

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**



**CABINET – TUESDAY, 24 JUNE 2025**

Title of Report	ANNUAL CORPORATE COMPLAINTS	
Presented by	Councillor Andrew Woodman Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder <div>PH Briefed<div>x</div></div>	
Background Papers	None	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications in respect of this report.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	There are no direct staffing or corporate implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	<p>This is the Council’s annual complaints report for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. It includes information in respect of complaints across all directorates. It also provides information for decisions issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) in the same period.</p> <p>The report contributes to the Council’s aspirations in the Corporate Delivery Plan of being customer focused by acknowledging that complaints and formal enquiries provide a regular and rich source of feedback from residents that inform the Council when things have gone wrong. Learning from this provides the opportunity to improve services to support residents.</p>	
Reason for Decision	The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Code requires the Council to report on complaints annually to the governing body	
Recommendations	<b>THAT CABINET:</b> <b>1. NOTES THE COMMENTS MADE BY CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 19 JUNE 2025.</b> <b>2. NOTES THE DETAILS OF THE ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25.</b>	

	<p>3. <b>REVIEWS THE CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY IN APPENDIX 1 AND DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY AMENDMENTS.</b></p> <p>4. <b>REVIEWS THE SELF-ASSESSMENT AT APPENDIX 2 AND CONFIRMS IT IS IN AGREEMENT THAT THE COUNCIL IS COMPLIANT.</b></p> <p>5. <b>REVIEWS THE UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR AND COMMUNICATION POLICY IN APPENDIX 4 AND DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY AMENDMENTS.</b></p>
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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Each year, the Council is required to prepare an annual summary of complaints dealt with under the corporate Complaints Policy (the year runs from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025).
- 1.2 A complaint is defined within the Council as: *‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf affecting an individual/resident or a group of individuals/residents’.*
- 1.3 The Council provides a wide range of services to its residents and receives relatively few complaints, the Council seeks to learn from them and look for patterns of service failure. The Council continues to use the feedback it receives from its complaints to generate ideas for service improvements both in the short and long term.
- 1.4 The Council works hard to view the complaints it receives as a positive opportunity, whilst remaining focused on trying to resolve them to the satisfaction of residents as quickly as it can.
- 1.5 This is a report on all Council services’ formal enquiries which are:
- Complaints
  - Member Enquiries
  - MP Enquiries
- 1.6 Many service requests and enquiries are resolved informally by officers and managers every day without the need for the formal complaints process to be followed. Officers are urged to address customer grievances and proactively rectify issues as part of their normal business. These are not all formally logged or reported on, though services are encouraged to record these informal enquiries in some way to inform the way they deliver and improve their services in the future. Managing complaints informally as soon as possible represents best practice.
- 1.7 Where a request for service has been sent via the complaints process but is not deemed as a corporate complaint these are logged as a ‘Request for service’ and are recorded and reported on quarterly basis.
- 1.8 The Council’s complaints procedure is designed to address those issues that necessitate a formal reply and, as such, could not be resolved during the earlier stages

of the process. The Complaints Policy and procedure can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

- 1.9 As of the 1 January 2023, all stage 1 complaints are now signed off by a Strategic Director. Stage 2 complaints are signed off by the Chief Executive to ensure that everything that could have been done to resolve the matter has been investigated prior to the complainant seeking independent review by the relevant ombudsman.
- 1.10 This report focuses not only on volumes and timeliness of responses but also aims, when it is possible, to identify themes and lessons learnt that result in service improvements.
- 1.11 The Council has a commitment to learning and improvement. Complaints and other formal enquiries are important information, providing an opportunity to understand where and why things sometimes go wrong and provide a basis for the Council to make positive changes, informed by data and the resident voice.

## 2.0 COMPLAINTS' OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Number of Complaints and Enquiries - all stages

Level	2023/24	2024/2025
Stage 1	263	346
Stage 2	74	107
Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (that have reached formal investigation stage)	11	23
MP enquiries	131	175
Member enquiries	634	705
Compliments	240	273

- 2.2 There was a total of 346 stage 1 complaints, which is a 32% increase on the previous year. There was also an increase of 45% compared to the previous year in respect of stage 2 complaints with a total of 107. Some of this increase could be attributed to the Government's 'make things right' campaign, more details on this campaign can be found in paragraph 2.7 of this report.
- 2.3 The Council provides a wide variety of services for over 97,200 residents. In this context, 453 complaints (stage 1 and 2 combined) are only a fraction of the number of customer interactions occurring each year. For example, the Council's Customer Service team received 97,264 customer interactions alone in 2024/25.
- 2.4 The number of compliments recorded by the Council also increased, from 240 in 2023/24 to 273 (an increase of 14%). Improved efforts by Council departments to capture more of the positive feedback of residents is reflected in this increase. There is better engagement of staff in the process of recording the compliments they receive.
- 2.5 The number of stage 1 complaints received can be broken down by service as follows:

Service	Number of Complaints	As a % overall
Waste Services	53	15
Environmental Protection	10	3
Leisure Services	6	2
Community Safety	6	2
Customer Services	4	1
Finance	1	0.3
Housing Assets	22	6
Housing Repairs	156	45
Housing Management	41	12
Housing Strategy and Systems	15	4
Property Services	1	0.3
Environmental Health	2	1
Planning and Infrastructure	10	3
Revenues and Benefits	19	5

- 2.6 The number of complaints for each service does not necessarily provide a direct correlation with the standard of customer service provided, and these overall results cannot be treated in isolation. Each of these service results are heavily influenced by the type of business transacted by that service, for example, the number of customer facing transactions carried out, the public profile of the actions carried out by that service, and whether the customer has alternative formal routes for redress or appeal.
- 2.7 Housing Repairs received the highest number of complaints, with a significant 59% increase in 2024/25 (156) compared to 2023/24 (98). This rise could be attributed to the Government's 'Make Things Right' campaign in 2024, which aimed to raise awareness among social housing residents about their rights to report issues and make complaints regarding their living conditions [Make Things Right | Social housing issue? Know how to complain.](#)
- 2.8 Considering the volume of interactions Housing Repairs has with residents, for example, 55,157 contacts in 2024/25, the number of complaints received is relatively low. The complaints represent approximately 0.28% of the total transactions completed.
- 2.9 Waste Services received the second-highest number of complaints. However, these complaints are minimal when considering the number of interactions with residents. In 2024/25, Waste Services provided waste and recycling collections to around 48,640 properties within the district each week, totaling approximately 3,720,960 collections a year. The number of complaints received as a proportion of total collections is just 0.001%.

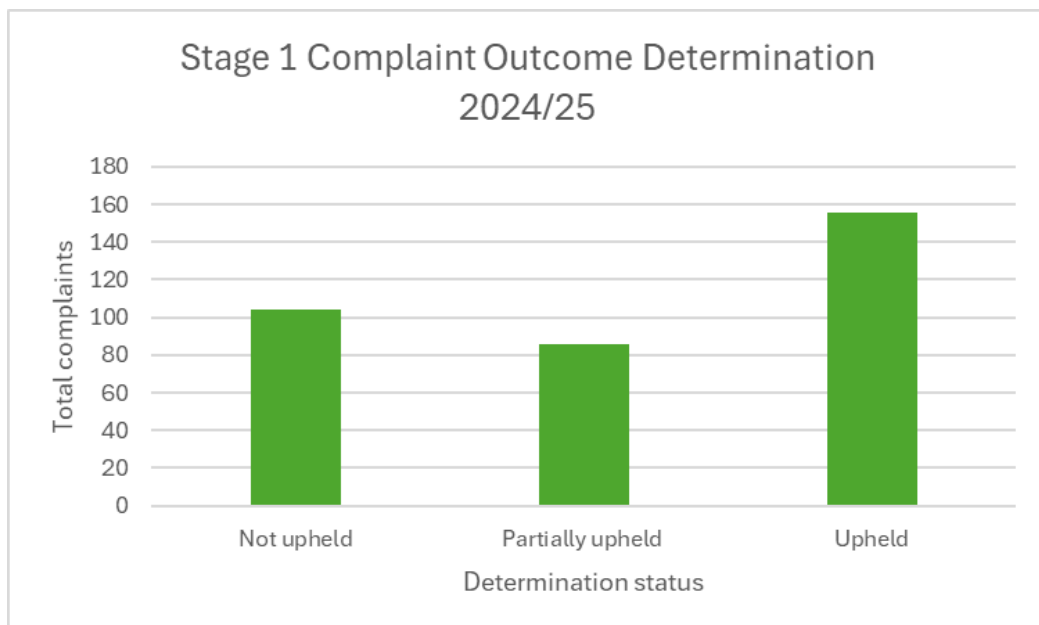
### 3 COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

3.1 Complaint outcomes are determined with one of the following statuses:

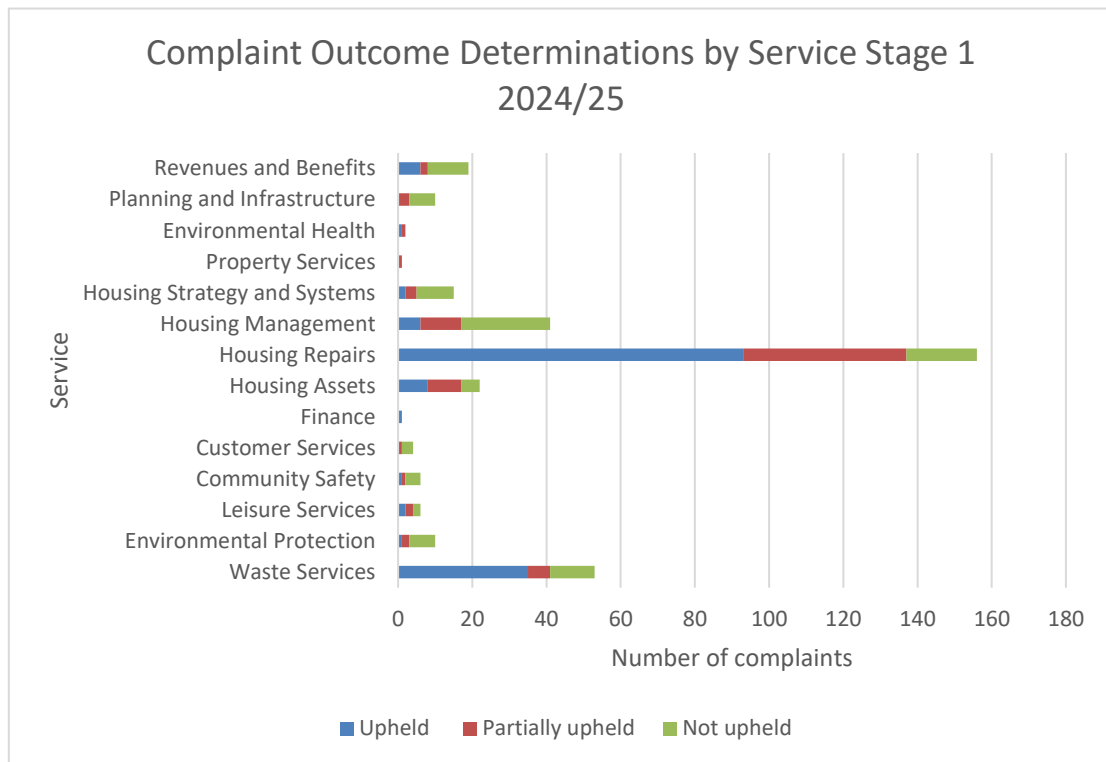
- Upheld- following investigation the Council has found in favour of the complainant.
- Not upheld- following investigation the Council has not found in favour of the complainant.

3.2 Sometimes complaints have more than one issue to be investigated. On occasion, these can have a mixture of the two above determinations and have a status partially upheld.

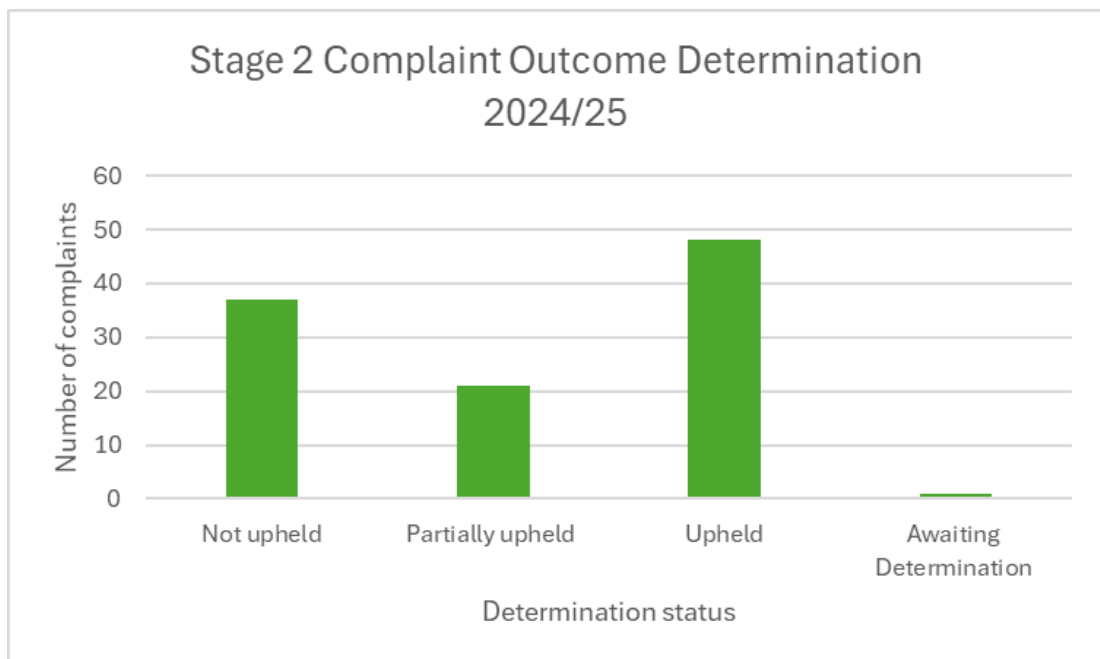
3.3 Stage 1 complaint outcome determination across the Council can be seen in the graph below. A total of 45% (156) of complaints were fully upheld when investigated at stage 1 of the complaints' process.



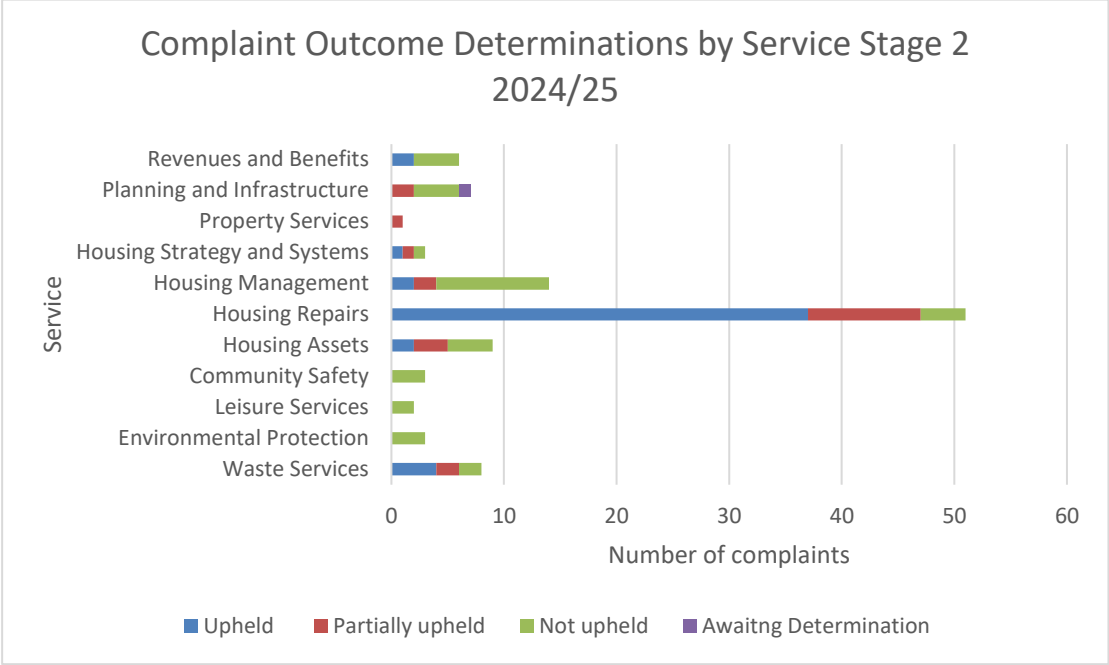
- 3.4 The graph below illustrates the stage 1 determinations by service. Housing Repairs has the highest upheld rate, with 93 complaints upheld and 44 partially upheld out of complaints for the service.



Stage 2 complaint outcome determination across the Council can be shown in the graph below. A total of 45% (48) of complaints were fully upheld when investigated at stage 2 of the complaints process.



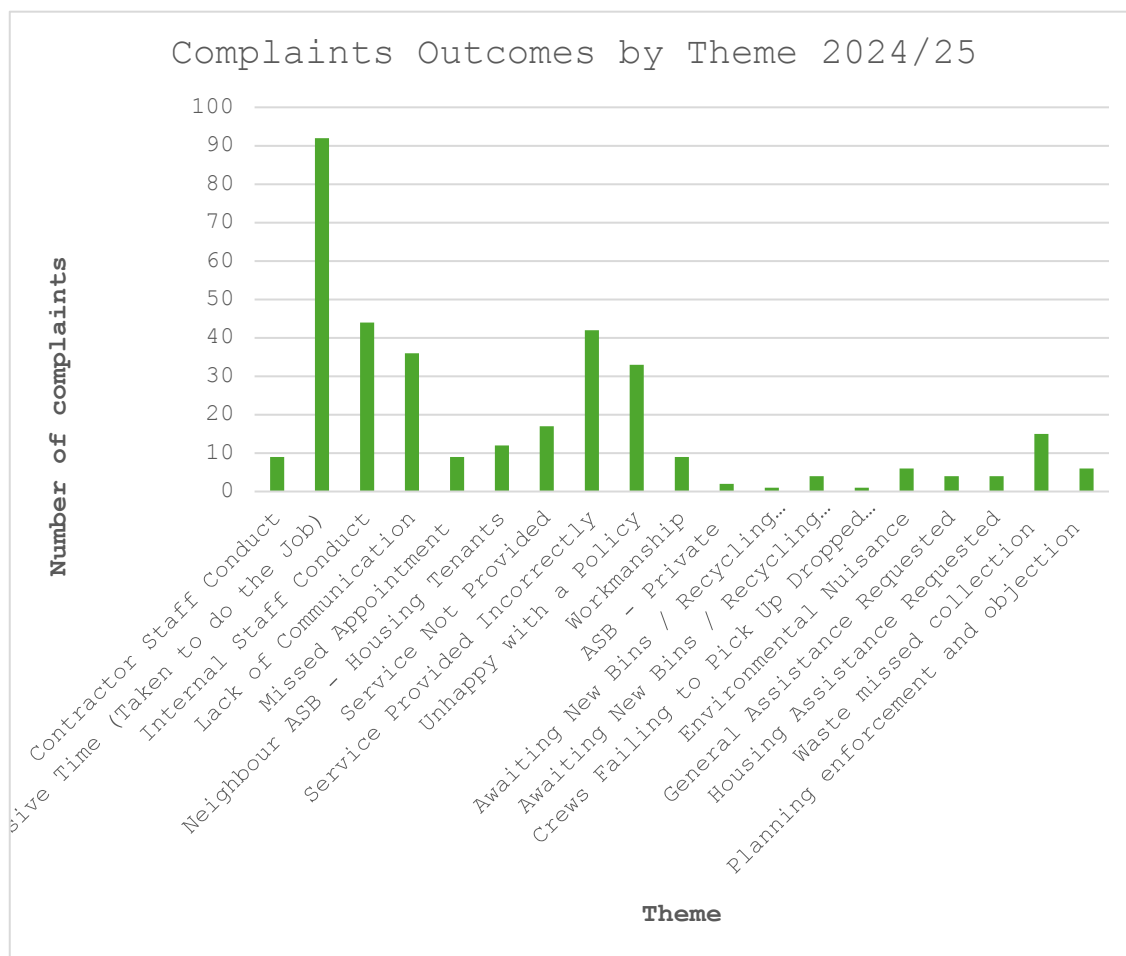
3.5 The graph below illustrates the stage 2 determinations by service. Housing repairs have the highest upheld rate, with 37 complaints upheld and 10 partially upheld out of complaints for the service. Given the volume of complaints within the housing service, quarterly reports are now prepared for the Strategic Director of Communities. These reports provide an overview of the complaints, including themes and outcomes. The findings are subsequently shared with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.



4.0 COMPLAINT THEMES

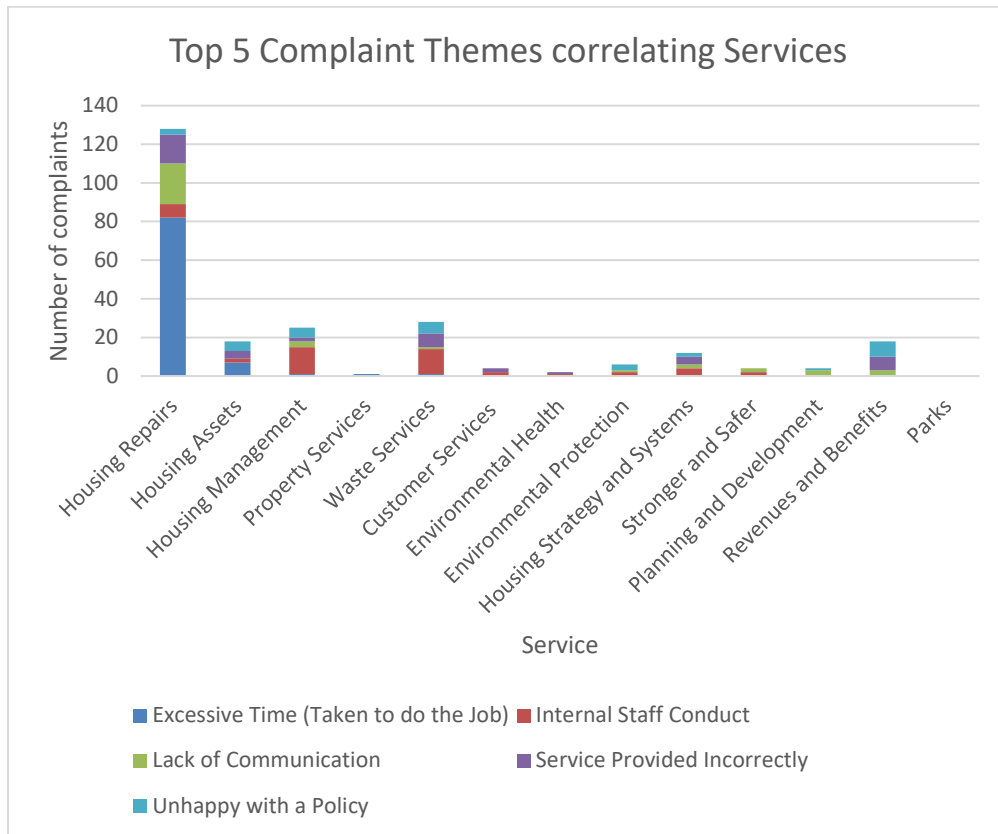
4.1 As part of the process of monitoring and handling customer feedback, the Complaints Team is responsible for categorising complaints based on the subject matter. The following diagram outlines the categories of complaints received in 2024/25.

## 4.2 Stage 1 – Themes of Complaint – 2024-25 Whole Council



4.3 92 (27%) of all complaints were categorised as excessive time taken to carry out a service. Complaints within this category have increased from 76 in 2023/24 (an increase of 21%).

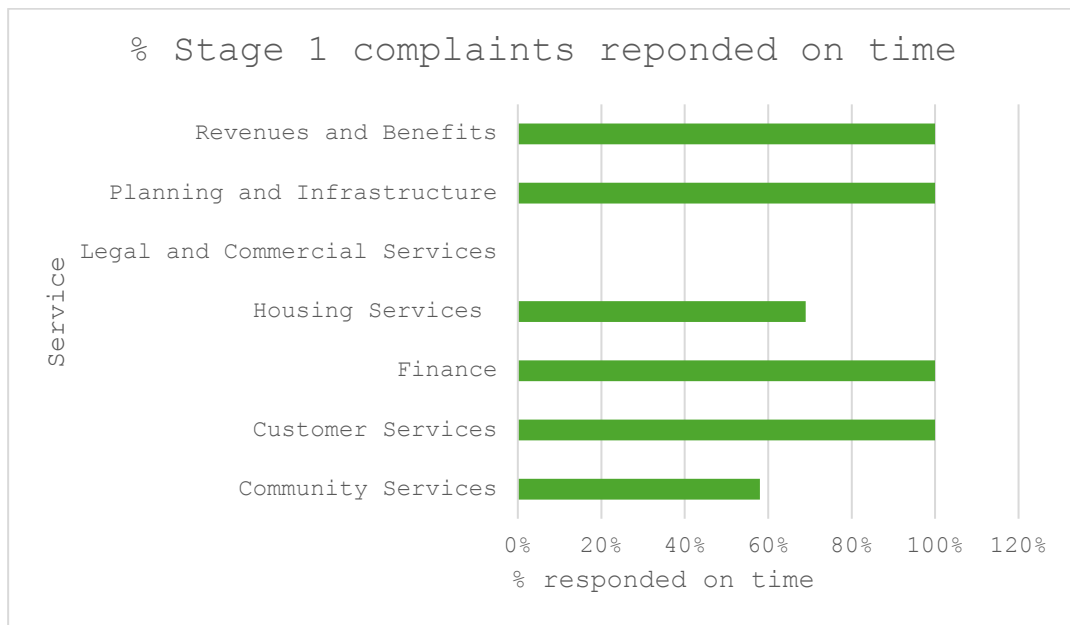
4.4 Staff conduct accounted for the second highest category of complaints, with 44 (13%) complaints. Complaints within this category have increased from 33 in 2023/24. These are where the complainants consider that an employee has behaved poorly either in person or on the phone. These are front-facing roles such as repair operatives, housing officers, community safety officers, customer services officers. These are usually related to a disagreement over a decision or action taken. Of the 44 complaints over staff conduct 11 (25%) were upheld in the customer's favour, 2 (5%) partially upheld and the remaining 31 (70%), the Council was not found to be at fault.



- 4.5 The categories of excessive time taken, staff conduct, and lack of communication were common reasons for complaints across all services. However, the Housing Repairs Service was the primary source of complaints about excessive time taken, with 82 out of 92 complaints in this category and 21 out of 36 regarding lack of communication. This issue directly correlates with the housing improvement plan, which has significantly reduced the number of outstanding repairs from 7,000 to 1,800—a 75% reduction. The Housing Service's commitment to further reduce this backlog to a normal level within the next 12 to 18 months is expected to lead to a decrease in complaints about excessive time taken.

## 5 COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 The Council's service standard is to respond in full to a complaint within 10 working days of receipt. If this is not possible within that timeframe (for example, because of the complexity of the complaint, the number of parties involved or awaiting additional information), a holding response is sent to the customer. This standard was met in 70% of complaints at stage 1 (242 complaints), processed in the year 2024/25.
- 5.2 When a complaint is escalated to stage 2, the investigating head of service has 10 working days to respond. This standard was met in 70% of escalated complaints (75 complaints).



- 5.3 All services endeavor to focus on providing a high-quality response that resolves all the issues raised and finds a suitable outcome in a timely way, whilst keeping the complainant informed and up to date with progress. Responding to complaints within the timeframe is a key performance indicator within the Council Delivery Plan and something that is being highlighted as an area for improvement in 2025/26 particularly for Housing and Community Services who failed to hit the targets set for 2024/25.

## 6 FINANCIAL REMEDIES

- 6.1 In awarding compensation, the Council must consider:

- The housing compensation policy which sets out the grounds and basis upon which compensation may be awarded and is applicable to all tenants of the Council [Compensation Policy](#)
- Corporate compensation payments are in accordance with the Councils Financial Procedure Rules provided that the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the relevant Strategic Director has advised on the appropriateness of compensation as per the constitution.
- Whether any statutory payments are due
- If any quantifiable losses have been incurred
- The time and trouble a customer has experienced
- Any distress and inconvenience caused
- The remedies guidance issued by the relevant Ombudsman

- 6.2 Suggested ranges of compensation are set out by the Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman also gives additional guidance in determining the adverse effect and impact on customers in particular circumstances.

- 6.3 Neither this guidance nor the suggested ranges are intended to be prescriptive, and discretion is required on a case-by-case basis to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of each situation.

- 6.4 For the annual year 2024/25, the Council has paid in total £27,372.26 as a financial remedy to complaints including compensation ordered by the Ombudsman compared to £20,888.61 for the year 2023/24.

## **7 UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR AND COMMUNICATION**

- 7.1 Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of individuals using the Council's services makes it very difficult for the Council to deal with their complaint. In a small number of cases, the actions of individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of the Council officers or the Council processes. When this happens, the Council must take action to protect the health and wellbeing of officers who have a right to do their jobs without fear of being abused or harassed. The Council must also consider the impact of the behaviour on the Council's ability to do work and provide a service to others.
- 7.2 As a result, the Council has developed an Unreasonable Behaviour and Communication Policy to set out how it deals with unreasonable behaviour and communication. This policy can be found in Appendix 4 of this report.
- 7.3 The Policy has been drafted with regards to the Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) Guidance note on 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and 'unreasonable complainant behaviour' and the Housing Ombudsman complaints code of conduct.

## **8 EXTERNAL BODIES**

### **- LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGSCO) - HOUSING OMBUDSMAN (HO)**

- 8.1 If complainants are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint as investigated through the Council's complaints' procedures, they can escalate their complaint to the Ombudsman. This section of the report provides information on cases that the Ombudsman has made decisions on in the 2024/25 period.
- 8.2 The Housing Ombudsman (HO) manages enquiries and complaints that are related to services provided by the Council as a social landlord e.g., repairs to properties.
- 8.3 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) handles enquiries and complaints that are related to all other Council services. This includes non- landlord housing issues such as housing allocation, homelessness and temporary accommodation which is categorised in LGSCO reports as "Housing".
- 8.4 The HO and LGSCO produce annual review reports and the data, feedback and recommendations and remedies made in these are reviewed by the feedback team who ensure the relevant service areas act on them in a timely manner.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN**

- 8.5 In February 2024, the LGSCO introduced a complaint code as "advice and guidance" for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to a complaint. The complaint code can be found at: [LGSCO Complaint code](#)
- 8.6 The LGSCO produces an annual report on the complaints they have received and the outcomes of each case this can be found at: [LGSCO annual report](#).

- 8.7 In 2024/25, 11 complaints were escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Of these, five were not for them as an Ombudsman and therefore re directed to the Housing Ombudsman, the LGSCO decided not to investigate five complaints. The remaining complaint was investigated, and the Council was not found at fault.

## **HOUSING OMBUDSMAN**

- 8.8 The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with them. It resolves disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities) and voluntary members (private landlords and letting agents who are committed to good service for their tenants).
- 8.9 On the 1 April 2024, the HO published its revised Complaint Handling Code which was first introduced in June 2020. This sets out requirements for member landlords that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.
- 8.10 The Code ensures complaint handling data is being used consistently across landlord members, promotes engagement at different levels within a landlord and sets out expectations for boards or equivalent governance, senior executives and frontline staff.
- 8.11 Compliance with the Code forms part of the membership obligations. Members are obliged to complete a self-assessment to measure the level of compliance. The Council's latest self-assessment based upon the latest code can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 8.12 When carrying out a complaint investigation the Ombudsman will consider whether the landlord addressed the complaint in accordance with the Code. Any failure identified could result in a finding of:
- Severe maladministration
  - Maladministration
  - Service failure
  - Mediation
  - Redress
- 8.13 Following an investigation where some level of maladministration has been found the HO could put an order and or recommendations in place to correct matters. The HO can also make recommendations on any case that has been investigated and determined by them to help improve service delivery and promote learnings from outcomes and ensure compliance with the Code.
- 8.14 The HO's Complaint Handling Code can be found at: [Housing Ombudsman complaint code](#)
- 8.15 The Housing Ombudsman has not yet published its Landlord Reports for 2024/2025 so all data presented below is from the Council's systems. The Landlord Performance report is normally received in October. Appendix 3 of this report shows the Housing Ombudsman's Landlord performance report for 2023/24.

8.16 In 2024/2025 the Council had 13 complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), the HOS formally investigated all 13 cases. The determinations found by the HOS on the 13 cases were two cases of no fault by the Council and 11 cases of the Council found at fault. The determinations of the Council being found at fault as follows:

- 3 x maladministration in handling repairs
- 2 x maladministration in handling of ASB reports
- 1 x service failure for handling of repairs
- 2 x service failure for handling of complaint
- 1 x service failure for handling of report of flooding
- 1 x severe maladministration in handling of multiple repairs
- 1 x maladministration in handling of reports of disrepair
- 4 x maladministration in handling of complaint
- 1 x service failure for handling staff conduct
- 1 x service failure for handling of communication
- 1 x maladministration in handling repairs and response to damp and mold

8.17 As a result of the HO determinations a number of recommendations and orders were put in place by the HO some of which were:

- The landlord should consider re-training of housing staff on complaint handling.
- The landlord should provide training on effective communication.
- The landlord should improve record keeping.

## **9 LEARNING POINTS**

9.1 The Council treats every complaint as an opportunity to identify learning outcomes and improve service provision. Complaints are valuable not only in identifying service improvements, but in improving public perception and satisfaction with the Council as a whole. Each complaint can be an opportunity to make changes or service improvements on a small or greater scale.

9.2 Examples of some of the learning points and improvements made as a result of complaints during 2024/25 include:

- Ensuring continuity in communication for ongoing complaints and keeping the complainant informed on updates.
- Speaking directly to customers to outline any potential delays in dealing with their request, whatever the reason might be.
- Communicating updates have been implemented with monthly internal articles, which have included statistical updates, lessons learnt and guidance on conducting investigations and formulating responses.
- The Customer Experience Team Leader continuing to support the repairs service with their complaints in particular the ombudsman responses.
- The Customer Services Team Manager establishing a group to review the customer contact standards as an organisation which will help improve culture and complaints.
- Undertaking Root Cause Analysis sessions with Waste and Housing Management services teams including looking at avoidable contact and how we better the customer journey.

- The Customer Services Team Manager developing additional training to assist with complaint investigations. This training, which is mandatory, has been rolled out to all NWL leaders and additional officers who handle complaints.

9.3 Looking back to the last years HO cases, there are a number of themes that have come forward when we consider these cases. Whilst each is unique there are some common threads which we are addressing. These are:

**The timeliness of repairs** – a broad theme around repairs times which largely stems from the issues of service interruption around COVID. This is being tracked through the Cross-Party Housing Improvement Board which has seen a 75% reduction in the number of outstanding repairs from 7,000 to 1,800.

**Training** – there are a number of instances where the HO has asked us to refresh training on specific issues in the service. This has included ASB, bereavement, safeguarding, and the new regulatory standards. These have been added to our renewed focus on skills and training of our staff which now occur quarterly.

**Responsiveness to reports of leaks and damp** – greater emphasis on damp and mould responsiveness should be seen with the introduction of Awaab's law being introduced from October 2025.

**Record keeping** – a number of changes to our systems have taken place to help us improve records of interactions with tenants. These range from Tenancy Audits, through to Stock Condition and the increased use of hand-held devices to enable greater on-the-spot reporting and record updating. This will continue to be a focus of the Improvement Plan going forwards.

9.4 Improvements for the forthcoming year of 2025/26 are:

- Focusing on the timeliness in responding to complaints to accord with the Council's Delivery Plan targets of 100% within timeline.
- Continuing development plan on the importance of complaints across the council.
- Working with the housing improvement board to provide a greater understanding of the service.
- Reviewing the customer contact standards to make them corporate and achievable.
- Improving culture to one of a more customer centric one.

## 10 MEMBER AND MP ENQUIRIES

10.1 Member and MP Enquiry data is included in the annual formal enquiries report as it is acknowledged that there is great similarity between the types of complaints submitted and the types of Member/MP enquiries received. It is not uncommon for a resident to make a complaint and then contact their Councillor about the same issue.

10.2 For the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the total number of Member Enquiries received was 705, compared with 634 in the previous period. This is an 11% increase in the number of Member Enquiries compared with the previous year's figures.

10.3 For the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the total number of MP Enquiries received was 175, compared with 131 in the previous period. This is a 34% increase

in the number of MP Enquiries compared with the previous year's figures.

**Member and MP enquiries by service.**

Service	Number of Member enquires	Number of MP enquires
Community Services	330	26
Customer Services	6	4
Economic Regeneration	4	2
Finance	1	0
Housing services	218	96
Human Resources	3	1
Legal and Commercial Services	10	0
Planning and Infrastructure	95	30
Revenues and Benefits	9	9
Not NWLDC function	28	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>175</b>

## **11 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES**

- 11.1 The reporting of complaints is embedded in the Council's performance management process, giving further opportunity for issues to be raised throughout the year, and for wider corporate trends to be identified should they arise.
- 11.2 A robust and effective complaints process ensures the Council is able to meet its vision, working collaboratively to deliver high quality services that support all communities in the District.
- 11.3 Reviewing and learning from complaints ensures the Council is committed to delivering its values. Delivering high standards in everything the Council does which shapes behaviours and builds trust with its residents.

## **12 CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 Complaints at service level remain low, particularly when compared to the overall volume of interactions the Council has had with the public in the same period, this does not negate the fact that the Council takes each complaint seriously when investigating and act upon any learning that has been identified. The Council is not complacent about the matters raised.

- 12.2 More work is required with services on the culture around complaints to ensure consistency on timeliness of responses and the importance of complaints.
- 12.3 The consistency of complaints reporting suggests that the complaints process continues to work effectively, and that the public can make a complaint with ease. Where necessary, trends are identified by the feedback team and managed by individual services. The Customer Services Team Manager and Customer Experience Team Leader will continue to work closely with Services to identify ways to effectively manage and resolve complaints.
- 12.4 The minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 19 June, will be circulated to Cabinet as an additional paper prior to the Cabinet meeting.

<b>Policies and other considerations, as appropriate</b>	
Council Priorities:	A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	Corporate Complaints Policy Unreasonable Behaviour and Communication Policy
Safeguarding:	None.
Equalities/Diversity:	None
Customer Impact:	The report provides an overview in to how residents experience our services. Over the reporting period, the feedback has highlighted both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Where complaints have been upheld, the Council has taken steps to address root causes, whether that is through staff training, process reviews or improved communication.
Economic and Social Impact:	None.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	None.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None.
Risks:	<p>A recurring pattern of complaints in specific areas may indicate deeper systemic issues. If left unaddressed, these could erode public confidence and lead to reputational damage.</p> <p>Delays in responding to or resolving complaints brings a risk to the Council's commitment to customer care. Timeliness is a critical factor in maintaining trust with our residents.</p> <p>Failure to act on complaint trends or to implement learning from upheld cases could leave the Council exposed to legal or regulatory scrutiny, particularly where vulnerable individuals are affected.</p> <p>If staff training, communication or policy clarity is not addressed, it may lead to service failures. These risks can compound over time, leading to increased volumes of complaints and greater strain on resources.</p>
Officer Contact	Nichola Oliver Customer Services Team Manager <a href="mailto:nichola.oliver@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">nichola.oliver@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>