may be escalated to the corporate risk register. These risk registers are reviewed frequently.

Legal implications: Under section 25 of the Local Government Act 1974 the Authority is subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO).

The LG&SCO has the power to investigate complaints where there has been:

- Maladministration causing injustice;
- A failure to provide a service that it was the public body's function to provide;
- There was a total failure to provide such a service.

Complaints will not be investigated by the LG&SCO until a complainant has exhausted a local authority's internal complaints procedure.

Privacy and security implications: Responses to the After the incident survey (ATI) are anonymised so no privacy risks or issues are raised.

Duty to collaborate: The Policing and Crime Act 2017 requires the Authority to keep opportunities for collaboration with the police and ambulance services under review. Complaints could arise from any of several business projects, processes, or procedures. Many of these have been developed in collaboration with other fire and rescue services or other partner agencies. During development and through to implementation, these are risk and impact assessed to reduce incidents that may lead to complaints arising. The LG&SCO can treat the actions of third parties as if they were actions of the Authority, where any such third-party arrangements exist (Local Government Act 1974, section 25(6) to 25(8)). This means the Authority keep responsibility for third party actions, including complaint handling, no matter what the arrangements are with that party.

Health and safety implications: Any actual or potential health and safety implications are considered during the investigation of a complaint and reported in line with current procedures.

Environmental implications: There is neutral effect from the recommendations.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: Any actual or potential equality, diversity, and inclusion implications are considered during the investigation of a complaint.

The ATI survey is structured to enable user experiences to be stratified and compared across a range of protected characteristics including ethnicity, gender, age, and long-standing limiting illness / disability.

Consultation and communication: Monitoring of user experiences of our emergency services performance and the reporting of findings contributes to the identification of potential opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our core emergency response, prevention, and protection processes.

In line with the recommendations in the LG&SCO Guidance, '[Effective Complaint Handling for Local Authorities](#)' (revised and published 8 October 2020), this report is submitted annually to this committee and available to the public in the interests of openness and transparency.

Background papers: The last report was made to the Overview and Audit Committee on 09 November 2022: <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/10/oa-091122-item-8.pdf/>

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Compliments, Concerns and Complaints received 2021/22 – 2022/23	None

Appendix 1

Compliments, Concerns and Complaints received 2020/21 – 2022/23

1. Purpose

This purpose of this report is to:

- compare concerns, complaints, and compliments data across the three years 2020/21; 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- advise of any corrective action taken to reduce or remove problems that led to a complaint being made.
- identify opportunities to improve public satisfaction with the services the Authority provides.

It includes details of the complaints that were upheld, corrective action taken to reduce or remove the problem and improve public satisfaction with the services we provide.

2. Scope

As the numbers of concerns, complaints and compliments received directly from the public is low, data from the annual satisfaction survey 'After the Incident' is also included, to capture the perceptions of those experiencing an incident in the home or in non-domestic premises.

3. Concerns and complaints

There were no complaints relating to:

Attendance Times, Incident handling or Call handling.

Complaints in regard to information security, freedom of information requests and fire safety are dealt with separately within Service and are not included in this report.

There were no complaints investigated by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) or the Information Commissioner, during this reporting period.

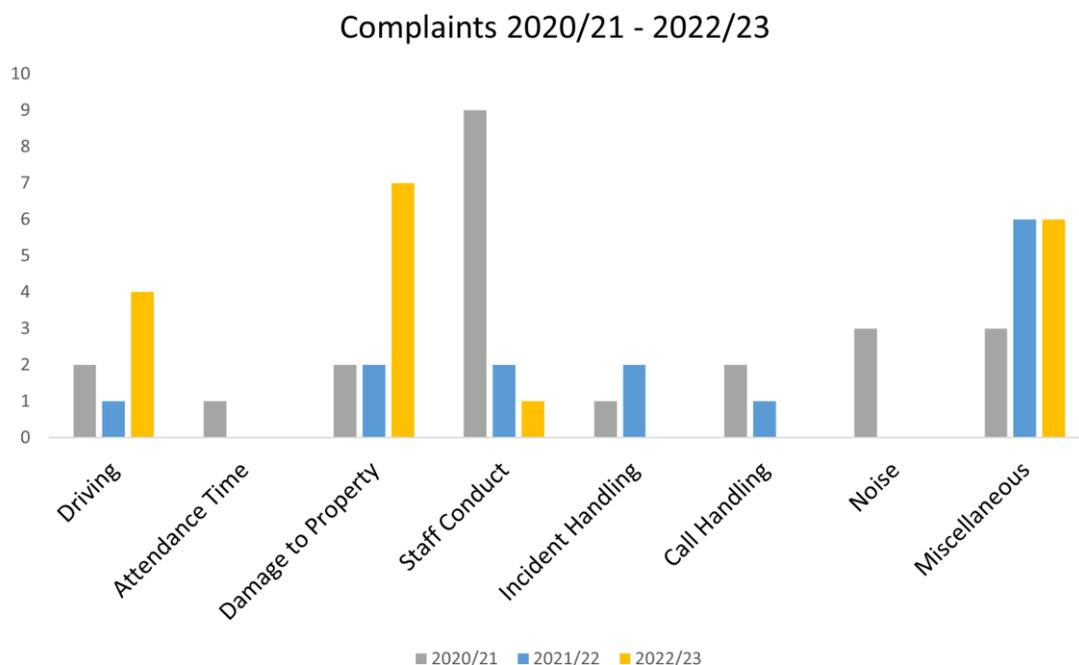
2020/2021 There were 24, concerns/complaints five of which were upheld:

- Damage to a neighbouring property driveway by a fire appliance following a house fire – *cost of repair of damage paid under a settlement agreement.*
- Complaint from neighbour regarding training at a Fire Station on a Sunday – *training continued, but every effort was made to keep the noise to a minimum.*
- A member of the public was not happy with the way a member of staff spoke to them when ringing regarding smoke detectors – *a letter of apology was sent explaining the situation.*
- Damage to car when taking action to avoid a fire appliance on blue lights – *Insurance claim.*
- A vehicle accident involving a fire appliance – *Insurance claim.*

Appendix 1

2021/2022 There were 14 concerns/complaints 2 of which were upheld:

- Smoke entered neighbouring property whilst training within an empty property – *Crews to notify neighbours of use of smoke during training exercises in empty properties.*
- Catering food rubbish from large scale exercise was placed in business recycling bin without permission. As a result refuse providers refused collection - *Ensure all rubbish from future large-scale exercises is disposed of in the correct manner.*



2022/2023 There were 18 concerns/complaints 3 of which were upheld:

- BFRS vehicle blocked access to resident's driveway and was disrespectful when asked to move it.

Complaint upheld. Individual was spoken to, and an apology issued.

- Near miss with Fire appliance on blue lights.

Complaint upheld. Driver and Incident Commander spoken to apology issued to complainant.

- Fire appliance damaged hedge at the front of property.

Complaint upheld. Driver and Incident Commander spoken to, complainant happy with outcome and would ask his gardener to look at the damage to his hedge. No further action was taken.

Appendix 1

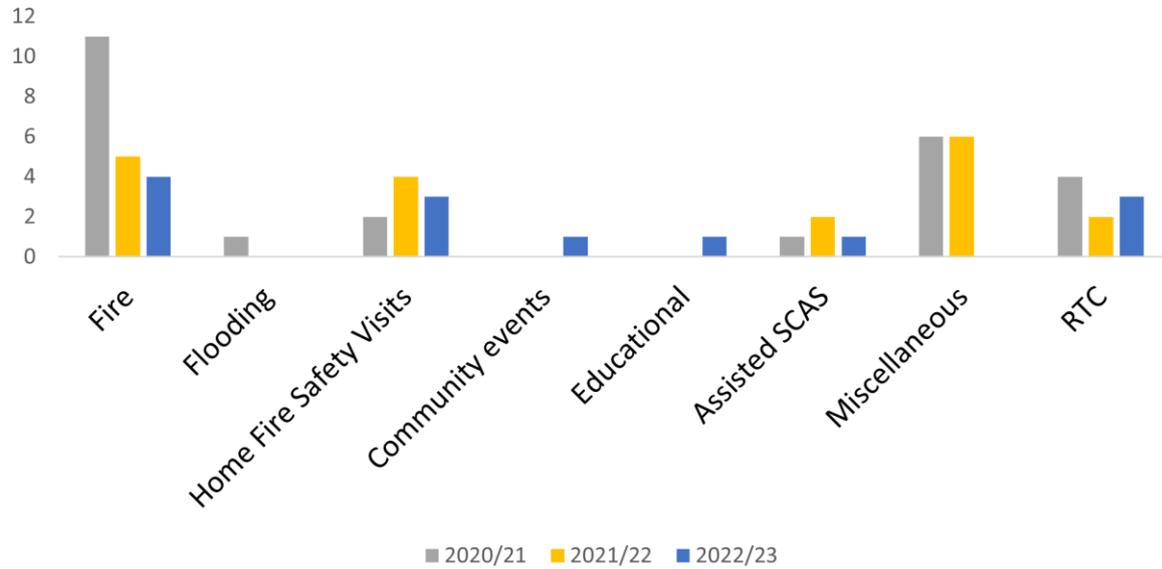
4. Compliments

2020/2021 - 25 compliments

2021/2022 - 19 compliments

2022/2023 - 13 compliments

Compliments 2020/21 - 2022/23



Appendix 1

5. After the incident - Customer satisfaction survey 2020/21- 2022/23

The survey runs from 1 April to 31 March each year and the report compares Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services' (BFRS) performance with previous years and other fire and rescue services (FRS) participating in this national survey. The surveys capture respondent perceptions of FRS performance across the following areas:

- The incident;
- At the scene;
- Information and advice;
- Overall service;
- Previous experience;

Respondents are also invited to make an overall assessment of satisfaction with the service provided.

These surveys are a good indication of how well the community is served when an incident occurs, and a useful supplement to the compliments, concerns, and complaints, received from other sources, to provide a broader range of feedback.

The questionnaires are returned to an independent social research practice¹ who analyse the returns and publish the results annually.

Table 1 Domestic incidents 2020/21 – 2022/23

Domestic	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Respondents	207	144*	23**
Very Satisfied	94%	94%	87%
Fairly Satisfied	4%	3%	13%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	2%	1%	0
Fairly dissatisfied	0	1%	0
Total Satisfied:	98%	97%	100%

*15 of which were completed online.

** see overview of key findings

¹ <https://www.ors.org.uk/>

Appendix 1

The list below reflects some of the comments submitted by people completing the survey of incidents in the home:

- Efficient, thorough, and polite.
- Fitted a temporary alarm until the Main's wired detector was installed.
- Followed up with a 'after service' house call.
- Looked after me as I had been burned.
- Very reassuring and sensitive as I had my 2.5-year-old daughter with me when the accident happened.
- Very reassuring, especially when I said I have anxiety and easily panic.
- Taking my mental state into consideration during the incident.

Table 2 Non-domestic incidents 2020/21 – 2022/23

Non-Domestic	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Respondents	106	72	18
Very Satisfied	94%	92%	83%
Fairly Satisfied	5%	7%	6%
Very Dissatisfied	1%	1%	6%
Total:	99%	99%	89%

Below are some of the comments submitted by people completing the survey of incidents in non-domestic properties:

- Fantastic communication and approachable. One designated officer was a welcome touch to reassure and have 1 point of contact/communications.
- Really helpful in liaising with the lift engineer, advising staff and calming the customers who were stuck in the lift.
- The FRS made everything safe and were very reassuring, caring and dealt with the incident very professionally.
- Worked well with our onsite emergency response team.

Overview of Key Findings

- Overall user satisfaction with the emergency service received from BFRS has remained fairly consistent over time, ranging between 95% and 100% for the domestic survey and 89% and 100% for the non-domestic survey.

Appendix 1

- Due to capacity issues within the Public Safety Administration Team, and the need to prioritise the scheduling of Home Fire Safety Visits to address recommendations made in relation to a Cause of Concern raised by the HMICFRS, After The Incident Survey ('ATIS') forms were not distributed for much of the year. As a result there was a very substantial reduction in the number of completed survey forms returned to Opinion Research Services for analysis :
 - Only 23 responses to the Domestic survey were received in 2022/23 compared with 144 for the previous year.
 - Only 18 responses to the non-Domestic survey were received in 2022/23 compared with 72 for the previous year.
- Although the very low number of returns reduces the statistical significance of the survey findings, overall satisfaction levels remain broadly within the range of findings for previous years (100% for the domestic and 89% for the non-domestic surveys respectively).
- Benchmarking – not enough Fire and Rescue Services took part in the survey for a benchmarking report to be produced for 2022/23.
- Distribution of the ATIS questionnaires, which measure the satisfaction of members of the public who have experienced an incident in the home or in a non-domestic dwelling, have been suspended, and the ORS Survey subscription has not been renewed, pending the availability of sufficient resources to resume administration of the survey.
- There is the potential to automate parts of the current manual process of survey administration. However, there is limited capacity to do this is currently due to other higher priority activities such as the preparation of the 2025-30 CRMP.