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3 September 2025

**Chair: Councillor R Holloway
Vice-Chair: Councillor P Rainbow**

Members of the Committee:

**Councillor D Darby
Councillor J Hall
Councillor P Harris
Councillor S Haynes
Councillor J Kellas**

**Councillor D Moore
Councillor P Peacock
Councillor M Pringle
Councillor M Shakeshaft**

Substitutes

**Councillor L Brazier
Councillor R Cozens
Councillor L Dales
Councillor A Freeman
Councillor K Roberts
Councillor M Spoors
Councillor T Thompson
Councillor T Wildgust**

MEETING:	Governance, General Purposes & Local Government Reorganisation Committee
DATE:	Thursday, 11 September 2025 at 6.00 pm
VENUE:	Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY
<p>You are hereby requested to attend the above Meeting to be held at the time/place and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business on the Agenda as overleaf.</p> <p>If you have any queries please contact Helen Brandham on Helen.brandham@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk.</p>	

AGENDA

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1. Notification to those present that the meeting will be recorded and streamed online
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Declarations of Interest from Members and Officers

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

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Note Fire Alarm Evacuation

In the event of an alarm sounding please evacuate the building using the nearest fire exit in the Civic Suite. You should assemble at the designated fire assembly point located in the rear car park and remain there until the Fire Service arrive and advise it is safe to return into the building



Report to: Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee – 11 September 2025

Director Lead: John Robinson, Chief Executive, Ext. 5200

Lead Officer: Carina Tona, Transformation and Service Improvement Officer, Ext. 5258

Report Summary	
Report Title	Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
Purpose of Report	To provide Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee with an update on the Government's requirement for local government reorganisation, including the work being undertaken to develop option 1e as a final proposal(s) for submission in November 2025.
Recommendations	<p>That the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee note the progress update, in line with their role to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) oversee the plans for, and impact of, Local Government Reorganisation within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire; andb) liaise with and advise the Council's Cabinet, Audit & Accounts Committee, Policy & Performance Improvement Committee and other committees so all Members are kept informed and provide an opportunity for them to input their views on LGR.

1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 At a meeting on 15 July, Full Council were asked to consider the independent options appraisal and summary document from PwC UK.
- 1.2 PwC's independent appraisal concluded that options 1b and 1e both met the Government's criteria and "that the differences between options 1b and 1e within each criteria are marginal".
- 1.3 At this meeting and approved by Cabinet, Newark & Sherwood District Council identified Option 1e as its preferred approach and is now working towards submitting this proposal to the Government by 28 November 2025. Under this option, two brand new unitary Councils serving the whole of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire will be created:
 - One new unitary Council that includes Nottingham City, Broxtowe and Rushcliffe; plus

- One new unitary Council that includes Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling and Mansfield.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered: Developing the business case

2.1 Governance and Programme Management

On 4 August 2025, after respective Council decision making, the Leaders of Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood, Gedling, and Bassetlaw issued a joint statement formally expressing their support for Option 1e in the LGR process.

Nottinghamshire Wide LGR Group

All Nottinghamshire Councils continue to collaborate, despite having different preferences. Ashfield and Nottinghamshire County Council have yet to formally declare their positions and Nottingham City Council are currently exploring a new two unitary option that was not part of the agreed Interim Plan. Rushcliffe Borough Council has agreed to submit a final proposal in support of option 1b and while Broxtowe Borough Council is opposed to LGR, it has expressed a marginal preference for option 1e.

Regardless of the preference all councils have continued to work together as collaboratively as possible; including regular communication and regular meetings.

Option 1e Project Board

A Programme Board was established, with Mansfield's Chief Executive confirmed as the CEO sponsor. As outlined above, the board comprises Chief Executives alongside colleagues responsible for LGR programme management within their respective councils, as well as senior officers in their role as workstream leads (see Section 2.2 for further details on workstreams). The board held its initial meeting on 14 August and will continue fortnightly in the run-up to the business case submission in November.

2.2 Workstreams

The workstreams operate under the Programme Board and have representation from the councils involved in Option 1e. There are five workstreams in total, with workstreams four and six combined, reflecting the government's criteria for LGR. Each workstream has a range of officers involved and a lead senior officer responsible for collating their outcomes for the business case, liaising with the board. The workstreams are expected to report their outcomes by the end of September. The criteria and workstreams are as follows:

1. Single Tier of Government
2. Improve Efficiencies and Capacity
3. High Quality and Sustainable Public Services
4. Meeting local needs and informed by local views
(Stronger community engagement and opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment)
5. Structures that support devolution arrangements

2.3 Public Engagement

In the criteria set out from the Secretary of State, the fourth criteria outlines that “proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.”.

Each council is responsible for determining how best to engage with its communities. In Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, all nine councils are working collaboratively to gather public views on the future structure of local government through a shared engagement survey.

The survey aims are to:

- **Improve Public Awareness:** Help people understand the implications of local government reorganisation on a personal, local, and regional level.
- **Gather Public Input:** Ensure residents and stakeholders have equal opportunity to express views, to support the LGR transition.
- **Ensure Representation:** Make sure all voices are heard, including those in rural and urban areas, as well as hard-to-reach populations.
- **Strengthen Decision-Making:** Provide valuable insights for shaping final proposals ahead of submission, and plan for the best possible transition for LGR.

The Survey

The survey has been conducted with support from Public Perspectives, an independent organisation that works with local councils and communities. [The survey](#) launched on 4 August for 6 weeks (closes 14 September). It is open to anyone who lives, works, or has an interest in the area.

LGR Dedicated Website

The survey is being promoted through a neutral joint Nottingham and Nottinghamshire [dedicated LGR website](#). It serves as the central hub for all public-facing information related to the reorganisation, such as to key documents, FAQs, and updates about the LGR process as the process evolves, including timelines and council decisions. The website is part of a broader communications strategy that includes branding to clearly identify the joint initiative, and to support engagement activities across the whole region.

The Results

The feedback from this survey will help shape and will be clearly evidenced in the final proposal. This coordinated effort is designed to demonstrate to the Government that local authorities have actively sought and considered the perspectives of key stakeholders.

Government Consultation

In addition to this, following submission of final plans in November, the Government will carefully consider all proposals and carry out formal statutory consultation before implementing any plans.

2.4 **Updating our Staff**

From the outset, we have prioritised keeping colleagues informed as the details of LGR have emerged. We recognise that the process may feel daunting and create uncertainty. To support everyone through this period of change, we have focused on clear, consistent communication. This includes outlining the Council's role in the LGR proposal, explaining the timeline, and providing opportunities for staff to ask questions and about the next steps. The following outlines some of the ways we have approached this so far:

- Emails and Newsletter Updates
One off all staff email and a fortnightly newsletter, with an introduction from the Chief Executive are effective to communicate updates on decisions, activities and provide signposting.
- Staff Roadshows
The staff roadshows held in February 2025 provided an early opportunity to outline LGR, present a brief overview, and facilitate a Q&A session. The 2026 staff roadshows will be a timely opportunity to place a strong focus on LGR again offering staff the chance to hear updates, ask questions, and engage directly with the Council's plans and progress.
- Dedicated LGR Hub
In August 2025, a dedicated hub was launched on the intranet to support staff in understanding the changes related to LGR. It provides a clear timeline, addresses common concerns through FAQs, and signposts how staff can share their views. The hub is actively maintained and will be updated as new developments arise.
- Drop-in sessions
All staff are invited to attend a drop-in session presentation with the Chief Executive during August and September 2025, either in person or online. They will be held at two locations: Castle House and Brunel Drive. These sessions offer an opportunity to hear directly about the latest developments in LGR, ask questions, and share feedback. To ensure accessibility, one of the sessions will be recorded and made available to any staff unable to attend.

2.5 Furthermore, the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee are asked to note that the following activities are underway too:

- External support on crucial services commissioned
- Visioning exercise undertaken
- Data sharing to set up a Nottinghamshire wide LGR SharePoint site

2.6 **Next Steps**

The headline timetable for the wider activities are as follows:

Activity	By when
Build full business case for our preferred option, 1e	July– November 2025
Communication and Engagement	August 2025 onwards
General Purposes, Governance and LGR Committee	11 September

Cabinet to consider and approve Final Business Case	November 2025
Submit final business case to Government	28 November 2025
Work continues around implementation and transition	November 2025 – May 2027
Decision by Government	Spring/ Summer 2026
Elections for shadow authority	May 2027
New unitary authority vesting day	April 2028

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Legal Implications (LEG2526/7802)

- 3.1 This report is for noting only.
- 3.2 The Monitoring Officers for all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire authorities are meeting on a regular basis to input on governance and legal aspects of Reorganisation.

Human Resources Implications: HR2526/2365 SL

- 3.3 Currently, there is no People Workstream, though Nottinghamshire HR Managers are meeting regularly and a workstream will be set up in due course. In the meantime, staff are being kept informed as outlined earlier in this report.
- 3.4 The main challenge for some staff is balancing workstream participation with their regular duties. Additional resources to support LGR are being considered, and a proposal will be prepared in due course.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[English Devolution White Paper](#)

[19 March 2025 Report to Full Council – Item 72](#)

[15 July 2025 Report to Full Council – Item 8](#)



Report to: Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee: 11 September 2025

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing
Deborah Johnson, Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development

Lead Officer: Jill Baker, Business Manager – Customer Services

Report Summary	
Report Title	Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self–Assessment Update.
Purpose of Report	To update Members of the completion of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
Recommendations	That the Governance, General Purposes & Local Government Reorganisation Committee approve: a) the completed Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self–Assessment; and b) publication of the Self-Assessment on the Council’s website.

1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 The Housing Ombudsman (HO) Complaint Handling Code (“the code”) sets out best practice for landlord’s complaint handling procedures, to enable a positive complaints culture across all landlords within the social housing sector. The Code encourages landlord-tenant relationships so that residents can raise a complaint if things go wrong.
- 1.2 The Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1 April 2024 which means that all members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme are obliged by law, to follow its requirements. The Housing Ombudsman has a legal duty to ensure landlords complaint procedures and responses are compliant with the Code.
- 1.3 Part of the statutory nature of the Code means landlords are required to submit an annual submission of their compliance against the Code. This helps to measure performance and ensure landlords are compliant. For 2025, landlords with 1,000 homes or more are required to submit their assessment to the HO by 30 September 2025.
- 1.4 There are nine sections of the Code:
- **Definition** - what is a complaint?
 - **Exclusions** – what will not be treated as a complaint
 - **Accessibility** – making it easy to make a complaint- meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and offering reasonable adjustments where appropriate

- **Staff** – landlords should have a designated person or team to respond to complaints
- **Process** – sets out a clear 2 stage complaints process
- **Stages** – sets out the timescales to provide a response at both stages including the use of extensions
- **Putting things right** – considering the impact on the resident and setting out what will be done to put things right
- **Self-assessment** – landlords must complete an annual self-assessment of their compliance against the Code
- **Scrutiny** – appointing a Member Responsible for Complaints to have responsibility and accountability for complaints

2.0 Self-Assessment

- 2.1 In order to comply with the Code, the Council must complete an annual self-assessment to evidence that our policies and practices.
- 2.2 This has been completed and was reviewed by the Tenant Engagement Board on 19 June 2025. The completed self-assessment is attached as **Appendix One**.
- 2.3 The Council is compliant in all but two areas - sections 8.1 and 8.2. This is due to the timings of the Committee meetings. Once the report has received committee approval and has been published on the Council's website, the self-assessment will be updated and resubmitted to the Housing Ombudsman, prior to the 30 September deadline. Following on from this, the Council will be compliant in all areas. The Housing Ombudsman understands that Councils committee cycles do not always synchronise with their timescales.
- 2.4 The staff guidance and process is being updated and then training will be delivered to staff by attending team meetings.
- 2.5 The involved tenants assist with the completion of the associated equality impact assessments.
- 2.6 The Housing Ombudsman self-assessment to be submitted prior to the deadline of 30 September 2025 and published on our website.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendation's officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications (FIN25-26/1727)

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, it is worth noting that if any maladministration is found by the Ombudsman, a financial remedy or compensation can be imposed, for which there would be no specific budget.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.’</i>	Yes	Defined in the Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, section 4.1 Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	The definition of a complaint is included in the response letter templates
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy.	Yes	Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, section 4.2, 4.5 and 4.8 Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf Training material	All complaint investigators receive training before they are allowed to investigate complaints
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests	Yes	Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, section 4.4 and 4.5 Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	If a complaint is received which is a service request, we contact the customer to explain this and obtain their permission for it to be treated as a service request.

	are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.			
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, section 4.5 Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf Training material	Training materials for all staff, additional training material for complaint handlers with a specific section for housing colleagues
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes	Examples of surveys	Our survey templates advise of this. Wording is also included in our Viewpoint and Star tenant satisfaction surveys

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint, they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, sections 2.2, 4.6 and 4.7 Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	The policy clearly defines when we will not accept a complaint, and that each complaint will be considered on its own merit. Anything that is not accepted as a complaint is either passed into an alternative available route (such as a formal appeal) or logged as a service request
2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the 	Yes	Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, sections 2.2 and 4.6 Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	The policy clearly defines when we will not accept a complain

	<p>claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 			
2.3	<p>Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.</p>	Yes	<p>Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, sections 2.2 and 5.1</p> <p>Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf</p>	<p>This is defined in the policy, and it states that we will use discretion to consider whether to accept a complaint out of this time limit.</p>
2.4	<p>If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.</p>	Yes	<p>Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, sections 2.2 and 5.1</p> <p>Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf</p>	
2.5	<p>Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.</p>	Yes	<p>Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, section 4.6</p> <p>Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf</p>	<p>The policy requires all complaints to be dealt on their own individual merit.</p>

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Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	<p>Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, section 5.2, 6.2 and 6.3</p> <p>Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf</p> <p>Approved-Reasonable-Adjustment-Policy-June-2024.pdf</p> <p>Training material</p>	<p>The Council will accept a complaint through any channel the customer wishes to use. If a customer wanted to submit a comment via social media, we would respond via social media and ask if they could use an alternative contact channel with support from our staff if required.</p> <p>We will make reasonable adjustments for tenants to submit a complaint and how we respond to them.</p>
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	<p>Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, section 3.3 and 4.8</p> <p>Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf</p>	<p>We accept complaints through all contact channels.</p> <p>It is reiterated in the training material that all colleagues can receive/make a</p>

			Training material	complaint on behalf of the customer, regardless of the nature of the complaint and the service area it relates to e area it relates to
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	Complaint performance is provided to Policy and Performance Improvement Committee and Tenant Engagement Board	The Council welcomes all feedback, recognise the importance to identify issues in service delivery and welcomes the opportunity to learn from feedback
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Yes	<p>The policy is published on our website.</p> <p>It is promoted in tenant newsletters and rent statements</p> <p>Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf</p>	
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	<p>Defined in section 12 of the policy</p> <p>Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf</p>	
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their	Yes	Defined in section 4.8 and 5.2 of the policy	

	behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.		Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	<p>Training materials</p> <p>Published on our website and included in acknowledgment and response template letters</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman service is promoted in quarterly rent statements and tenant newsletters</p> <p>Defined in section 7 of the policy</p> <p>Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf</p>	

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes	Business Manager Customer Services is responsible for complaint handling and is the link officer for the Ombudsman. There is a single point of access for all complaints.	<p>All complaints are managed through a CRM system called Meritec. The customer service team leaders log the complaints and allocate them to the senior officer for action</p> <p>Each business has senior officers responsible for investigating and responding to complaints</p> <p>To provide capacity within the housing directorate, a complaints co-ordinator has been recruited recently who supports the investigation and responses to complaints.</p>
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes	Part of job roles	

4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes	Complaint investigations staff recognise that the importance of investigating complaints promptly. Training	All complaint investigation officers have received staff training The CRM automatically produces reminders prior to the complaint due date
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Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	The Council has one policy All complaints are dealt with on their individual merit.
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	We aim for early and local resolution as it provides an effective and efficient outcome for the complainant	There are two stages in our Policy. Officers are encouraged to liaise with complaints to support an early resolution
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the	Yes	Two stages in our policy Defined in section 6 of the policy	

	complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.		Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	Yes	Our complaints are not handled by a third party	
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	Defined in sections 5.3 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as "the complaint definition". If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	Defined in sections 6.2 and 6.3 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf Letter templates	Staff investigating a complaint which comes under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman, contact the complainant at the acknowledgement stage. This provides the investigating officer an opportunity to fully understand the complaint.

				The complaint definition is included in the complaint template letters
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	Letter template Telephone call with customer	This will be made clear in the acknowledgement response
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 	Yes	Included in sections 6.2 and 6.3 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf Training materials	
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Yes	Included in sections 6.2 and 6.3 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	

5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	<p>Reasonable Adjustments Policy.</p> <p>Approved-Reasonable-Adjustment-Policy-June-2024.pdf</p> <p>Agreed adjustments added to housing management system.</p> <p>Discussed and reviewed with tenants as part of Getting to Know You visits</p>	
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	We would not refuse for a complaint to be escalated through its complaints procedure unless the complaint had been advised that there is a separate process for reporting it or a statutory right of appeal.	Included in staff training
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	Training materials	These are kept within the central CRM system and records kept within the Housing Management System

5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	Our Policy allows for complaints to be dealt with and resolved at any time of the process	
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	Managing-Unreasonable-Behaviour-Policy.pdf	Quarterly review of the register
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Managing-Unreasonable-Behaviour-Policy.pdf	

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	Training materials	All investigating officers are trained to prioritise and respond to complaints within a timely manner
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaint's procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	Included in section 6.2 of the Policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	We can demonstrate commitment as per our policy, processes and training but due to volume of complaints received and resource issues this was not achieved during 2024/25 Additional resource is now in place to support the handling of complaints. This has had a positive impact and there has been a

				significant improvement in the number of complaints acknowledged and completed within the prescribed timescales.
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Included in section 6.2 of the Policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	<p>We can demonstrate commitment as per our policy, processes and training but due to volume of complaints received and resource issues this was not achieved during 2024/25</p> <p>Additional resource is now in place to support the handling of complaints. This has had a positive impact and there has been a significant improvement in the number of complaints acknowledged and completed within the prescribed timescales.</p>

6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Included in section 6.2 of the Policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.		Included in section 6.2 of the Policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	Included in staff guidance and training	Investigating officers are trained to provide response in a timely manner when the response is known. All outstanding actions from the complaint response letter are logged and monitored against progress/ completion.

				Regular meetings are held with managers to check actions have been completed. Systems are also checked to confirm completion of repairs and checks with our accounts team are made to ensure compensation payments have been made.
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Letter templates Training material	
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Included in section 5.5 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf Training materials	
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage;	Yes	The response templates include these	

	b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.			
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Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	Included in sections 6.3 and 7.0 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	Included in section 6.2 of the policy and staff guidance Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	

6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	Included in section 6.3 of the policy and staff guidance Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Included in section 6.3 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Included in section 6.3 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf Training materials	We can demonstrate commitment as per our policy, processes and training but due to volume of complaints received and resource issues this was not achieved during 2024/25 Additional resource is now in place to support the handling of complaints. This has had a positive impact and there has been a significant improvement in the number of complaints

				acknowledged and completed within the prescribed timescales.
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Included in section 6.3 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Included in section 7.0 of the policy Customer-Complaints-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf	
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	Policy Included in staff guidance and training	All outstanding actions from the complaint response letter are logged and monitored against progress / completion. Regular meetings are held with managers to check actions have been completed. Systems are also checked to confirm completion of repairs and

				checks with our accounts team are made to ensure compensation payments have been made. If we are unable to determine internally if actions have been completed (sometimes due to a staff member leaving) we have contacted the tenant to check and followed up where necessary. Since May 2025 we have appointed a new Housing Complaints Coordinator and one of the aims of this role is to be able to provide more updates to tenants on the progress of their complaint and / or ongoing actions. .
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Included in staff and training	
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage. b. the complaint definition. c. the decision on the complaint. 	Yes	Included in complaint response templates	

	d. the reasons for any decisions made. e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right. f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.			
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	Two stage process and the stage 2 response is the final one	

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising. • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong. • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons. • Taking action if there has been delay. 	Yes	Response letter templates. Compensation Policy for our tenants Training materials	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconsidering or changing a decision. Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum. Providing a financial remedy. Changing policies, procedures or practices. 			
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	<p>Response letter templates.</p> <p>Compensation Policy for our tenants.</p> <p>Covered in training for investigating officers</p>	
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	<p>This is covered in the response letter templates.</p> <p>We have a Compensation Policy for our tenants.</p> <p>Covered in training for investigating officers</p>	Our remedy offer clearly sets out what will happen. At the point of response however, we do not always have the 'when' but it does inform them that an officer will contact them to arrange a convenient time for an appointment or visit to take place. We always try to agree this with the tenant in advance, but it is not always possible.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	This is covered in the response letter templates.	

			<p>We have a Compensation Policy for our tenants.</p> <p>Covered in training for investigating officers</p>	
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Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	<p>Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept: any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and 	No	<p>Quarterly Performance reports are reported to our Senior Leadership Team and the relevant committees together with a more in-depth complaints report half yearly.</p> <p>In addition, an annual report is published</p> <p>Our annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code and the Annual Ombudsman review letters are reported to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant Engagement Board Policy and Performance Improvement Committee - 1 September 2025 Audit and Governance Committee – 24 September 2025 Full Council – 21 October 2025 	<p>The Annual Complaints and Performance report goes through our committee process</p> <p>We are not compliant until this report has been through the committee process and published on our website.</p> <p>The links to the report will be added to this document once they are available and the self-assessment will be resubmitted.</p>

	f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.		Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports shared with Tenant Engagement Board	
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	No	This will be reported and published annually	<p>The Annual Complaints and Performance report goes through our committee process</p> <p>We are not compliant until this report has been through the committee process and published on our website.</p> <p>The links to the report will be added to this document once they are available and the self-assessment will be resubmitted.</p>
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	This would happen	
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	We would co-operate with this instruction from the Ombudsman	
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the	Yes	This would happen if an incident took place. This would be carried out by the designated Complaints Manager and	A reminder of doing this is in the Customer Services Business Continuity Plan

	Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.		Housing Regulatory Compliance Manager	
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Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	Covered in training and staff guidance	
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	Complaint performance is discussed in housing management meetings, including lessons learnt and any issues. Quarterly performance reports and half yearly reports reviewed at committees	
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	Quarterly performance reports are reported to our Senior Leadership Team and the relevant committees together with a more in-depth complaints report half yearly. Complaints data is discussed at the Housing Directorate Monthly meetings Involved scrutinise complaints twice yearly	

9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	Director of Customer Services & Organisational Development has the overall responsibility for Complaints. Director of Housing, Health and Wellbeing oversees complaints relating to Housing	
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes	The lead member for complaints is the Chair of the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee. The Portfolio Holder for Housing is regularly updated	
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	Quarterly Performance reports are reported to our Senior Leadership Team and these committees together with a more in-depth complaints report half yearly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Performance Improvement Committee • Audit and Governance • Tenant Engagement Board Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports shared with Tenant Engagement Board	The MRC, the chair of Policy and Performance Committee Portfolio Holder for Resources is responsible for complaints and reporting to Cabinet

9.7	<p>As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	Yes	<p>Quarterly Performance reports are reported to our Senior Leadership Team and the relevant committees together with a more in-depth complaints report half yearly.</p> <p>Our annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code and the Annual Ombudsman review letters are reported to the following committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Performance Improvement Committee • Audit and Governance • Tenant Engagement Board <p>Results of Ombudsman investigations are reported to the relevant committees</p>	
9.8	<p>Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working 	Yes	<p>Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy</p> <p>Training documentation</p> <p>Reports to committees</p>	

	<p>with colleagues across teams and departments</p> <p>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</p> <p>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</p>			
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Report to: Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee: 11 September 2025

Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Director - Customer Services & Organisational Development

Lead Officer: Jill Baker, Business Manager Customer Services, ext. 5810

Report Summary	
Report Title	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Purpose of Report	To inform Members of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Update
Recommendation	That the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee note the contents of the report.
Reason for Recommendation	It is an Ombudsman requirement that Annual Review Letters are shared with Members

1.0 Background Information

- 1.1 Each year the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) produces an Annual Review Letter for local authorities detailing the number, type and decisions made relating to each authority. The annual review letter for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 relating to this is attached to this report as **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 The Housing Ombudsman is in the process of producing its Annual Complaints Review.

2.0 LGSCO Annual Review April 2024 – March 2025

- 2.1 The statistics provided with the Annual Review Letter, **Appendix 2**, show that for this period, the LGSCO received 16 complaints relating to services provided by this Council and made decisions on 16 complaints. This compares to eleven received and nine decided for 2023 – 2024.

The LGSCO received a record number of complaints during 2024 - 2025, exceeding 20,00 for the first time – the result of 16% increase in each of the past two years

- 2.2 Although the figures for ‘received’ and ‘decided’ are the same, actual complaints differ between them: 2 received complaints do not feature in the decided list; and 2 decided complaints do not feature in the received list. This is due to several reasons:

- The complaint may have been received during 2024 - 2025 but a decision will be made in 2025 - 2026 (or even later) and therefore the complaint will show in a later year's report; similarly, a complaint decided in 2024 – 2025 may have been received in the preceding year.
- The complaint did not relate to a service provided by us e.g. highways.
- The complaint was classed as premature.

2.3 Likewise, the received figures the LGSCO provide never align with the figures the Council hold. This is because the LGSCO numbers include enquiries from people who the LGSCO signpost back to the Council. These are captured in the “closed after initial enquiries” figures. There is no way of identifying who these customers are. The table below details the categories of the complaints received and decisions made in each of the Ombudsman categories.

Ombudsman Category	Received by the LGSCO	Decided by the LGSCO
Benefits and Tax	0	0
Planning and Development	6	7
Housing	4	4
Corporate and Other Services	5	4
Environmental, Public Protection and Regulation	1	1
Total	16	16

2.4 The table below shows the outcome of each decision.

Ombudsman Category	Closed after initial enquiries	Advice given	Incomplete or invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Upheld	Total
Benefits & Tax						
Planning & Development	5			2		7
Housing	1	2	1			4
Corporate and Other Services	2			2		4
Environmental, Public Protection and Regulation					1	1
Total	8	2	1	4	1	16

2.5 The upheld complaint was regarding noise nuisance. The Council was found at fault due to a delay in beginning a formal statutory nuisance investigation and providing conflicting information. The remedy was to apologise and to make a symbolic payment to remedy the injustice caused by the faults.

Adjusted for our population, this represents 0.8 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. The average for similar councils is of 1.1 upheld decisions per 100,00 which means we are performing better than average.

- 2.6 During 2024 - 2025, the LGSCO upheld 83% of all the investigations they carried out, up from 80% in 2023 - 2024.

Complaints relating to Education & Children's Services dominate their casework, accounting for 27% of all complaints and enquiries received, and 91% of these were upheld.

Significant for Councils, is the number of complaints the LGSCO received relating to Housing accounted for 17% of all cases they received, a higher proportion to previous years. 85% of these were upheld.

- 2.7 The LGSCO recognise that while issues relating to housing, remain particularly prevalent in London, similar issues are repeated across the county. Issues include people being denied access to housing resisters, being given the wrong priority and not being treated fairly when homeless or faced with homeless.
- 2.8 Although the LGSCO dealt with four housing relating complaints relating to us, none were taken any further.
- 2.9 The LGSCO has published anonymised details of the eight complaints relating to our Council which it reviewed and closed after making initial enquiries.

Ombudsman reference number and link	Ombudsman category	Summary of complaint	Decision Reason
https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-014-287	Planning	The Council's planning committee did not consider the proposal objectively and pre-determined the outcome of the application.	We will not investigate this complaint... because we are unlikely to find fault.
https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/housing/private-housing/24-013-538	Housing	The Council failed to accept liability for damage caused by its contractor; the Council's insurer denied the claim; claimant wants Council to claim from contractor or make payment directly itself.	We will not investigate... because it is reasonable for the complainant to challenge the decision on liability in the County Court.

https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-012-493	Planning	The Council granted retrospective permission for a school car park extension without obtaining a drainage strategy and addressing other related issues; complainant wants the Council to ensure it will follow correct procedures in the future and ensure the school maintains its drains.	We will not investigate... because the complaint does not meet the tests in our Assessment Code; there is not enough evidence of fault, and we cannot achieve the outcome the complainant is seeking.
https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/other-categories/councillor-conduct-and-standards/23-021-481	Councillor conduct and standards	A Parish Councillor behaved unprofessionally, the Council investigation was delayed and did not fully address the complainant's concerns; they wanted the Council to re investigate and retract part of the investigation findings.	We cannot investigate... the actions of a Parish Councillor... Nor will we investigate how the Council considered the complaint; there is no worthwhile outcome we can achieve.
https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/enforcement/24-008-948	Planning	Conduct of a Council officer involved in enforcement action against the complainants and a request to remove officer from the case.	We will not investigate ... because the complaint falls outside our jurisdiction due to the passage of time, we cannot look at matters already considered by the courts, and there is a potential remedy through the courts.

https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-007-205	Planning	The Council granted permission for a neighbour's development which overlooks his property/impacts his privacy; he did not receive consultation letters so was unable to comment on the application.	We will not investigate ... because there is not enough evidence of fault affecting the outcome.
https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/other-categories/leisure-and-culture/24-007-875	Leisure and culture	Inadequate toilet provision and signage at a Council run building; also how staff dealt with her when she reported her concerns and made a complaint.	We will not investigate ... because further investigation would not lead to a different outcome.
https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-007-898	Planning	The Council told him to apply for planning permission but then declined to determine his application and failed to respond to his agent's correspondence.	We will not investigate ... because there is not enough evidence of fault by the Council to warrant investigation.

3.0 Further Learning and Developments

- 3.1 All Ombudsman complaints received by the Council are reviewed to see if any changes in processes and policies are required.
- 3.2 Regarding the case where the Council was found to be at fault, a revised process has been implemented, resulting in all noise complaints starting as a statutory nuisance investigation, together with the Licensing Enforcement Officer assisting in any informal resolution running alongside the noise investigation.
- 3.3 The LGSCO have issued their Complaint Handling Code as "advice and guidance" and intend to start considering the Code as part of their process from April 2026. Councils are encouraged to adopt the Code as soon as they can do so.
- 3.4 The LGSCO Complaint Handling Code mirrors the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, which the Council complies with.
- 3.5 The LGSCO has published a series of good practice goods and free training resources. These will be utilised training provided to our employees.

- 3.6 The Council welcomes complaints and to support this, is creating a series of training videos to support its employees.
- 3.7 We do have a strong emphasis on complaint handling and are constantly reviewing the handling of complaints and our practices

4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendation's, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications FIN25-26/8294

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, it is worth noting that if any maladministration is found by the Ombudsman, a financial remedy or compensation can be imposed, for which there would be no specific budget for.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

21 May 2025

By email

Mr Robinson
Chief Executive
Newark & Sherwood District Council

Dear Mr Robinson

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. We have listened to your feedback, and I am pleased to be able to share your annual statistics earlier in the year to better fit with local reporting cycles. I hope this proves helpful to you.

[Your annual statistics are available here.](#)

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

In a change to our approach, we will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 16 July 2025, alongside our annual Review of Local Government Complaints.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published [good practice guides](#) to support councils to adopt our [Complaint Handling Code](#). The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. The guides were issued alongside free [training resources](#) organisations can use to make sure front-line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular [complaint handling training](#) programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

APPENDIX 2

Reference	Authority	Category	Subcategory	Received
23021481	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	23/10/24
24000947	Newark & Sherwood DC	Housing	NULL	25/04/24
24002374	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Other planning application	23/05/24
24007205	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Householder planning application	08/08/24
24007875	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Leisure and culture	05/08/24
24007898	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Householder planning application	17/08/24
24008177	Newark & Sherwood DC	Housing	Managing council tenancies	23/08/24
24008948	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Enforcement - other	29/08/24
24012493	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Other planning application	17/10/24
24013431	Newark & Sherwood DC	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Noise	30/10/24
24013538	Newark & Sherwood DC	Housing	Private landlord/tenant issues	31/10/24
24014287	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Other planning application	12/11/24
24015143	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	26/11/24
24022116	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	26/03/25
24022444	Newark & Sherwood DC	Housing	Managing council tenancies	21/03/25
24023060	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	31/03/25

Ref.	Authority	Category	Subcategory	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason	Remedy
23018395	Newark & Sherwood DC	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Noise	23/09/24	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology, Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble
23019643	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Enforcement-householder	17/06/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature, open new case if resubmitted	
23021481	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	26/11/24	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation	
24000947	Newark & Sherwood DC	Housing	NULL	25/04/24	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised	
24002374	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Other planning application	23/05/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
24007205	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Householder planning application	25/09/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
24007875	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Leisure and culture	23/09/24	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation	
24007898	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Householder planning application	23/09/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
24008177	Newark & Sherwood DC	Housing	Managing council tenancies	23/08/24	Advice given	Signpost - go to complaint handling	
24008948	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Enforcement - other	07/11/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.1 court proceedings	
24012493	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Other planning application	13/12/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
24013538	Newark & Sherwood DC	Housing	Private landlord/tenant issues	06/01/25	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(c) Court remedy	
24014287	Newark & Sherwood DC	Planning & Development	Other planning application	22/01/25	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
24015143	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	26/11/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
24022116	Newark & Sherwood DC	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	26/03/25	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
24022444	Newark & Sherwood DC	Housing	Managing council tenancies	21/03/25	Advice given	Signpost - go to complaint handling	

Ref.	Authority	Category	Subcategory	Decided	Remedy	Remedy Target Date	Remedy Achieved Date	Satisfaction with Compliance
23018395	Newark & Sherwood DC	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Noise	22/09/24	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	23/10/24	17/10/24	Remedy complete and satisfied

Explanatory notes	
A new column has been added to the received, decided and compliance outcome sheets, detailing the primary subcategory recorded on the case (the main subject of the complaint).	
Cases received	
Cases with a recorded received date between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. Status as of 3 April 2025.	
Cases decided	
Cases with a recorded decision date between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. Status as of 3 April 2025.	
Please note that some cases may have been reopened since that date, with either a decision outcome pending or a new decision outcome recorded.	
Service improvement recommendations are no longer included in this workbook. Councils can view them on the online map here: https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance	
We report our decisions by the following outcomes:	These decision outcomes are included in the number of cases reported as not for us / not ready for us in the complaints overview section on the online map.
Invalid or incomplete: We were not given enough information to consider the issue.	
Advice given: We provided early advice or explained where to go for the right help.	
Referred back for local resolution: We found the complaint was brought to us too early because the organisation involved was not given the chance to consider it first.	
Closed after initial enquiries: We assessed the complaint but decided against completing an investigation. This might be because the law says we're not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective use of public funds if we did.	This decision outcome is included in the number of cases reported as assessed and closed in the complaints overview section on the online map.
Upheld: We completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or the organisation provided a suitable remedy early on.	These decision outcomes are included in the number of cases reported as investigated in the complaints overview section on the online map.
Not upheld: We completed an investigation but did not find evidence of fault.	
The following decision reasons are satisfactory remedy decisions , i.e. upheld cases where we were satisfied the authority had already provided a suitable remedy to resolve the complaint:	These decision reasons are included in the number of cases reported as satisfactory remedies provided by the council on the online map.
Upheld - Injustice remedied during organisations complaint processes	
Upheld - fault & inj - no further action organisation already remedied	
Compliance outcomes	
Cases with a recorded remedy achieved date between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. Status as of 23 April 2025. The relevant date is the date of compliance with the recommendations (for example, the date on an apology letter) rather than the date the evidence is provided to us. If we were notified after 23 April 2025 of a remedy achieved before 31 March 2025, this will not be included here.	
Some cases may be marked as 'Remedy completed late' even when the remedy achieved date is before the remedy target date. This happens because the target date covers all remedies (service improvements and personal remedies). As service improvements often have a longer timescale for completion, we will mark a case as 'completed late' where this longer timescale is met, but the personal remedy was provided late.	



Report to: Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee: 11 September 2025

Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Director - Customer Services & Organisational Development

Lead Officer: Carl Burns, Transformation & Service Improvement Manager
Rowan Bosworth-Brown Senior Transformation & Service Improvement Officer
Tracey Allen, Research & Development Officer.

Contact: performance@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk

Report Summary	
Report Title	Customer Feedback – Half Year 2 - 2024/2025
Purpose of Report	The customer feedback report is an opportunity for the Committee to see what complaints are being submitted across the organisation. It gives an opportunity to understand how the customer is receiving the services we deliver and is a form of performance management to inform how well we are doing and where we can improve.
Recommendations	That the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee note the Customer Feedback Half 2 report and recommend PPIC conduct a performance review for any areas of concern.

1.0 Background

- 1.1. The Council values resident feedback on services received and has a robust customer feedback policy to capture, investigate, respond and learn from the insights it gives. This policy involves a two-stage complaint process, with the opportunity for complainants to escalate to the relevant Ombudsman if unsatisfied after Stage 2.
- 1.2. Feedback, both positive and negative, is crucial for identifying areas needing improvement and preventing larger issues. Significant work has been done in the past year on complaints policy, procedure and staff training. Key developments include comprehensive training for complaint handlers, a complaints toolkit, complaint response templates and adjustments to accommodate new Housing Ombudsman response times.

2.0 Half Year Report 24/25

- 2.1 The Customer Feedback report (**Appendix 1**) provides an overview of all types of customer feedback received between October – March 24/25. This half we received 20 suggestions and 75 compliments or praise for our services. In terms of complaints received, 305 complaints were logged at stage 1 with 42 being escalated to stage 2

Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Suggestions	Compliments (Praise)
305	42	20	75

- 2.2 Whilst the overall volume of complaints received is high when compared to the same half of 23/24, it should be noted that there has been a decrease in the total number of complaints when compared to half 1 24/25. This is also the first time we have seen a decline in the number of complaints received since the upward trend began in half 1 of 23/24. This is a positive sign and suggests the early impact of recent improvements is beginning to take effect.
- 2.3 We have proactively promoted ways in which residents can make complaints to raise awareness. There are some known issues in delivering the repairs service, which are being addressed. It is important to see complaints in context of almost 3,500,000 waste collections there were 56 complaints. There are 5,400 council homes and 231 complaints in relation to these.
- 2.4 The complaints responded to on time has declined and this can be attributed to a higher volume of complaints being received, resource challenges, and previously there were some difficulties with the complaint's software, which have now been resolved. The post of Complaints Coordinator has since been appointed within the Housing, Health & Wellbeing Directorate and will be responsible for managing complaints received at stage 1. In addition to this, a new process to improve response times Council wide, is being introduced and will be led by the Director of Customer Services and Organisational Development.

Period	Met Deadline	Missed Deadline	Total completed	% on Target
October - March 2023/24	194	22	216	90%
October - March 2024/25	139	157	296	47%

3.0 Distribution

- 3.1 This report is shared with SLT and then Business Managers before being presented to the Committees below. This enables Directors and Business Managers to consider if there are any themes and actions, they need to undertake to improve the services they provide.
- Member Champion for Complaints
 - Policy & Performance Improvement Committee
 - Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee
 - Housing Assurance Board

4.0 Proposal/Options Considered

- 4.1 That the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee review the Customer Feedback Half 2 report and recommend PPIC conduct a performance review for any areas of concern.

5.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

Human Resources Implications

- 5.3 There are no HR implications as a result of this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

2nd Half Year Report Oct – Mar 2024/25

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

(COMPLAINTS, SUGGESTIONS
AND PRAISE)

Director Lead:

Deborah Johnson, Director of
Customer Services and
Organisational Development

Lead Officers:

Carl Burns, Transformation and Service
Improvement Manager

Rowan Bosworth-Brown, Senior Transformation
& Service Improvement Officer

Tracey Allen, Research & Development Officer

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CUSTOMER FEEDBACK ANALYSIS

Our Customer Feedback Policy has been formally adopted and agreed and is designed to cover the requirement of both the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman. We are bound by the requirements both Ombudsmen set out which are clear about the expectations on us in how we deal with complaints.

One of the key things that both Ombudsmen expect that we report on and use all the feedback from customers, especially complaints, to improve our services.

This report is shared with:

- Senior Leadership Team and Business Managers
- Member Champion for complaints
- Housing Assurance Board / Tenant Engagement Board
- Policy and Performance Improvement Committee
- Audit and Governance Committee

Contents

1. Context
2. Overview of Feedback
3. Complaints – Stage 1
 - 3.1 No of Stage 1 complaints received.
 - 3.2 Complaints by Business Unit
 - 3.3 Complaints by category
 - 3.4 Processing times
 - 3.5 Outcomes of complaints by delivery teams
 - 3.6 What we learned – examples.
4. Complaints – Stage 2
5. Ombudsman complaints
6. Suggestions
7. Compliments (Praise)
8. Putting it Right

1. Context

The Council recognises the importance of listening to the views of its residents about the services they receive from us. Our Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy provides the opportunity to capture, investigate, respond, and learn from customer feedback to assist with the delivery and shaping of Council services in the future.

Both positive and negative feedback is important to us as it provides us with a customer opinion, an opportunity for us to learn and with information to recognise what we are doing well and where we can improve our services.

It can act as an early warning of problems that may otherwise stay unseen until they become a larger problem, which can then take up significant resource and time to remedy. Feedback helps us find the root cause of problems and to recognise where specific systems or processes aren't working as they should, and it enables us to create meaningful and effective changes in policies, procedures and the training of staff.

Staff who respond to complaints undertake comprehensive training which includes how to investigate and respond to complaints, our process and the role of the Ombudsmen. We have updated our feedback handling system to support the process and ensure consistency of responses.

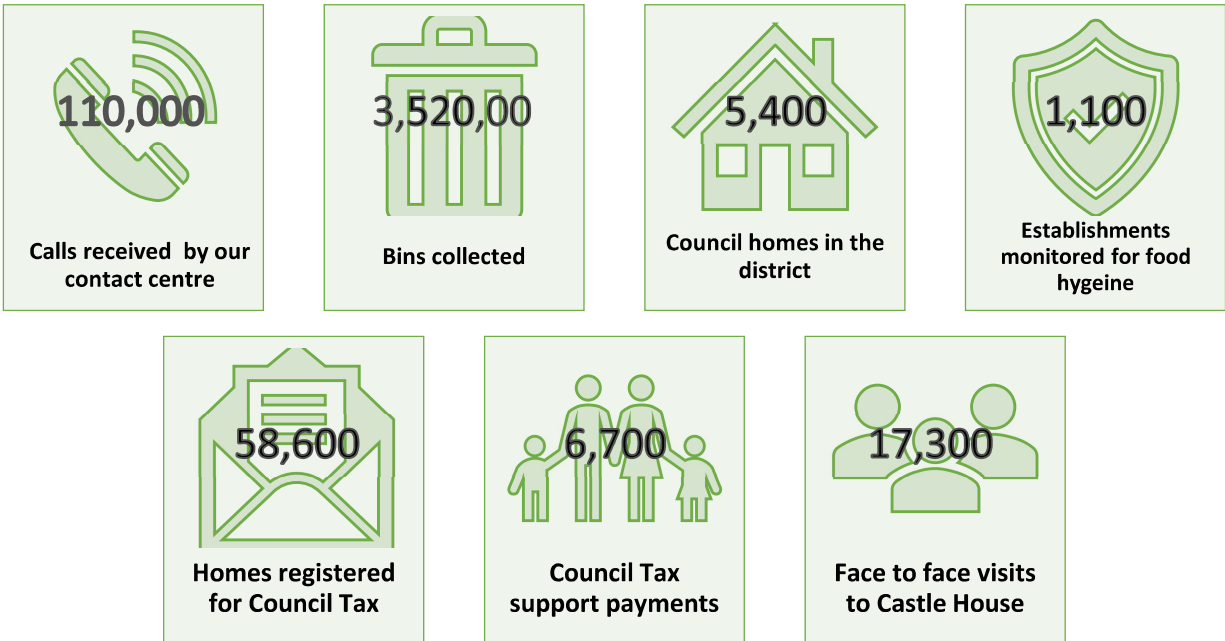
Our policy meets the requirements of the statutory Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman have issued their Code as "[advice and guidance](#)" and we are working to ensure we meet there requirements.



Our Responsibilities

From waste management and housing to food hygiene and financial support, these services play a critical role in enhancing the quality of life for residents. The council's commitment to maintaining and improving these services is evident in the scale of its operations and the positive impact on the community. Feedback is received for all these services. Some data to provide context can be found in fig 2 below, which was correct as of 2024/25:

Fig 2 - Our Responsibilities



(All Figures are approximate)

2. Overview of feedback

Table 1 provides a summary of all customer feedback received during the second half of 2024–25.

Table 1 – Overview of feedback

Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Suggestions	Compliments (Praise)
305	42	20	75

All figures shown include withdrawn complaints, unless otherwise specified. These typically involve enquiries initially submitted as complaints/suggestions, but, upon investigation, are found to be service requests. In such cases, the customer is contacted, and if they agree, their report is withdrawn and reclassified as a service request.

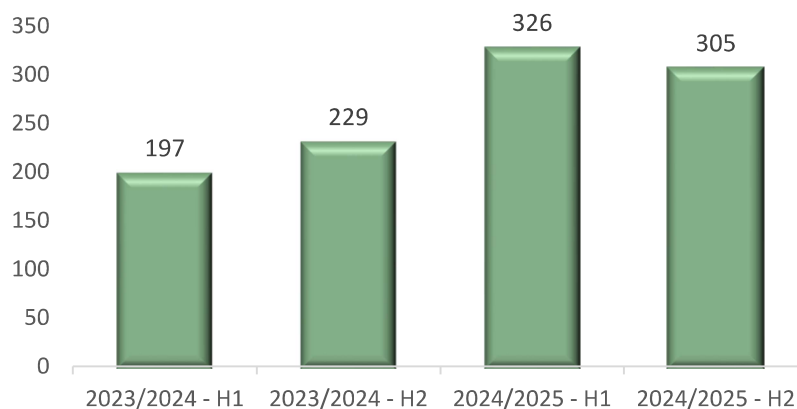
3. Complaints – Stage 1

It is essential for us to employ a variety of methods to engage and consult with our customers, to obtain as broad and representative a view of our services as possible. Complaints serve as a valuable source of information, helping us identify areas for improvement and providing insight into where we are delivering satisfactory service.

3.1 Number of Stage 1 Complaints received

While the number of Stage 1 complaints rose significantly between H1 2023/24 and H1 2024/25, peaking at 326, there has been a notable decrease in H2 2024/25, with complaints falling to 305. This marks the first decline since the upward trend began, suggesting potential stabilisation or early impact of recent improvements

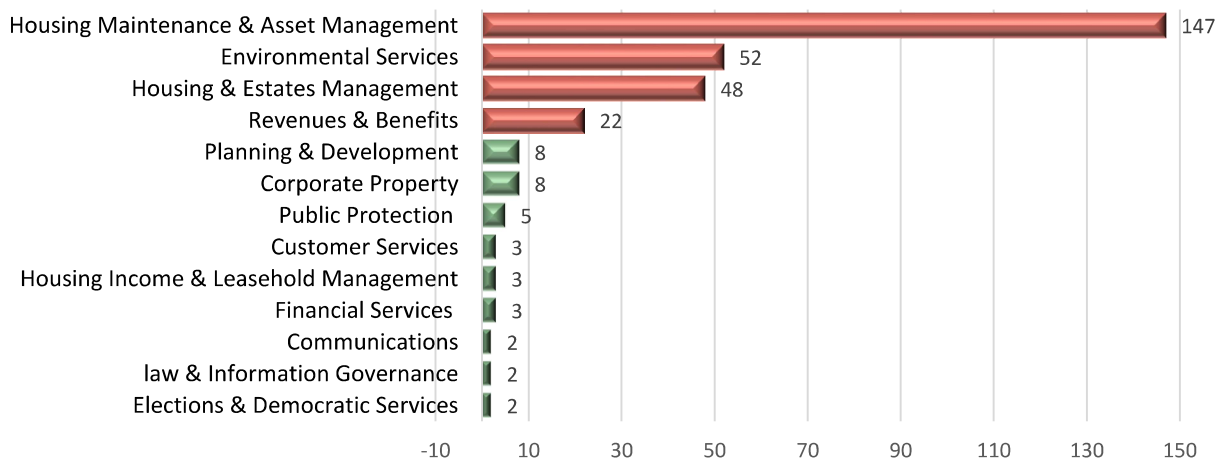
Chart 1 (2-Year trend) - Half years – Stage 1 complaints



3.2. Complaints by Business Unit

In the second half of 2024/25, the distribution of Stage 1 complaints by Business Unit shows that Housing Maintenance & Asset Management received the highest percentage of complaints at 48%, followed by Environmental Services at 17%, and Housing & Estates Management at 16%. Revenues & Benefits accounted for 7% of the complaints received. The remaining units each received less than 3% of the total complaints. A breakdown of complaints by Business Unit is shown in chart 2, followed by a short summary of the services receiving the highest number of complaints.

Chart 2 (Stage 1 complaints received by business unit)



Complaints have increased by 60% when compared with the same period in 2023/24. The largest proportion of complaints received for the service were for service delivery (delays) with 55 cases, highlighting issues with timeliness within the service. Complaints related to officer performance—including quality of work, service decisions, and conduct—collectively account for 54 complaints, indicating concerns with staff behaviour and effectiveness. Additionally, contractor performance and customer communication each received 14 complaints. Less frequent, but still relevant issues include missed actions, lack of responsiveness, and one case of dangerous driving. One complaint for the Business Unit was subsequently withdrawn.

Chart 3 (2-year outturn Stage 1 complaints)

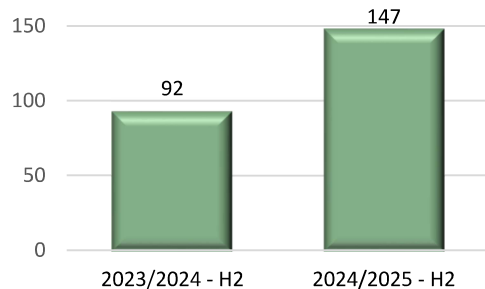
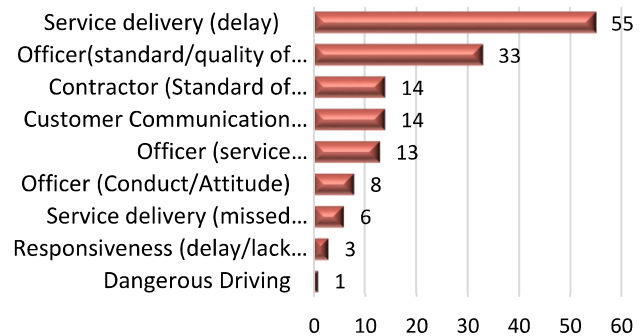


Chart 4 (Stage 1 complaints by category)



All Figures shown include complaints withdrawn. This provides a more accurate measure of demand.

Environmental Services – 52 complaints received.

The Environmental Services delivery teams have seen a 4% increase (increase of 2 complaints) in complaints compared to the same period in 2023/24. The most frequent categories were related to service delivery, including missed actions, 16 complaints, followed by service delivery delays and officer conduct/attitude, each with 9 complaints, and officer standard/quality of work with 7 complaints, highlighting operational lapses and staff performance as key areas of concern within the Business Unit. The remaining complaints were distributed across further categories, in smaller or similar numbers.

Chart 5 (2-year outturn Stage 1)

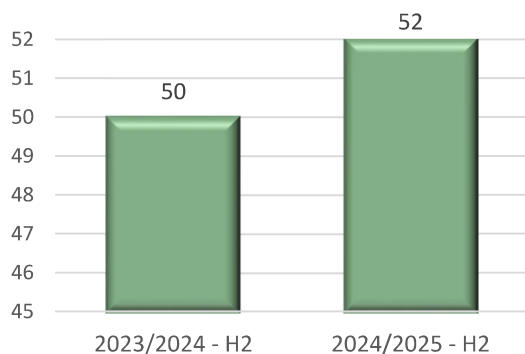
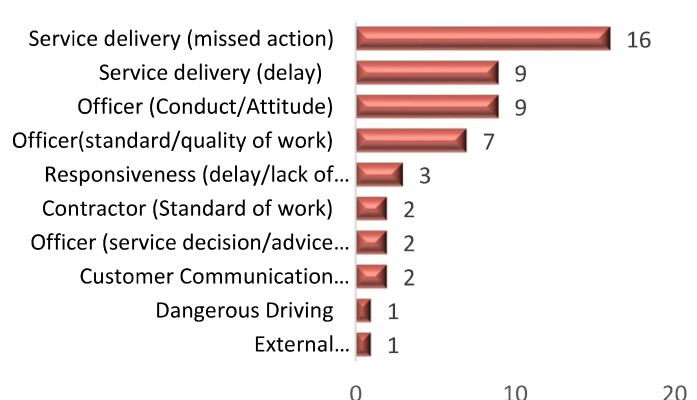


Chart 6 (Stage 1 complaints by category)



All Figures shown include complaints withdrawn. This provides a more accurate measure of demand.

Housing & Estates Management – 48 Complaints received.

In the second half of 2024/2025, Housing & Estates Management recorded 48 Stage 1 complaints, marking a 50% increase from 32 complaints in the same period of 2023/2024. The most frequently reported issues were; Officer Conduct/Attitude and Officer Standard/Quality of Work, each accounting for 10 complaints, together making up 35% of the total. Customer Communication was cited in 7 complaints (12%), highlighting ongoing concerns around staff behaviour, performance, and clarity. The remaining categories—Contractor Standard of Work, Officer Service Decision/Advice, Service Delivery (Delay), and Responsiveness (Delay/Lack of Action) were also received in smaller or similar numbers.

Chart 7 (2-year outturn Stage 1 complaints)

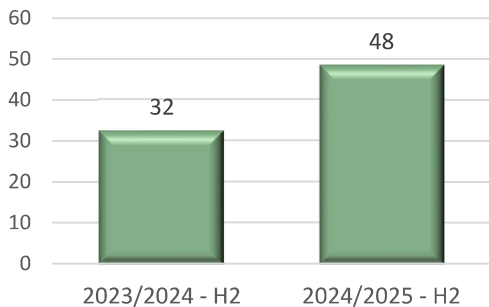
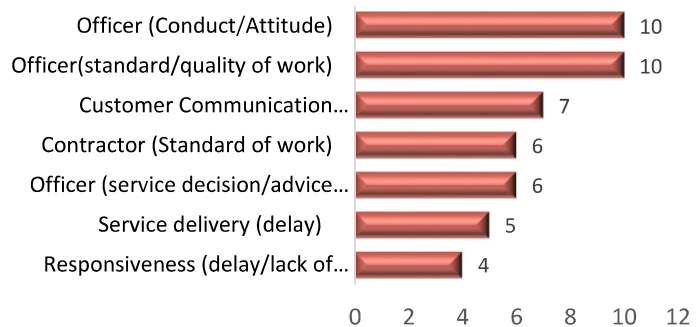


Chart 8 – Stage 1 complaints by category



All Figures shown include complaints withdrawn. This provides a more accurate measure of demand

Revenues & Benefits - 22 Complaints received

Revenues & Benefits recorded a total of 22 complaints, an increase from 15 in the same period of 2023/2024. The most common issues reported were related to customer communication (6 complaints), officer service (5), and responsiveness, including delays or lack of response (3). Other concerns included officer conduct and service delivery delays or missed actions (2 each), as well as the standard or quality of work by contractors and officers (1 each).

Chart 9 - 2-year outturn Stage 1 complaints

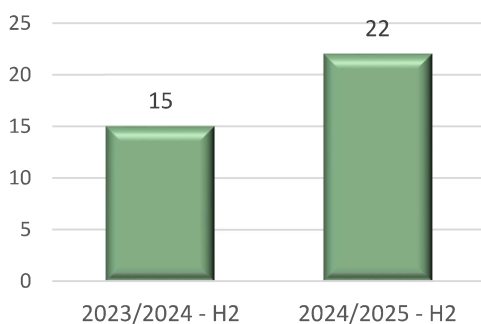
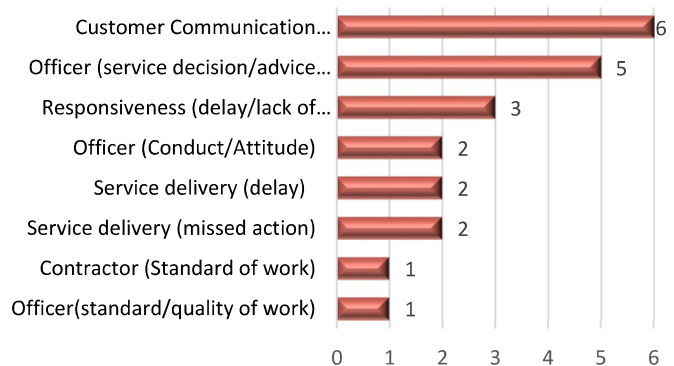


Chart 10 – Stage 1 complaints by category



All Figures shown include complaints withdrawn. This provides a more accurate measure of demand

3.3 Complaints by Category

Table 2 highlights that the most common category of complaints is related to service delivery delays (24%), and standard/quality of officers' work (19%). Issues with customer communication (12%) Reports of officer conduct/attitude and service decisions or advice each made up 11%. Complaints about missed actions in service delivery (9%) and contractor work quality (8%) are notable as well. Overall, service delivery and officer-related issues appear to indicate the need for improvements in these areas, along with better communication and responsiveness to customer concerns.

Table 2 (Stage 1 complaints by category)

Complaints Category	Received	% of total
Service delivery (delay)	72	24%
Officer (standard/quality of work)	57	19%
Customer Communication (delays/lack of)	37	12%
*Officer (Conduct/Attitude)	34	11%
Officer (service decision/advice provided)	34	11%
Service delivery (missed action)	28	9%
Contractor (Standard of work)	24	8%
Responsiveness (delay/lack of action)	14	5%
External agent/contractor (Conduct/Attitude)	3	1%
Dangerous Driving	2	1%
Total	305	100%

A closer look at the top category of “Service delivery (delay)” shows that, of the 72 complaints received for this category, 55 (76.4%) were received for the Housing Maintenance & Asset Management Business Unit.

Issues included:

- **Extended Resolution Times:** 40 complaints were not resolved within the stipulated time frames, leading to dissatisfaction among residents. Delays in addressing urgent issues like heating and hot water repairs significantly impacted residents' quality of life.
- **Communication Gaps:** 35 complaints highlighted inadequate communication with residents regarding the status of their complaints and expected resolution times. Missed appointments and lack of follow-up calls contributed to frustration and mistrust.
- **Resource Allocation:** 30 complaints highlighted perceived staff shortages, suggesting there were not enough skilled personnel to handle the volume of complaints efficiently. Additionally, delays in ordering and receiving necessary parts for repairs further exacerbated the problem.

Some complaints involved multiple issues, such as both extended resolution times and communication gaps, which is why the numbers for each issue overlap. This indicates that several complaints were multifaceted, addressing more than one area of concern.

“It is not unusual that the customer facing business units typically receive a higher volume of complaints due to the nature of the work being carried out by these teams and in the case of Housing Maintenance and Asset Management, how intrinsically linked this service is to the lives and homes of our tenants. We encourage all customers to provide feedback to us, whether positive or negative, and because of this feedback we recognise that this is an area in which improvement is required. We have recruited a complaints co-ordinator to help this business unit with ensuring complaints are responded to in time, also enabling officers to focus on rectifying service failures and implementing improvements and are taking steps to increase the level of resources within the business unit for identified pinch points. Some of these complaints also relate to the performance of our contractors and we are working with them to improve their services and response times”.

*Note: The complaints category 'Officer (Conduct/Attitude)' is a broad category that does not only cover the behaviour of an officer but could also include a complaint raised for either

- noise during a waste collection
- response given by the officer was deemed not suitable or
- the behaviour and/or attitude of the officer.

Work is ongoing to review the categories to refine them for increased clarity.

3.4 Processing Times

To ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code, it is necessary for our policy to include specific timescales for responding to complaints. The council is currently updating its recording systems to reflect these new requirements, which will be applied to all complaints from April 2025 onward.

- Stage 1 - acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of the request being received and provide a full response within 10 working days.
- Stage 2 -acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of the escalation request being received and provide a full response within 20 working days.

It is important that we take complaints seriously and meet the timescales of our policy and the Housing Ombudsman. When a customer has complained to us it is right that they expect a response within a reasonable timescale. There will be occasions where the timescales need to be extended in cases where obtaining the relevant information may take longer as it's from a third party or because an officer who had dealt with the customer is on leave. Wherever this delay is necessary, the complainant will be kept updated.

Table 3 below summarises the number of complaints that met or missed statutory deadlines. The significant increase in complaint volume during this period has impacted our ability to meet response targets. Investigations are ongoing to understand the reasons behind missed deadlines.

Table 3 (Stage 1 Complaint processing summary)

Period	Met Deadline	Missed Deadline	Total completed	% on Target
October - March 2023/24	194	22	216	90%
October - March 2024/25	139	157	296	47%

7 Withdrawn and 2 suspended complaints are excluded from the above calculations

In the second half of 2024/25, 305 Stage 1 complaints were received. Of these, 7 were withdrawn and 2 suspended, leaving 296 to be processed. Of those, 47% (139) were responded to within the statutory deadline—a significant drop from 90% (194 of 216) during the same period in 2023/24. This decline is attributed to a higher volume of complaints being received, resource challenges, and previously there were some difficulties with the complaint's software, which have now been resolved. The post of Complaints Coordinator has since been appointed within the Housing, Health & Wellbeing Directorate and will be responsible for managing complaints received at stage 1. In addition to this, a new process to improve response times Council wide, is being introduced and will be led by the Director of Customer Services and Organisational Development.

Table 4 – (Late responses by delivery team – Stage 1

Delivery Team	Received	Overdue	%
Housing Maintenance & Asset Management	147	120	82%
Housing & Estate Management	47	21	45%
Waste & Transport	48	13	27%
Planning Development	8	4	50%
Council Tax	19	2	11%
Corporate Property	8	2	25%
Public Protection	2	1	50%
Legal	2	1	50%

Excludes complaints which were withdrawn/suspended and Teams with all complaints dealt with on time.

During the second half of 2024/25, Housing Maintenance & Asset Management had the highest percentage of overdue complaints with 120 out of 147 responses exceeding statutory response times. Planning Development and Public Protection both had 50% of their complaints overdue. The increase in complaint volume, coupled with the announcement of new response deadlines, is believed to be impacting these figures.

3.5 Outcome of Complaints

Once the officer responsible for responding to a complaint has undertaken the appropriate investigation they will determine if the complaint was fully upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld. In writing the response they clearly state the outcome and record this within the ESB system.

It is important to note that sometimes customers are unhappy with a decision or process but upon investigation it is found that the council has acted appropriately, and these complaints are not upheld.

Often complaints contain more than 1 issue, complaints partially upheld are where some of the issues raised are upheld but others are not.

Complaints that haven't been decided may be addressed after the reporting period and will be included in future reports once their decision process is complete.

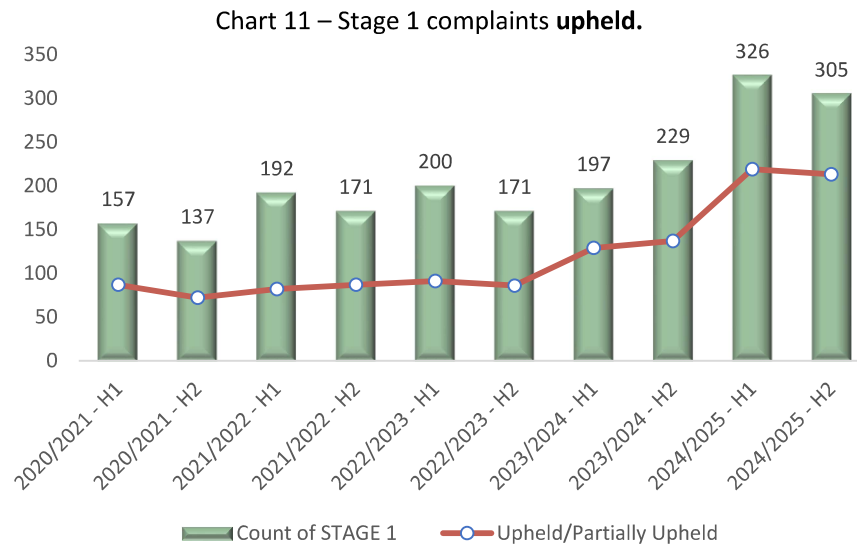
Table 5 (decision status of stage 1 complaints)

Complaints Upheld	Complaints Partially Upheld	Complaints Not Upheld	Complaints not decided
149	64	72	11

**2 complaints were suspended and 7 were withdrawn from the process*

On further examination of our data over a period of 5 years, there is a clear upward trend in the total number of complaints over the periods, with a significant peak in 2024/2025-H1 (chart 9).

The number of upheld or partially upheld complaints has been gradually increasing, indicating a trend towards more complaints being acknowledged, suggesting that the standards for upholding complaints might be evolving or that more complaints are meeting the criteria for being upheld.



3.6 What have we learned?

Analysis of our customer feedback allows us to identify and address specific service issues effectively. Table 6 highlights examples of actions taken in response to customer complaints, demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement. These examples reflect how we translate feedback into service enhancements. Most upheld complaints have led to recorded improvements and lessons learned.

Table 6 (Lessons learned)

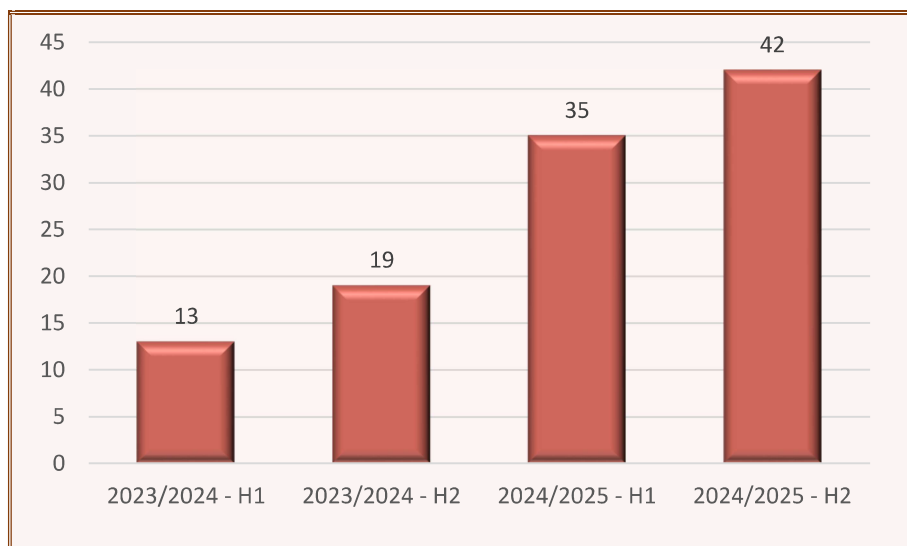
Area of concern	Action taken to improve
Corporate Property	
At Tolney Lane Riverside car park, visitors were unable to access the advertised free Christmas parking. Payment was required as there was no option to obtain a free ticket.	The parking machine software had failed on this occasion. We are amending signage in place to include instructions to customers for them to continue to park for free without displaying the free parking ticket when the machines are out of use.
Housing Maintenance & Asset Management	
Damage occurring during repairs to the exterior of a property. Plaster was knocked off the wall, exposing brickwork, and glue has been spilled on the floor.	Works carried out by Compliance Team appear to have fallen in between different contractors and agency staff being used. Difficult to track works carried out and any QC checks undertaken before sign-off and payment. Discussed as part of processes and procedures with current interim Compliance team members.
No heating or hot water for 3-4 weeks in council home. Despite multiple requests to repair. The cause has not yet been identified. This is causing distress for the tenants.	Changes to process for updating Contractor of newly acquired properties, and additions to the gas contract have been made.
Dissatisfaction with service provided by Out of Hours Repairs. The inside window glass of a rear double door was accidentally smashed, posing a clear danger. Despite this, the issue was not classified as an emergency, and the residents were required to secure the window themselves. The resident explained that the window had been unstable since they moved into the property, contributing to the breakage.	Updated Repairs Supervisors and emailed to ensure that operatives make safe damaged double-glazed units, even if only one pane is damaged. This will also be picked up as part of the wider Out of Hours service review.
A report was made regarding outstanding repairs. The tenant is still waiting for repointing work to be completed after the scheduled date was missed without notification. Despite multiple calls to inquire about the delay, no satisfactory response was received.	The team was reminded to communicate with tenants regarding appointments. Supervisors were instructed to ensure operatives notify them and works planners if tasks cannot be completed, preventing tenants from being unaware of cancellations.
Regenerations & Housing Strategy	
A complaint was raised regarding the conduct of a tenant during a meeting about the new response and repairs policy. The tenant accused the complainant of shouting repeatedly and name-calling due to a disagreement. The complainant found the tenant's behaviour highly inappropriate and aggressive.	Creation of a meeting protocol for involved tenants, to outline conduct and behaviour expectations. To be led by Tenant Engagement Team, developed in collaboration with tenants.
Revenues & Benefits	
A resident, who recently purchased a house was sent a letter requesting payment. The resident set up a direct debit to pay in three instalments, as specified in the letter. However, the entire amount was charged at once.	A review identified that the wording for the payment option, which provided instalments only through January, was unclear. The customer chose this option, leading to confusion. The wording has been amended to clearly indicate the number of instalments being chosen.

4. Complaints - Stage 2

Stage 2 complaints are those where a customer remains dissatisfied with the response received at Stage 1. Reviewing these in detail allows us to identify opportunities for service improvement and assess the effectiveness of our initial responses. Although the overall number of complaints remains proportionally small compared to the volume of services delivered, Stage 2 complaints provide valuable insight into more complex or unresolved issues.

In the second half of 2024/25, 42 Stage 2 complaints were received—an increase of 23% compared to 35 in the previous period. This continues a two-year upward trend, suggesting either increased complexity in complaints or challenges in resolving issues at Stage 1.

Chart 12 (2-Year trend)- half years



Includes withdrawn and suspended complaints at this stage

Of the 42 Stage 2 complaints received in the period, 25 were upheld with a further 4 being partially upheld (table 7)

Table 7 (Stage 2 Complaints)

Complaints Upheld	Complaints Partially Upheld	Complaints Not Upheld	Complaints not decided/in progress
25	4	12	1

Of the 42 complaints processed during Half 2, 40% met the response deadline of 15 working days (table 8)

Table 8 (Stage 2 processing deadlines)

Period	Met Deadline	Missed Deadline	Total completed	% on Target
October 2024 – March 2025	17	25	42	40%

The highest rate of overdue responses was recorded in Housing Maintenance & Asset Management, where 16 of 22 complaints (72.7%) missed the deadline. Revenues & Benefits and Environmental Services processed all of their Stage 2 complaints within the required period.

Table 9 (Stage 2 processing times by BU)

Business Unit	On Time	Overdue	Grand Total
Housing Maintenance & Asset Management	6	16	22
Planning Development	1	2	3
Public Protection		1	1
Revenues & Benefits	1		1
Housing Estates & Management	5	6	11
Environmental Services	4		4
Grand Total	17	25	42

All stage 2 complaints are thoroughly reviewed during the development of this report, including all related correspondence exchanged throughout the life of the complaint. This helps clarify why each complaint escalated to stage 2 and what could have been done differently at stage 1 to resolve it earlier. Table 10 highlights the most common themes, helping to sense check whether resources and attention are being appropriately focused in the right areas.

Table 10 (Stage 2 Complaints by Category)

Category of Complaint	No.	%
Housing - Time Taken to Complete Repair (Repairs)	11	26%
Staff Conduct	7	17%
Housing - Quality of Repair Work (Repairs)	4	10%
Housing - Standard of Accommodation	4	10%
Communal Area	3	7%
Communication	3	7%
Housing - Quality of Repair Work (Assets)	2	5%
Communication and staff conduct (contractor)	1	2%
Contractor - Customer Service (Repairs)	1	2%
Customer Communication (Delays/Lack of)	1	2%
Housing - Time Taken to Complete Repair (Assets)	1	2%
Multiple issues - Staff conduct, outstanding repair issues, lack of support	1	2%
Neighbour Issue	1	2%
Outcome of Council Decision	1	2%
Waste - Contamination of Recycling	1	2%

5. Ombudsman Complaints

Each Ombudsman produces Annual Review Letters detailing how many complaints they have received for individual councils and how many decisions they have made. These are reported to the Audit and Governance Committee. Table 11 below summarises the number of complaints received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) for the previous 4 years.

Table 11 (LGSCO complaints decisions)

Year	Decided by the LGSCO	Number Upheld
April 2024 - March 2025	9	1
April 2023 – March 2024	9	0
April 2022 – March 2023	9	0
April 2021 – March 2022	12	0
April 2020 - March 2021	11	1

For the financial year 2024/25, the LGSCO has published nine decisions. Eight were closed after initial enquires and one was upheld as follows:

- *In 2023, the Council acknowledged a statutory nuisance but did not act promptly to begin a formal investigation. Additionally, the information provided to the complainant was inconsistent. Following a review, the Council has accepted that there were delays and communication issues. It has agreed to issue a formal apology and make a symbolic payment in recognition of the inconvenience caused.*

The LGSCO have published two good practice guides aimed at helping authorities to get things right before cases are escalated:

- Appendix 1. [Section 117 Aftercare guidance \(lgo.org.uk\)](https://lgo.org.uk/section-117-aftercare-guidance)
- Appendix 2. [Guidance for practitioners: Deprivation of Capital \(lgo.org.uk\)](https://lgo.org.uk/guidance-for-practitioners-deprivation-of-capital)

The Housing Ombudsman outcomes for the past 4 years are shown in Table 12.

Table 12 (Housing Ombudsman complaints decisions)

Year	Decided by the HO	Number Upheld
April 2024 - March 2025	2	2
April 2023 – March 2024	1	0
April 2022 – March 2023	1	0
April 2021 – March 2022	1	0
April 2020 - March 2021	1	0

For the financial year 2024/25, the Housing Ombudsman has published 2 decisions, both of which were upheld:

1. *The Housing Ombudsman reviewed a complaint about Newark and Sherwood District Council's handling of damp and mould in a resident's home. The resident, who has mental health issues and young children with respiratory problems, reported several problems. The council did not fix these issues quickly, causing ongoing distress. The Ombudsman found the council's response inadequate, and the council acknowledged this, apologized, and paid £600 in compensation. They also committed to completing the necessary repairs and mould treatment promptly.*
2. *A resident with Asperger's and ADHD, along with his partner who has mental health vulnerabilities, reported antisocial behaviour from a neighbour, including noise, late-night gatherings, and drug use. The landlord's response was inadequate, failing to conduct a risk assessment, offer mediation, or liaise effectively with the police, leading to distress for the resident. The Ombudsman found maladministration and service failure in the Councils handling of the complaint, ordering £750 compensation, a written apology, and an internal review to improve ASB handling and record-keeping practices.*

6. Suggestions

During the period, 20 suggestions were initially received. Upon examination, one suggestion was identified as a service request and another as a complaint. Additionally, three suggestions were subsequently withdrawn. Table 13 provides a sample of the suggestions received.

Table 13 (Suggestions)

Suggestion	Response
Communications	
Suggestions on how to make it easier for people who are sight impaired or not computer literate Increase contrast between text and background. Using black and white, avoid grey buttons. Larger buttons are easier to see and click. Please pass to your Disability Access officer and carry out a review of the website to increase accessibility	We have an accessibility guide that we follow to ensure our website meets accessibility standards. We also use a dedicated tool to regularly assess and maintain the accessibility of our site. Additionally, we are preparing to present a report to the Senior Leadership Team in the coming weeks regarding the site's accessibility, which may include a proposal to transition to a new content management system to further enhance accessibility.
Corporate Property	
A customer raised concerns about accessibility at the London Road car park. They highlighted the lack of dropped kerbs or safe access routes to the footpath, requiring wheelchair users to navigate behind parked cars to reach their destination. The customer suggested removing one parking bay to install a drop kerb and improve access	Newark and Sherwood District Council acknowledges the accessibility issue raised and appreciates the feedback. In response, planned works will include the removal of one parking space, installation of cross hatching for disabled access, and the addition of a dropped kerb to improve wheelchair access. These improvements are expected to be completed within 8–10 weeks, pending coordination with other scheduled works.

Suggestion	Response
A resident expressed concern about drivers, including taxis, leaving engines running while parked, particularly near Boots on Stodman Street. They noted this contributes to pollution and breaches anti-idling laws, and suggested enforcement action.	The Council acknowledges that unnecessary engine idling is an offence and has referred the matter to its enforcement and transport teams to consider awareness campaigns and targeted enforcement in key areas. However, the Council does not have powers to enforce pavement parking unless it occurs in marked bays or restricted areas; obstructive parking must be reported to the Police via 101.
Economic Growth	
As I am disabled and cannot walk far, I must go shopping to Retford as they have a mobility scooter hire service for blue badge holders. I would visit Newark more if this was available and am sure a lot of other people would too.	Thank you for taking the time to provide the suggestion for a mobility scooter hire service in Newark. It is not something currently planned for in our service areas, however, we will take your suggestion on board and consider it in line with any suitable future funding programmes.
Environmental Services	
A resident reported that the general waste bin in the centre of Fleming Drive Park frequently overflows with dog waste, likely due to its location near the park entrance. They suggested installing a dedicated dog waste bin with a lid next to the existing bin to reduce odour, improve hygiene, and prevent fly attraction.	The Council has acknowledged the issue and agreed to explore the installation of an additional lidded litter bin in the centre of the park to help manage waste more effectively

7. Praise (Compliments)

Compliments help us understand what our customers value and highlight good practices. This includes compliments directed to the Council by customers regarding the quality of service provided by individual staff members or service teams. Occasionally, customers have submitted a compliment instead of a complaint. To prevent confusion, we have amended the wording to "Praise."

I want to extend a huge thank-you to your repairs team and the lady I spoke to this morning at 9am. I was in an absolute state regarding a problem with our waste and in a real panic. An emergency repair / assessment was promptly scheduled. Speaking to someone who genuinely wants to help and understands the stress caused by home issues made a world of difference. We have recently had a spate of repairs, and the service has been brilliant. It has been a straightforward process, and I am super grateful. Thankyou

Chart 13 (Praise Themes)

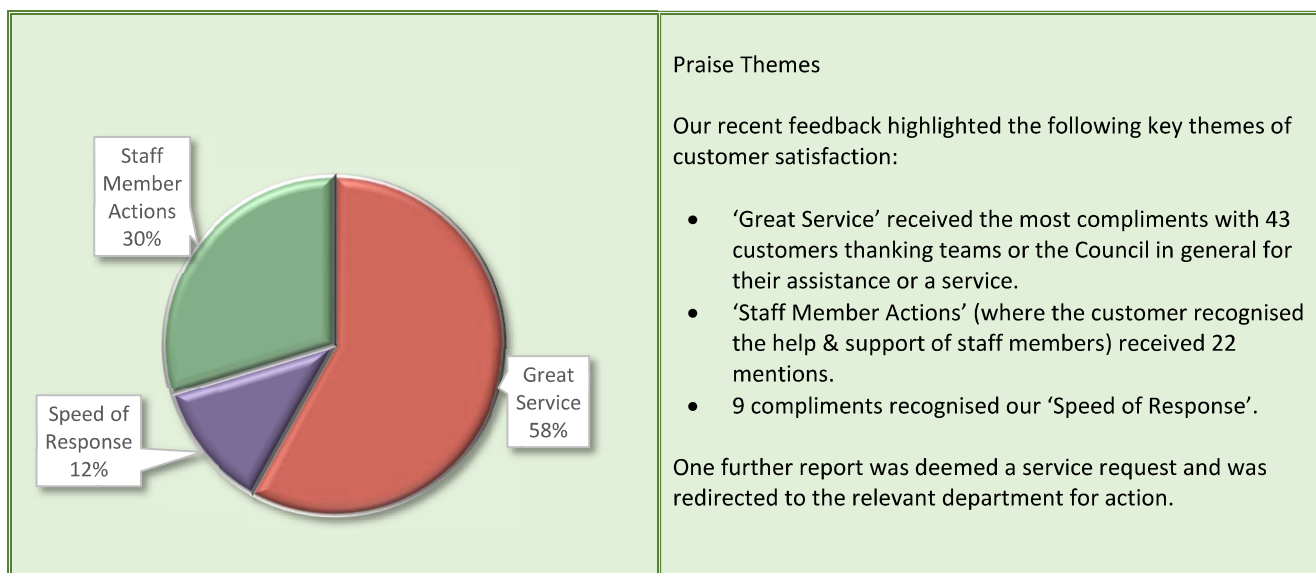
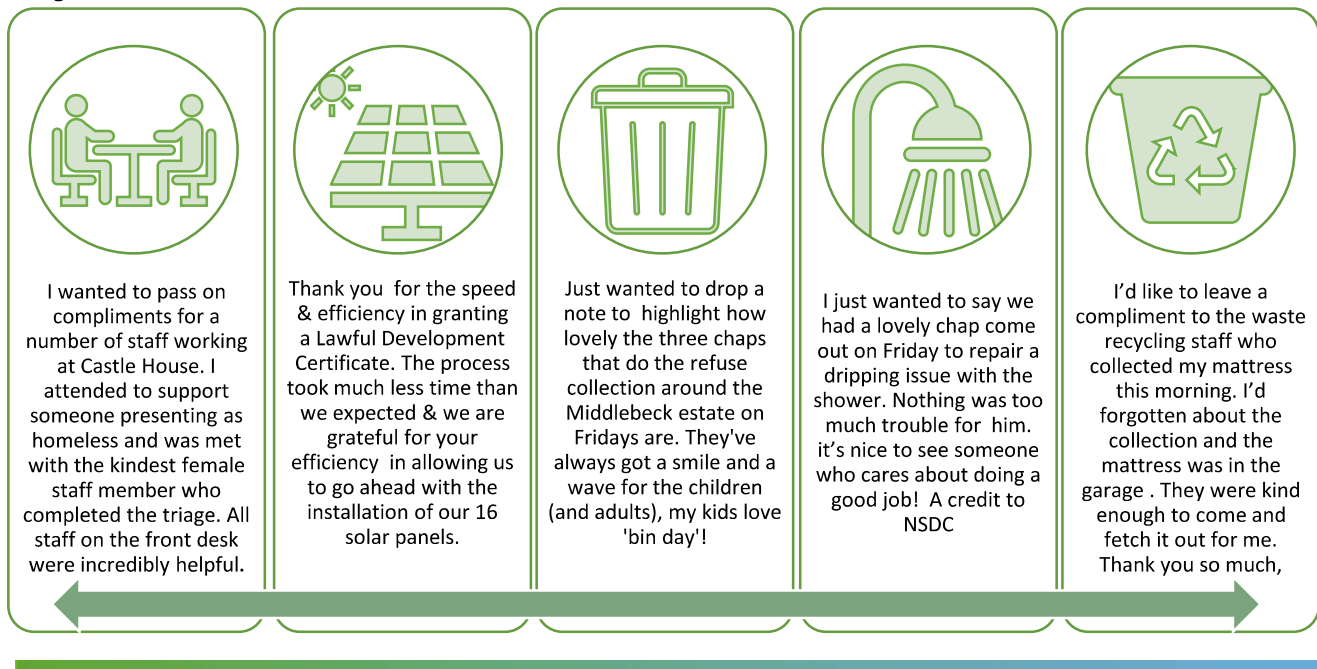


Chart 14 (praise by BU)



Compliments Examples

Fig 3

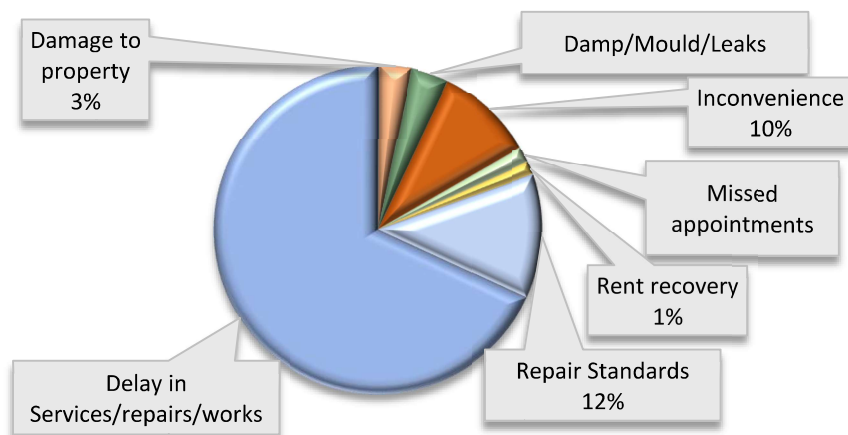


8. Putting it Right

Compensation serves as a remedy for any inconvenience or distress caused by service failures within the Council's social housing. Each claim will be evaluated individually. The compensation amount will reflect the level of inconvenience, disturbance, and distress experienced due to delays in resolving the issue, and the extent of the Council's responsibility. Additionally, the Council will consider whether the time taken to resolve the problem was excessive.

Sixty-seven claims were awarded compensation in the period 01 October 2024 – 31 March 2025 (Half 2 2024/25) amounting to a total of £16,353; representing a 167% increase from the £6,135 paid out during the same period in 2023/24. Chart 15 shows the percentage of the total awards in each category. Table 14 displays the costs awarded in each category in comparison to the same period in 2023/24.

Chart 15 - Categories



The highest single category is Delay in Services/Repairs/Works, increasing from £4,180 in half 2 2023/24 to £5,707 in the same period 2024/25. These figures reflect a broader and more responsive approach to addressing service-related issues, particularly in housing and maintenance.

Table 14 (Compensation by category)

Category	Half 2 2023/24	Half 2 2024/25
Damage to property	£200	£270
Damp/Mould/Leaks	£231	£3,810
Goodwill	-	£413
Inconvenience	£594	£2,664
Missed appointments	£100	-
Rent recovery	£81	£724
Repair Standards	£750	£1,043
Delay in Services/repairs/works	£4,180	£5,707
Standard of service (Contractor)		£2,098
Total Compensation paid	£6,135	£16,728



Report to: Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee – 11 September 2025

Director Lead: Sue Bearman, Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services, Monitoring Officer

Lead Officer: Nigel Hill, Business Manager Elections & Democratic Services, Deputy Monitoring Officer

Report Summary	
Report Title	Code of Conduct Annual Report for the Period 1 May 2024 – 30 April 2025
Purpose of Report	To consider the Code of Conduct Annual Report for the Period 1 May 2024 – 30 April 2025
Recommendations	<p>That the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) note the annual report;b) note that a particular focus will be given to social media at the next Code of Conduct refresher session for all Members; andc) note and endorse the communications strategy for the Local Government Association Debate not Hate campaign.
Reason for Recommendations	To provide Members with details of Code of Conduct complaints received in 2024/25 and an update on related matters. .

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Governance, General Purposes and LGR Committee has responsibility for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted Members of the Council. It is also responsible for maintaining an overview of the Member Code of Conduct and arrangements for dealing with complaints.

2.0 Code of Conduct Complaints

- 2.1 It was reported to Audit & Governance Committee (this Committee's predecessor) in July 2024 that the Monitoring Officer recorded 41 formal complaints within the period 1 April 2023 to 30 April 2024: of these 19 related to District Councillors and 22 related to Town or Parish Councillors.

- 2.2 At Members' request, due to concerns about the significant increase in complaint numbers, an update report was presented in February 2025. It was reported that the Monitoring Officer recorded 28 formal complaints within the period 1 May 2024 to 31 January 2025: of these 15 related to District Councillors and 13 related to Town or Parish Councillors. 14 of the 28 complaints were received from members of the public and 14 from elected officials.
- 2.3 The total number of complaints received for the municipal year was 40; a comparable number to the previous reporting year, when 41 complaints were recorded.
- 2.4 The following is a summary of complaints received from 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025:

Subject of Complaint	Number
District Councillor	22
Parish Councillor	18
Total	40

Complainant Type	Number
Member of the Public	18
Elected Official	22
Total	40

- 2.5 The following is a summary of outcomes in relation the 40 complaints received:

Complaint Outcomes	Number
Closed without investigation*	31
On hold pending the outcome of another complaint	1
Withdrawn	4
Investigation	4
Total	40

* It was determined following appropriate consultation with the Independent Persons that either no further action was required, or that informal resolution was appropriate.

- 2.6 The nature of complaints received is similar to previous years and can be summarised as follows: -
- Disrespect
 - Bringing authority into disrepute
 - Conduct at meetings
 - Verbal abuse/outburst
 - Breach of confidentiality
 - Failure to register and declare interests
 - Conflict of interest
 - Bullying, harassment and discrimination
 - Failure to act with integrity and honesty

- 2.7 17 complaints related to social media posts. A separate report regarding the Council's Social Media Policy for Councillors is due to be presented to the November meeting of this Committee, and it is proposed that a particular focus is given to social media at the next Code of Conduct refresher session for all Members.
- 2.8 No further action was taken in relation to 8 complaints that were considered politically motivated/tit for tat, and that it would not be in the public interest, or a good use of resource, to consider them further.
- 2.9 In relation to the District Council, the highest number of complaints made against an individual Councillor was 7. The highest number of complaints made by an individual complainant (a Councillor) was 13. In relation to parish and town councils, a number relate to underlying issues at one parish council. Those complainants have been signposted to other bodies including the parish council's auditors and the Information Commissioner, where appropriate, as the formal remit of the District Council is limited to Code of Conduct matters. Mediation has also been recommended.
- 2.10 For comparison, in 2022-23 a total of 14 complaints were received. In 2021-2 a total of 9 complaints were received. The high volume of complaints inevitably has a resource implication on the Monitoring Officer, members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) including the Chief Executive, and other Officers. A conservative estimate is that 2 hours a week of SLT Officer time is taken up with conduct related matters.
- 2.11 The Council's two appointed Independent Persons provided independent review and oversight in relation to all formal complaints recorded, and any investigations. With the volume of complaints received this is a not insubstantial task, and the Monitoring Officer is hugely appreciative of their invaluable assistance.

3.0 Formal Investigation and Code of Conduct Hearings

- 3.1 In relation to the 4 complaints referred for investigation, this has been outsourced to an independent investigator who has now concluded their investigation. The initial quote was for £4,515 plus VAT, but final confirmation of cost is awaited at the conclusion of the matter. No Code of Conduct Hearings were held during the reporting period.

4.0 Register of Members Interests

- 4.1 Register of Interests Forms for Newark & Sherwood District Council Members are published on the Council's website: <https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>. Members are periodically sent reminders by Democratic Services to check their registers are up to date.
- 4.2 Town and Parish Councillors are also required to complete a Register of Interests Form. These are also published on the Council's website: <https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/parishcouncils/register-of-interests-for-parish-councillors>. Regular communication is held with parish councils to ensure, as far as possible, that all their Register of Member Interest Forms are sent to us for publication. Where

forms are outstanding, regular reminders are sent to those parishes. Also, when we become aware of new Members who have been appointed through co-option to fill vacancies, the parishes are reminded of the requirement to submit the completed returns to us as soon as practicable.

5.0 Code of Conduct Training

- 5.1 The Monitoring and Deputy Monitoring Officer delivered Code of Conduct training in November 2024 in conjunction with equalities training. This Committee is due to receive a separate report regarding Member training and development in November.

6.0 Government Consultation on the Code of Conduct

- 6.1 Audit & Governance Committee (this Committee's predecessor) responded to the Government's consultation on the Code of Conduct in February 2025. The consultation sought views on introducing a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England, and measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime in England to ensure consistency of approach amongst councils investigating serious breaches of their member codes of conduct, including the introduction of the power of suspension. The Government is yet to publish its findings and proposals; an update will be brought to this Committee when available.

7.0 Conduct and Public Service

- 7.1 Under its 'Conduct and Public Service' workstream, Audit & Governance Committee noted (May 2025) that Officers were to explore the cost and resource implications of supporting the Local Government Association's Debate not Hate Campaign. A communications strategy is attached as an **appendix** for information and endorsement.
- 7.2 Enquiries have also been made with other organisations including East Midlands Councils and East Midlands Mayoral Combined Authority about the possibility of the Council hosting a conference regarding good conduct in public office. While nothing is planned for the time being the Council's interest has been registered.

8.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications FIN25-26/3692

- 8.1 The budget for code of conduct complaints was set to cover the additional cost of any complaints received that required further investigation by an external body. The table below shows the actual activity from 2022/23 to the current forecast in 2025/26:

Year	Budget	Actual	(Favourable)/Unfavourable Variance
2022/23 Actual	300	0	(300)
2023/24 Actual	300	1,362	1,062
2024/25 Forecast	320	27,644	(27,324)
2025/26	5,000	5,000 (based on forecast)	0

8.2 The actual for 24/25 was £27,644 needed to outsource some assessment work and investigations. This resulted in an unfavourable variance of £27,324 which was funded by the Corporate Contingency budget.

8.3 As an addition to the above table the 2025/26 cost of 2 hours per week of an SLT member would be approximately £7,000 per annum.

Legal Implications LEG2526/4204

8.4 The Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report, in accordance with its terms of reference.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Government Consultation is published -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england>

Audit & Governance Committee report 31 July 2024 is published -

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/documents/s20492/Item%2017%2031.07.24%20Annual%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20Complaints%20Report.pdf>

Audit & Governance Committee report 19 February 2025 is published -

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/documents/s22057/Item%2019%2019.02.25%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Update%20and%20Government%20Consultation.pdf>

The Code of Conduct and associated complaints procedure are published on the Council's [website](#).

Debate Not Hate – Communications Plan

Background Information

The Local Government Association are building a picture of the level of abuse and intimidation councillors receive on a daily basis for simply carrying out the role in their community.

Anyone, regardless of their background or political affiliation, should feel safe to become a councillor and be proud to represent their community.

But their 2025 Debate not Hate survey of councillors found more than half report being victims of misinformation, while rates of abuse and threats remain high across local government.

The increasing level of abuse and intimidation aimed at local politicians is preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election and undermining local democracy.

Aim

The Debate Not Hate campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in their communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the responses and support for local politicians facing abuse and intimidation.

Audiences

Councillors

Residents

Key officers

Corporate Communications

Democratic Services

Campaign deliverables

Date to go live	Channel	Action	Further information	Suppliers	Budget	Lead officer	Status
Immediate and free communication actions							
ASAP	Website	Upload information about the Debate Not Hate campaign to the main NSDC website.	Councillors and committees Newark & Sherwood District Council	N/A	N/A	BF	
ASAP	Intranet	Upload information about the Debate Not Hate campaign to the Member's intranet	Any article that goes on the member's intranet also automatically goes on the staff one	N/A	N/A	BF	
ASAP	Email	Email to all Councillors regarding the Debate Not Hate campaign	Directing them to the page on the intranet	N/A	N/A	BF	
ASAP	Press release	Press release to announce our support for the campaign		N/A	N/A	BF	
ASAP	Social media	Social media schedule	Posts to go out every couple of weeks / month, and more frequently during key times such as elections.	N/A	N/A	BF	
September	Posters	Display posters around Castle House and in the Civic Suites during Committee Meetings	A4 – produced internally to avoid external costs	N/A	N/A	BF	
Throughout the year	Newsletters	Article about the campaign	Can be included in all newsletters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Resident • Business • Tenant 	N/A	N/A	BF	
Other free activity to consider							
ASAP	Email signature banners	Staff, or selected staff and councillors to add these to signatures	Subject to check via Transformation Team and our email signature policy	N/A	N/A	BF	
ASAP	Virtual meeting background	Add the background to the intranet for people to download	This could only be for a select period of time such as elections like when we do a background for Armed Forces reasons.	N/A	N/A	BF	

Budget pending communication actions							
TBC	Posters	Professionally print off some posters to have in committee meetings and around CH and to send to other offices	Anything bigger than A4 will need professionally printed. Additionally, the print quality will be enhanced.	Ultimate Print	A3 glossy posters cost £4 each but specific costs TBC	BF	
TBC	Standeers	To display in the Civic Suites during committee meetings.	LGA have already designed these so it would be just printing them up. These can also be taken to specific events	TBC	Approximately £75 plus VAT each	BF	



Report to: Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee – 11 September 2025

Director Lead: Sue Bearman, Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Services

Lead Officer: Nigel Hill, Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services

Report Summary	
Report Title	Remote Attendance at Meetings and Proxy Voting
Purpose of Report	To update Members on the Government consultation on remote attendance at meetings.
Recommendations	That the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee note the contents of the report.
Reason for Recommendations	For Members to be aware of the feedback from the current makeup of Councils.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 11 December 2024 the Audit & Governance Committee considered a report in relation to the Council's response to the Government consultation on remote attendance at meetings and proxy voting.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Government consultation had stemmed from a recognition that there were circumstances in which it may not always be possible for Members to attend council meetings in person.
- 1.3 The Government's intention was to amend the law to introduce provisions for remote attendance at local authority meetings and it was hoped that such flexibility would strike the right balance between in-person and remote attendance thereby encouraging a wider diversity of people will and able to stand and actively participate in local democracy.
- 1.4 The outcome of the consultation has now been published. *See background papers for a link to the full response.*

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered

- 2.1 The Government is of the view that in-person authority meetings remain vital for local democracy, but that hybrid and remote attendance and proxy voting, will enable local authorities in England to develop more modern, accessible and flexible working practices.

- 2.2 They have carefully considered arguments for and against remote attendance and proxy voting and they plan to legislate to support permanent provision in relation to both policies, when parliamentary time allows.
- 2.3 On remote attendance, they plan to permit local authorities to develop their own locally appropriate policies, if they decide to hold remote meetings.
- 2.4 On proxy voting, they plan to require principal (unitary, upper and second-tier) councils to implement proxy voting schemes, to provide consistency for Members who are absent when they become a new parent, or for serious or long-term illness. They plan for this requirement to apply to meetings of full council. For all other meetings, proxy voting may be used but will not be required and substitute or pairing schemes may be more appropriate. They plan for other local authorities not listed above to be enabled but not required to implement proxy voting schemes, for any of their meetings, in the context of member absences for serious or long-term illness or becoming a new parent.
- 2.5 They plan to work collaboratively with the sector to develop clear and supportive guidance in relation to both remote attendance and proxy voting policies.
- 2.6 Implementation will require updates to the Council's Constitution, and these will be brought to Committee for consideration once the legislative changes are published, in readiness for implementation when the legislation comes into force.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Remote attendance and proxy voting in local authorities: consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)

27 NOVEMBER 2025

Report Title/Topic

Customer Feedback (Complaints, Suggestion & Praise for the period April 2025 – September 2025 (Half 1 - 2025/26)

Housing Ombudsman Annual Review Update

Local Government Outcomes Framework

Feedback of meetings between Chair & VC of GGP&LGR/A&A/PPIC

Review of Council's Constitution

Member Training & Development Protocol

5 FEBRUARY 2026

Report Title/Topic

Whistleblowing Annual Report

Gifts and Hospitality Annual Report

RIPA Annual Report

16 APRIL 2026

Report Title/Topic

Annual Review of the Council's Constitution

Annual Review of Exempt Reports