



Environment & Transport Select Committee
30 June 2011

Update on Community Recycling Centre performance

Purpose of the report: Policy Development and Review

This is an officer report to provide an update to the Environment and Transport Select Committee on the performance of and developments at Surrey's Community Recycling Centres (CRCs).

Introduction:

1. Surrey County Council provides 15 CRCs where the public may deposit their waste and recycling. The sites are operated by SITA Surrey on behalf of Surrey County Council. In 2010/11 members of the public brought around 134,000 tonnes of waste to the CRCs, which equates to 28% of the total municipal waste collected in Surrey. It is estimated that members of the public make over 2.5 million visits to the centres each year.
2. This provides an update on improvements made and also outlines the current performance of the sites.

Van Permit Scheme

3. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires waste disposal authorities such as Surrey County Council to provide places where residents can dispose of their own household waste free of charge, and that those places should be reasonably accessible to residents. The Act is not prescriptive and allows local authorities to provide facilities as they see fit. Surrey County Council has not explicitly defined how reasonably accessible CRCs should be.
4. In February 2009 The Executive agreed to introduce a van and trailer permit scheme to monitor their usage at the CRCs.
5. In April 2010 the scheme was implemented across all CRCs. The purpose of the scheme is to prevent the use of the Community Recycling Centres by traders and reduce the amount of non-household trade waste that is brought to the sites. Householders wishing to use

the CRC's with a van or large trailer are required to obtain a free permit before using the site. Permits can be obtained by applying on-line or by telephoning the council's contact centre and are issued free of charge. Permits are only issued to Surrey householders and the use of permits is monitored. Similar systems are in place at many other recycling centres in England.

6. Since the scheme began, over 18,000 permits have been created. Of the total, 11,500 permits have been created by residents using the website application and 6,500 have been created over the telephone by the Contact Centre. No charge can be levied, as the permits are provided for the disposal of household waste only. Surrey County Council officers feel that charging for household waste is unlawful. This is because section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that disposal authorities must provide places for their residents to dispose of household waste and that the disposal of their household waste at these places should be free. However earlier this year Somerset began to charge an entry fee of up to £2 at four of their sites to avoid having to close them. Somerset initially consulted with residents regarding the possible closure of the sites and residents indicated that they would pay to use them. Somerset changed the name of the four sites to differentiate between the statutory free disposal facilities and the new chargeable recycling sites. The charging system was introduced in April 2011 and even though there have been 250 complaints; there have been no legal challenges as yet.
7. Surrey County Council residents are also able to complete and generate their van permit online without any contact with SCC officers. This amounts to an avoided cost of £83,000 per annum by using web-based permit system rather than the contact centre telephone based system. Savings of £30,000 - £50,000 were also made by developing the Blackberry application in house, rather than contracting out.
8. Surrey County Council is the first authority to use this kind of technology to monitor usage of sites by commercial type vehicles. The system was nominated for a Local Government award for the IT initiative of the year. The government funded Waste Recycling Action Programme (WRAP) is also promoting Surrey County Council's electronic permit system to other County Councils as an example of best practice.
9. Users of vans and trailers have made 23,000 visits to the sites since the scheme was introduced. A summary of visits by site since March 2010 is shown below.

| Site | Town | Visits |
|----------------|-------------|---------------|
| Blenheim Road | Epsom | 2606 |
| Bond Road | Warlingham | 546 |
| Bourne Mill | Farnham | 1070 |
| Chaldon Road | Caterham | 685 |
| Charlton Lane | Shepperton | 1650 |
| Elmbridge Road | Cranleigh | 1633 |

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Horley Road | Redhill | 857 |
| Lyne Lane | Chertsey | 1738 |
| Martyrs Lane | Woking | 604 |
| Petworth Road | Witley | 1859 |
| Randalls Road | Leatherhead | 1932 |
| Ranmore Road | Dorking | 1012 |
| Slyfield | Guildford | 4222 |
| Swift Lane | Bagshot | 1002 |
| Wilton Road | Camberley | 1304 |
| | Grand Total | 22720 |

10. 90% of users have made 5 or less visits to the sites whilst 3% of users have made more than 10 visits in the last year.
11. The permit scheme combined with other controls acts as a preventative measure to reduce the amount of non-household waste entering the sites by improving controls on commercial type vehicles, and has helped to contribute towards a 9,000-ton reduction in waste arising at the CRCs during 2010/2011. If this waste entered the CRCs and was landfilled, it would have cost the county £750,000.
12. The permit scheme cost £100,000 to set up (£76,000 of this was SCC staff time in IT and the Contact Centre). The scheme costs £33,000 per year to maintain (£23,000 of this relates to ongoing Contact Centre staffing costs for telephone applications).
13. The site visit data that is being collected will be used to develop a reasonable usage policy for the van permit scheme. Most other authorities ask residents to apply for a permit every time they visit a CRC, or the permit issued may only be valid for a limited number of visits. SCC permits are electronic and open-ended to avoid costs associated with repeat applications. However, a reasonable usage policy should be introduced to allow SCC to investigate where it suspects that individuals may be abusing the system. Officers are working with legal services to develop a reasonable usage policy and this will be the subject of a further report to the select committee in due course.

Construction Waste Policy

14. In common with many other authorities, the council places restrictions on how construction waste may be brought to the CRC's. Since 1998 Surrey County Council has adopted a policy that allows residents to bring construction waste in their cars but not in vans and trailers. The policy is set out on Surrey County Council's website.
15. Construction waste is defined as any waste that arises from home improvements or DIY and includes items such as kitchen/bathroom fittings, fitted units, flooring, bricks, earth, plaster, fencing and sheds.

16. The Council's legal obligations to provide CRC's are set out in two separate pieces of legislation.
1. The Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978
 2. The Environmental Protection Act 1990
17. The 1990 Act does not require the Council to accept construction waste at its CRC's even if it is from a private home.
18. The 1978 Act places no restrictions on the type of waste that can be deposited at the CRC's however the Council's legal officers consider that the Council's policy of allowing residents to deposit their construction waste using a car but not a van or trailer is reasonable and lawful.
19. In June 2010 an individual made a complaint to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) that Surrey County Council were failing to comply with the 1978 Act by introducing restrictions on the acceptance of construction waste at the CRC's.
20. In February 2011 the Council was advised by Defra that the Minister had considered this complaint and had concluded that Surrey County Council was meeting its statutory obligations under the 1978 Act.
21. Defra has decided to repeal section 1 of the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978. It plans on the repeal coming into force during April 2012. Defra will shortly be issuing a statement to this effect on its website along with a draft of the Commencement Order that would enact the repeal. The repeal will remove the potential for differing interpretations of what waste disposal authorities must accept for free at their CRCs, as described in sections 17 and 18 above.
22. Sita Surrey sets charges for construction waste brought to the sites.
23. Many authorities in the UK operate restrictions on construction waste at their sites. Details of neighbouring authority policies and effects on tonnages of construction waste received at their sites during 2009/2010 are shown in the table below.

| Authority | Policy | Total Tonnes | Rubble Tonnes | % Rubble | Kg/hd Rubble |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Kent | None | 190,540 | 43,473 | 23% | 31 |
| Medway | None | 28,535 | 6,265 | 22% | 25 |
| West Sussex | One boot load per visit | 136,579 | 23,386 | 17% | 30 |
| Hampshire | On boot load per month | 229,115 | 37,685 | 16% | 22 |
| Brighton and Hove | One boot load per month | 20,471 | 3,208 | 16% | 13 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------|--------|-----|----|
| Surrey | Accepted in cars only | 143,292 | 15,313 | 11% | 14 |
| East Sussex | One boot load per month | 58,568 | 6,122 | 10% | 12 |

24. Controls on construction waste at CRCs can have a marked effect on tonnage entering the sites. Surrey currently has strong controls in place. Relaxing these controls could put the Council at risk of increased construction waste entering the sites from businesses and from other authority areas.

25. It is important to note that construction waste cannot be counted towards Surrey County Council's recycling rates.

Provision of recycling centres

26. Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires Surrey County Council to provide places for residents to dispose of their household waste for free. Those places should be in Surrey and should be reasonably accessible to residents.

27. Surrey County Council has 15 recycling centres. A table comparing site provision with neighbouring authorities in the southeast is shown below. Surrey County Council's provision of sites is comparable to surrounding authorities like West Sussex, Kent and Hampshire.

| Authority | Number of Sites | Population Mid 2009 | Thousand residents per site |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| East Sussex | 12 | 512,088 | 43 |
| Hampshire | 26 | 1,721,878 | 66 |
| West Sussex | 11 | 781,500 | 71 |
| Surrey | 15 | 1,098,200 | 73 |
| Kent | 18 | 1,394,700 | 77 |
| Medway | 3 | 249,488 | 83 |
| Brighton and Hove | 2 | 253,500 | 127 |

28. The table below shows the average distance from towns in Surrey to the nearest Community Recycling Centre. Distances and driving times were calculated using AA Route finder and Google Maps.

| District/Borough | Town | Nearest Site | Distance (miles) | Time (minutes) |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Waverley | Haslemere | Witley | 7 | 13 |
| | Farnham | Farnham | 1 | 2 |
| | Godalming | Witley | 3 | 10 |
| | Cranleigh | Nanhurst | 2 | 4 |
| Guildford | Guildford | Guildford | 3 | 7 |
| Woking | Woking | Woking | 3 | 8 |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------|---|----|
| Surrey Heath | Camberley | Camberley | 1 | 4 |
| Runnymede | Egham | Lyne | 4 | 10 |
| Elmbridge | Weybridge | Charlton Lane | 4 | 10 |
| | Walton on Thames | Charlton Lane | 2 | 7 |
| | Esher | Charlton Lane | 5 | 16 |
| | Cobham | Leatherhead | 4 | 7 |
| Spelthorne | Ashford | Charlton Lane | 3 | 7 |
| | Staines | Charlton Lane | 5 | 13 |
| | Sunbury | Charlton Lane | 2 | 6 |
| Mole Valley | Leatherhead | Leatherhead | 1 | 5 |
| | Dorking | Dorking | 2 | 5 |
| Reigate and Banstead | Reigate | Earlswood | 3 | 9 |
| | Redhill | Earlswood | 1 | 3 |
| | Horley | Earlswood | 4 | 9 |
| | Banstead | Epsom | 4 | 15 |
| Tandridge | Caterham | Caterham | 1 | 3 |
| | Warlingham | Warlingham | 0 | 1 |
| | Oxted | Warlingham | 6 | 12 |
| Epsom | Ewell | Epsom CRC | 2 | 8 |
| | Epsom | Epsom CRC | 1 | 5 |

29. Most main centres of population in Surrey are no more than 15 minutes away from the nearest recycling centre. It is the Waste and Sustainability Department's view that this network of facilities satisfies the requirement to make sites available and reasonably accessible to residents in Surrey.
30. The network of CRCs has been largely in place since the 1970s when SCC acquired responsibility for waste disposal. A programme of site upgrades is still continuing, as part of the Council world class waste solution to increase recycling.
31. In addition to the 15 CRCs, Surrey County Council also pays for Waverley Borough Council refuse trucks to attend Haslemere car park every Saturday to accept general waste from residents. This is because SCC closed the Haslemere CRC in the 1980s on the condition that it then provided the Haslemere dustcart service. Subsequently there has been the provision of the dustcart service on this basis. Waverley BC supplement this service with a truck for garden waste and some bring banks located in the car park. Surrey County Council pay almost £40,000 per annum for the hire of the refuse trucks.
32. Surrey County Council performed an analysis on waste collected at Haslemere and almost half of the rubbish put in the truck was black bag waste. Half of the waste in the black bags was food waste.
33. Waste management was subject to a Public Value Review (PVR) in 2010 and the report made a recommendation concerning the future of the Haslemere dustcart service. The PVR had a specific focus on efficiencies and cost savings. Subsequently it considered the provision of the service in Haslemere. The report proposed that the service be

discontinued primarily because of it costs 5 times as much to handle waste as a CRC. This decision has been contested and officers are investigating suitable replacement services.

Current performance of the Community Recycling Centres

34. In 2009/10 the total amount of waste brought to the sites reduced by 6% compared to 2008/9. A further reduction of 6% is projected between 2009/10 and 2010/11. The van permit and resident schemes, and improvements to operations onsite have contributed to this reduction in tonnage (18,000 tonnes over two years). It is the Waste and Sustainability Department's view that this diverted tonnage comprises, in part, waste from other Council areas outside of Surrey County Council and trade waste, and that this waste would have been disposed of by other Councils and private operators. Fly tipping in Surrey has reduced over the past two years according to the Environment Agency fly tipping database. As a result, officers believe that the reduction in waste at the CRCs did not lead to increased fly tipping across the county.
35. However, the average recycling rate across the Community Recycling Centres during 2010/2011 is 57%, compared to 64% in 2009/2010.
36. Among contributing factors such as the increasing cost of fuel deterring residents from making a trip to the CRCs and using kerbside services instead, officers have identified two other reasons for the reduction in recycling performance at the CRCs. Firstly a retrospective change by Defra in the classification of recycling affected green waste collected at the Community Recycling Centres and by District and Borough Councils at the kerbside. Surrey has resolved this problem by ensuring all green waste is sent to facilities that comply with the Defra guidance.
37. Secondly there have been difficulties in finding wood recycling markets following changes in landfill tax legislation.
38. Around 12% of material brought to Community Recycling Centres, comprises waste wood. Of this material, only a small fraction is clean wood which is suitable for recycling and the remaining material comprises painted or treated timber, chipboard, MDF and composite material such as chipboard with plastic laminate coating. At present recycling markets only exist for clean wood and the 'dirty' wood is processed and turned into a woodchip fuel and sent for energy recovery in biomass combustion plants in Sweden.
39. The Wood Recyclers Association and many wood processors strongly argue that waste wood processed to a specification into woodchip for fuel is recycling. However, the Environment Agency disagree and say that wood recycled into fuel and then sent for energy recovery in a biomass plant cannot be counted towards the Council's recycling target. It can however be classed as recovery.
40. Some other authorities send their wood waste to companies that 'mix' their waste with clean commercial wood waste and then claim a much

higher proportion of this material is recycled. Officers have discussed this with Defra officials who have advised that this practice is not acceptable. Other authorities have been contacted by the Environment Agency and advised that the practice is not acceptable.

41. Over the past few months SITA Surrey have started to separate clean and dirty wood at the Community Recycling Centres, either by providing a separate container for each material or by taking the mixed material to a sorting facility. This will enable a small proportion of wood waste to count towards Surrey's recycling target.
42. Officers are currently working with Sita to establish the composition of the residual waste at the CRCs with a view to improving recycling levels further. Officers are also conducting a joint evaluation with Sita to ensure the CRCs maximise their contribution towards county wide recycling targets.
43. Sita are also reviewing staffing levels to ensure adequate staffing is provided at peak and quieter times to ensure recycling performance is maximised.

Extended Opening Hours – pilot

44. In February 2011 a pilot scheme was approved to extend opening hours (during the summer period) at two Community Recycling Centres, one in the east of the county (Earlwood, Redhill) and one in the west of the county (Wilton Road, Camberley).
45. The aim of the pilot scheme is to ease congestion over the summer period particularly at weekends, which then in turn will enable increased recycling, reduce the level of fly tipping and improve customer satisfaction.
46. Currently during summer opening hours the sites close at 17.15 on weekdays and 14.45 at weekends. During the pilot scheme the sites will open until 19.30, Monday to Sunday.
47. The pilot commenced on 1st April 2011 and ends 30th September 2011. A publicity campaign has been developed to ensure that the improvement in service is communicated to residents, with a view to maximising use of the trial sites during the extended opening hours, which officers hope will reduce congestion, enable increased recycling, reduce levels of fly tipping and improve customer satisfaction.
48. Automated Traffic Counters (ATCs) have been installed at both sites to count the traffic entering the sites for the duration of the trial. These results will be summarised and reported following the end of the trial to enable a decision to be taken regarding any long-term implementation.

Customer service

49. The introduction by SITA Surrey of a training scheme and recycling incentives for staff has resulted in better quality of service for Community Recycling Centre users. This has led to an improvement of user satisfaction levels in the 2010/11 SCC Joint Neighbourhood Survey compared with previous years. The first 6 months of 2011 show improved satisfaction levels of 82% compared with 78% in 2009/10 and 74% in 2008/09.
50. The sites receive over 2.5 million visitors every year. However, complaints do not usually exceed 30 each month. This means we receive one complaint for every 7,000 visits to the sites. A summary of complaints, complements and comments for 2010/2011 up to February 2011 is attached as an appendix. Complaints are highest when the sites are at their busiest in spring and summer.

CRC Redevelopment programme

51. The CRC redevelopment programme is aimed at improving service and recycling levels by identifying new sites to replace smaller congested ones, and to upgrade existing sites. A programme of conversion of many of the CRC's into modern split-level recycling centres is currently underway. The purpose of the redevelopments is to improve safety, reducing queuing and provide additional space for more recycling containers. Redevelopments to date include:
- a. Lyne Lane, Chertsey
 - b. Blenheim Road, Epsom
 - c. Earlswood, Redhill
 - d. Charlton Lane, Shepperton
 - e. Martyrs Lane, Woking
52. Further redevelopments are planned to take place at the following sites:
- a. Randalls Road, Leatherhead
 - b. Petworth Road, Witley (expansion and improvement)
 - c. Bond Road, Tandridge (Relocate)
 - d. Swift Lane, Bagshot (Relocate)

Conclusions:

Financial and value for money implications

CRC operations, including the redevelopment programme are provided for within the Council's waste management budget.

Equalities Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken for the Community Recycling Centres has identified positive benefits in improving the accessibility of sites

by creating split level sites and removing the need to climb steps to access recycling containers.

Environmental Impact

Reducing waste, recycling and diverting it from landfill has positive environmental benefits.

Risk Management Implications

The performance of the Community Recycling Centres is closely monitored and to ensure as much waste as possible is diverted from landfill.

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy/Local Area Agreement Targets

Reduction of waste arisings, increase in recycling and diversion of waste from landfill are priorities for the Council.

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| Recommendations: |
|-------------------------|

Officers request that the report is noted and that the Select Committee reviews the CRC service again in six months.

Report contact:

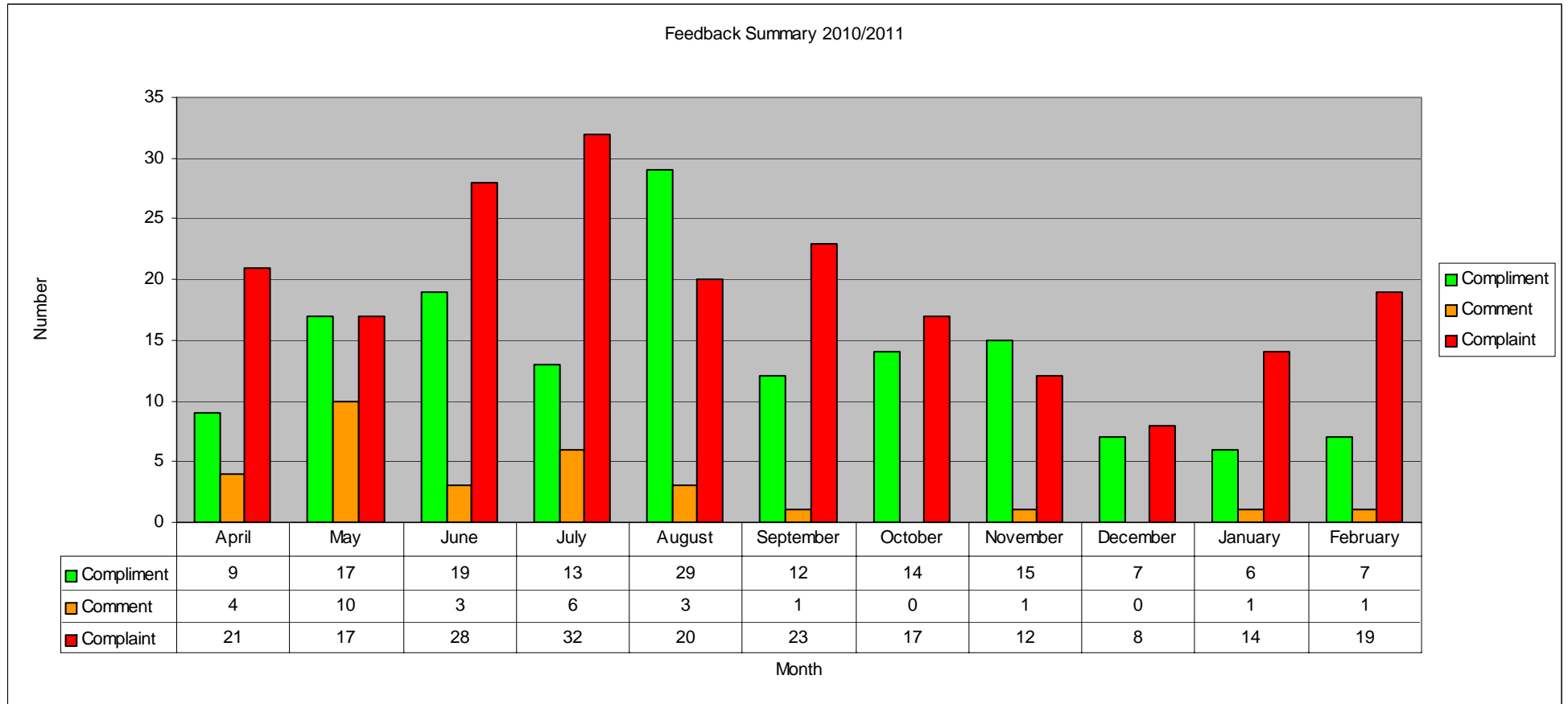
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| Feedback Summary 2010/2011 | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | January | February | Total |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Compliment | 9 | 17 | 19 | 13 | 29 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 148 |
| Comment | 4 | 10 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 30 |
| Complaint | 21 | 17 | 28 | 32 | 20 | 23 | 17 | 12 | 8 | 14 | 19 | 211 |
| Total | 34 | 44 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 36 | 31 | 28 | 15 | 21 | 27 | 389 |



| Complaints Breakdown 2010/2011 | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | January | February | Total |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|----------|-------|
| Home Improvement Waste Policy | 8 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 38 |
| Staff Attitude/ Helpfulness | 3 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 57 |
| Recycling | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Residency Scheme | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Van Permit | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 26 |
| Infrastructure | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 17 |
| Other | 4 | 2 | 11 | 13 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 62 |