



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**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.

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## **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.

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**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