

Annual Complaints Handling and Service Improvement Report 2024/25

1. Summary

- 1.1 This appendix outlines the complaints received in relation to housing services during the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and covers the following points:
- Number of complaints received
 - Number of complaints handled at each stage of the process
 - Complaints by type/service area
 - Complaints performance
- 1.2 In addition to this appendix, an annual report covering all areas of complaints, including housing, will be submitted to the Governance Committee in December 2025.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced new social housing consumer standards that contain specific expectations that registered providers of social housing must comply with and detail the outcomes that providers are expected to achieve.
- 2.2 In relation to complaints, the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard state that the registered provider (the Council) must:
- Ensure their approach to handling complaints is simple, accessible and publicised.
 - Provide accessible information to tenants about:
 - (a) how tenants can make a complaint about their landlord;
 - (b) the landlord's complaints policy and complaints handling process;
 - (c) what tenants can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how a complaint was handled; and
 - (d) the type of complaints received and how they have learnt from complaints to continuously improve services
- 2.3 In the event that the Council cannot resolve a matter to the tenant's satisfaction, they have the option of complaining to the Housing Ombudsman Service and asking they investigate the matter.
- 2.4 The Housing Ombudsman published a new statutory Joint Complaint Handling Code that came into effect on 1 April 2024. A similar non-statutory Code was also introduced by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman at the same time.
- 2.5 The statutory guidance provides for a single, robust set of standards for complaints procedures that are accessible, efficient and fair. These will facilitate the development of a framework for high-quality complaint handling that will enable the Council (as landlord) to resolve complaints raised by its residents as efficiently and effectively as possible and imbed lessons learning from complaints to drive service improvements.
- 2.6 A legal duty is also placed on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the Code, regardless of whether it receives individual complaints from residents about a landlord.
- 2.7 The revised Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which includes a self-assessment against the Code.

- 2.8 Dover District Council has always viewed complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve services for its residents and actively encourages tenants and customers to raise comments and complaints. All expressions of dissatisfaction represent a positive opportunity to learn and provide insight that will help the Council improve its service delivery.
- 2.9 In accordance with the Ombudsmen's Joint Complaint Handling Code, the Member Responsible for Complaints (known as the 'MRC') and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive the following:
- (a) Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;
 - (b) Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;
 - (c) Regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and
 - (d) Annual complaints performance and service improvement report.
- 2.10 The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy will work with the MRC to determine the best method of delivering this requirement. Currently, the Council in 2024/25 provided quarterly updates on Stage 2 complaints to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and an Annual Report to the Governance Committee.
- 2.11 However, for Quarter 1 2025/26, this will be changing with a dedicated quarterly report to the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee, rather than being reported as part of the quarterly performance report as happened in 2024/25. This will allow the Cabinet to have access to more detailed information than could be provided as one of many key performance indicators that formed part of the quarterly Strategic Performance Report.
- 2.12 The Governance Committee will continue to monitor complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations and, in relation to non-executive functions, to make payments or provide other benefits in cases of maladministration.
- 2.13 This will not change the role of individual Portfolio Holders who will continue to receive updates as normal on the performance of their respective service areas including in relation to complaints.

3. The Importance of Complaints and Compliments

- 3.1 Complaints and compliments are viewed as valuable feedback, and the Council should endeavour to use the lessons learnt from this feedback to improve the services it provides. There are many benefits to be gained from an effective and efficient complaints process:
- Good complaint handling promotes a positive relationship between the Council and service users.
 - Complaints allow an issue to be resolved before it becomes worse. Those issues not resolved promptly can take significant resource and time to remedy.
 - Involvement in complaint resolution develops staff ownership, decision-making and engagement.
 - Complaints provide senior staff with essential insight into day-to-day operations, allowing them to assess effectiveness and drive a positive complaint handling culture.
 - Data collected about complaints can be analysed and used to inform key business decisions to drive improvements in service provision.

4. The Complaints Policy

4.1 The Council operates the required two stage complaints process as set out in the Joint Complaint Handling Code by the two Ombudsmen. The definitions in use under the Complaints Policy are those defined by the Ombudsmen as follows:

- Service Request – “A request that the Council provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision.”
- Complaint - "An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.”

4.2 Service Requests are not considered to be complaints under the Complaints Policy but if not resolved, may lead to a formal complaint. The majority of Service Requests are received directly by the individual service and dealt with without requiring further intervention from outside the service. For example, a tenant requesting a responsive repair.

4.3 For complaints, the Council operates the Ombudsman required two stage complaints process. All complaints are primarily received by (through the website, telephone, email or letter) Corporate Services though on some occasions complaints are passed by a service or customer services on behalf of an individual/resident to Corporate Services. This provides for a comprehensive single record of all complaints received by the Council.

4.4 Stage 1 complaints are responded to by individual services with support and advice from Corporate Services if required. A copy of all Stage 1 documentation is held on the complaints database. If a complainant is not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2, asking for it to be reviewed.

4.5 Stage 2 complaints are handled by the Corporate Services Officer responsible for complaints. This provides an independent challenge to the Stage 1 complaint response and if required the Corporate Services Officer can take a different view to the Stage 1 response and recommend alternative actions.

4.6 Although Stage 2 completes the Council’s complaints process, complainants have the right to escalate a complaint to the relevant Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will consider a request for review of the Council’s handling of a complaint and may choose to investigate the complaint further. The Ombudsmen may uphold a complaint in full, in part or not at all. Corporate Services will liaise with the Ombudsman in respect of any cases that have been referred by a resident to them.

5. Complaints the Council Refused to Accept

5.1 The complaints that the Council refused to accept that related to the Council’s role as landlord were for the following reasons in 2024/25 were in line with those set out in our Complaints Policy. They were:

- Where the resident/individual has known about the issue for more than 12 months unless there is good reason for the delay or if there are safeguarding or health and safety issues.
- Something for which there is a statutory right of appeal or that can be appealed about to a tribunal (such as the Housing Benefit Appeals Service) or go to court about, unless there is a good reason the resident/individual should not be expected to use that appeal right.

- Where legal proceedings have already started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form or Particulars of Claim, have been filed at Court.
 - Matters that have already been considered under the Council's Complaints Policy or by the Ombudsman.
 - Anonymous complaints will not normally be accepted as it would not be possible for the Council to respond to them. However, the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy in consultation with the Council's Monitoring Officer will make a decision on a case-by-case basis as to whether an anonymous complaint should be investigated further.
 - Contacts considered to be a request for service and not a complaint.
 - Complaints relating to staff behaviour as these engage a separate procedure.
 - Complaints relating to Member behaviour as these engage a separate procedure.
- 5.2 If the Council takes the decision not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided to the complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take the decision to the appropriate Ombudsman. Where the Ombudsman does not agree the Council may be instructed to accept the complaint.
6. **Scope of Annual Complaints Handling and Service Improvement Report 2024/25**
- 6.1 The figures below apply to complaints opened during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 6.2 For the purposes of this report, complaints relating to the following housing services are provided:
- Housing Management
 - Housing Rents
 - Housing Repairs
- 6.3 These services are within the remit of the Housing Ombudsman. Complaints relating to other services within the Council will be reported to the Governance Committee as part of the Annual Complaints report due to be considered by the Governance Committee in December 2025. This includes Housing Needs/Options and Private Sector Housing which fall under the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman so these figures will be reported as part of the full Annual Complaints report covering all Council services.
- 6.4 During 2024/25, the Council has put significant efforts into making it easier for residents to make a complaint and for that complaint to be dealt with more efficiently. This has included promoting the complaints process through the housing service and technical improvements to the webform and webpages for making complaints. This work will continue in 2025/26 as part of a continuous drive to improve residents access to the complaints system.
7. **Complaints Received 2024/2025**
- 7.1 Overall, the Council has seen an increase in complaints year-on-year between 2023-24 and 2024/25. For the three housing services referred to above at paragraph 3.2, this has seen the number increase from 113 to 163 complaints. The 163 Stage 1 complaints include 21 that progressed to Stage 2 in the complaints process.

Table 1: Number of Housing Complaints and Service Requests Opened in 2024/25

Level	2024/25
Stage 1 Complaint Opened	163
Stage 2 Complaint Opened	21
Ombudsman Complaints Opened	1
Ombudsmen Investigation Reports	3

7.2 The 163 Stage 1 complaints include the 21 that progressed to Stage 2 and the 1 complaint that was escalated to the Ombudsman. As a consequence, 141 complaints did not progress any further than Stage 1.

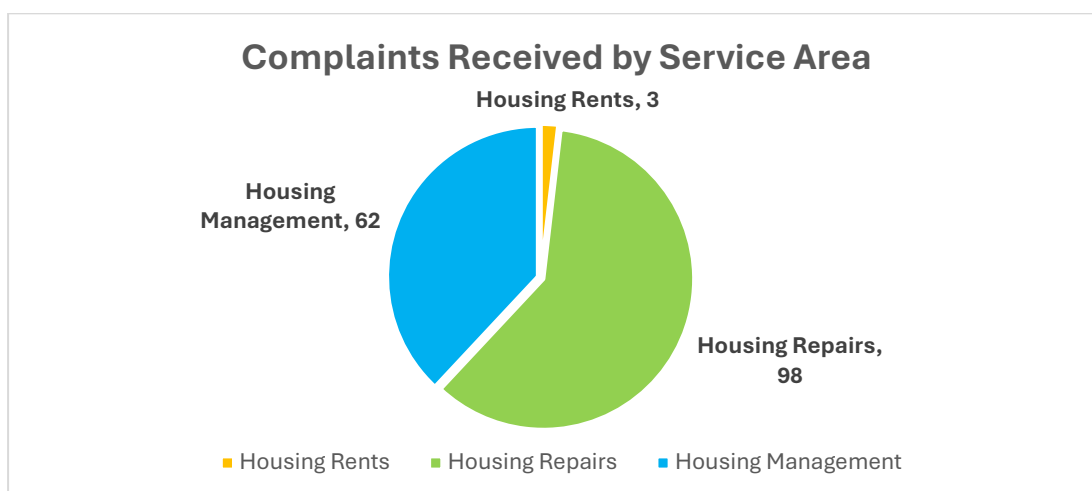
7.3 It should be noted that in accordance with Ombudsman guidance, there is no time limit on when a Stage 2 complaint can be progressed from the closure of the Stage 1 complaint. This can lead to some Stage 1 complaints in 2024/25 not escalating to Stage 2 until the 2025/25 year. Similarly, the Ombudsman complaints that resulted in investigation reports in 2024/25 related to complaints opened in the year 2023/24.

7.4 The 163 complaints are broken down as follows by service area:

Table 2: Number of Complaints by Service Area

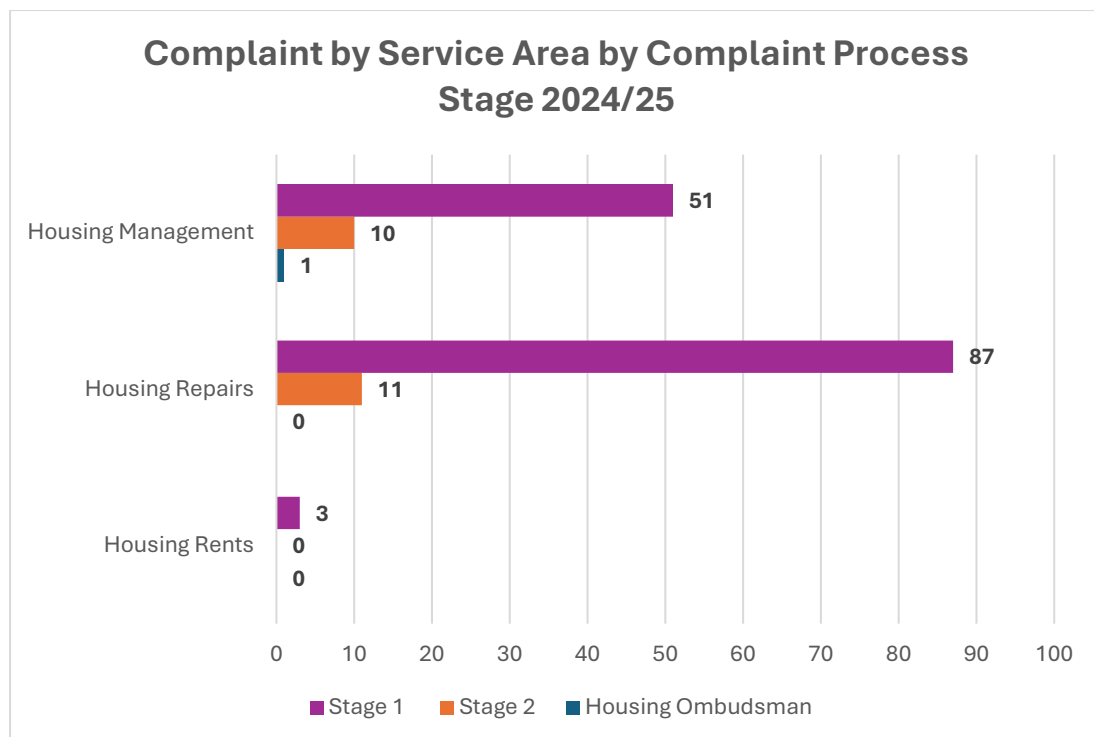
Service Area	2023/24	2024/25
Housing Rents	3	3
Housing Management	33	62
Housing Repairs	77	98
Total	113	163

7.5 There were 22 complaints within the 163 that related to multiple service areas (for example, housing management and housing repairs or housing rents and benefits). For ease of reporting these have been assigned to the main housing area for the complaint.



8. Complaint Received by Stage and Service Area 2024/25

8.1 The following shows the number of complaints at their final escalation stage (Stage 1 or Stage 2) by service area.



8.2 As these figures demonstrate, the overwhelming majority of complaints are resolved at Stage 1 by all three service areas.

8.3 The number of complaints to progress to Stage 2 in 2024/25 was as followed:

- Housing Management – 19% of Stage 1 complaints progressed to Stage 2
- Housing Repairs – 12% of Stage 1 complaints progressed to Stage 2
- Housing Rents – 0% of complaints progressed to Stage 2

8.4 This compares to performance in 2023/24:

- Housing Management – 15% of complaints progressed to Stage 2
- Housing Repairs – 19% of complaints progressed to Stage 2
- Housing Rents - 67% of complaints progressed to Stage 2 (for context, this was 2 out of 3 complaints)

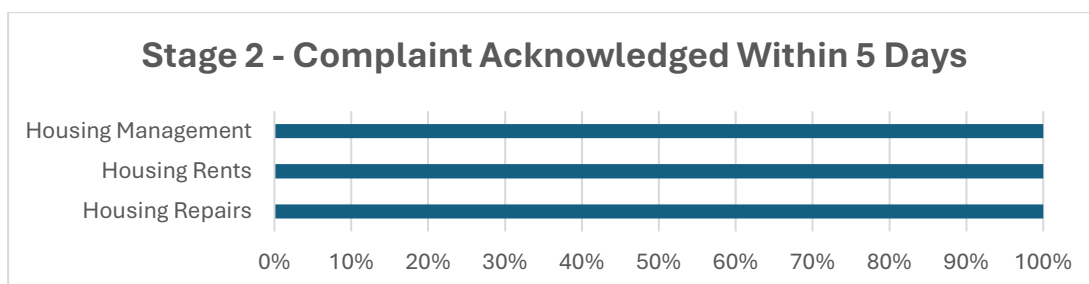
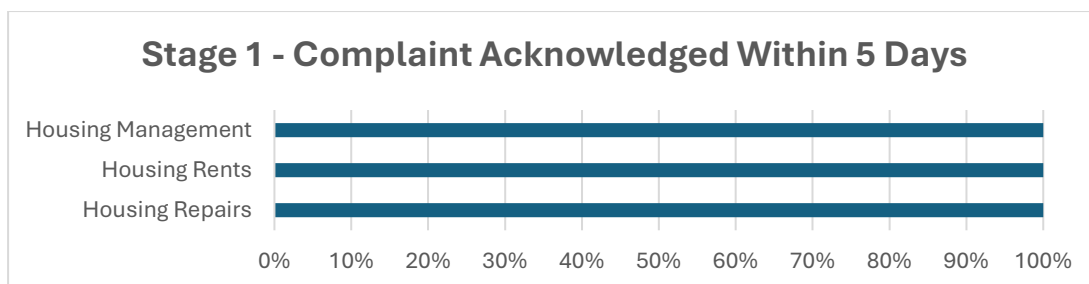
Housing Ombudsman Cases

8.5 There was one Housing Ombudsman case opened in 2024/25 relating to a complaint first opened in 2024/25.

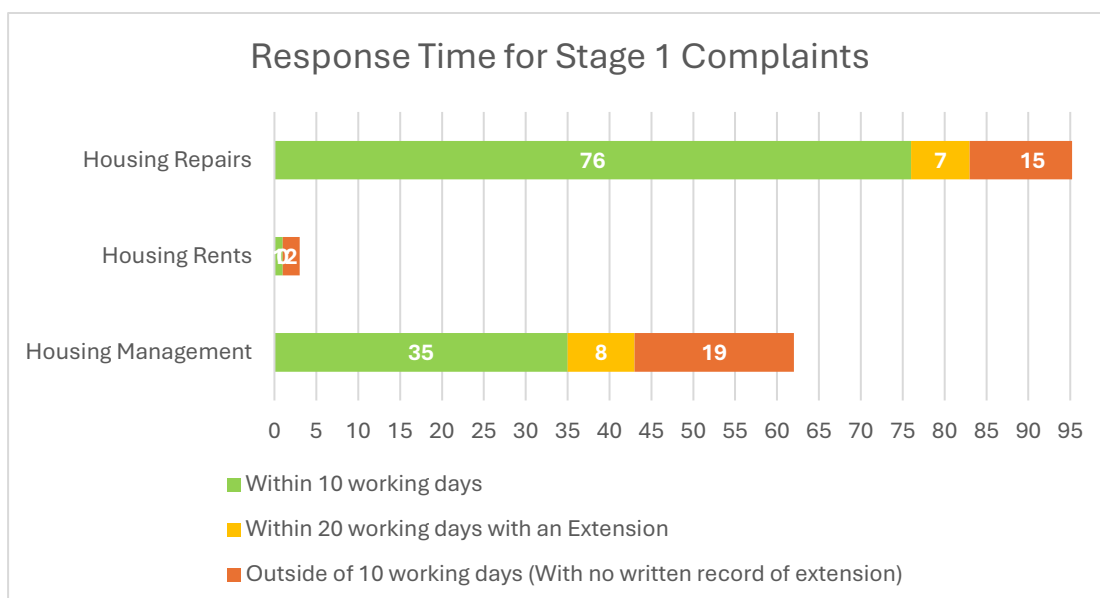
8.6 In addition, there were three Housing Ombudsman cases determined in 2024/25 resulting in fifteen findings. All three of these cases were originally opened at Stage 1 in the 2023/24 year.

9. Processing Times for Complaints Opened in 2024/25

9.1 The Council's Complaints Policy requires all complaints received to be acknowledged within 5 working days. This is undertaken by the Corporate Services team and was achieved for Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints



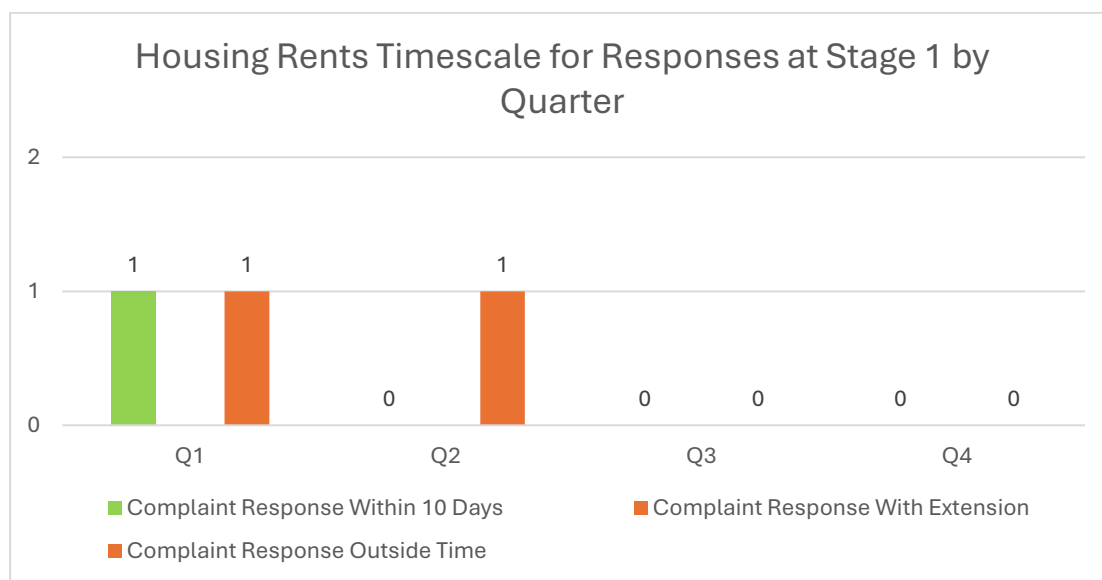
- 9.2 The Council's Complaints Policy allocates 10 working days for Stage 1 complaints to be responded to and 20 working days for Stage 2 complaints to be responded to. This is the timeframe set by the Ombudsman.
- 9.3 There is a facility for an extension to this timescale when considering a complaint. In such cases the resident will be informed of the expected new timescale for response. Any extension should be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) should be clearly explained to the resident. A good reason in this situation could include, but is not limited to, where information is required from third parties or where a matter is particularly complex, hence further time is required to complete the investigation.
- 9.4 When a resident is informed of the need for an extension to the timescale for a response, they will also be provided with the details of the Housing Ombudsman should they be dissatisfied with the extension of time.



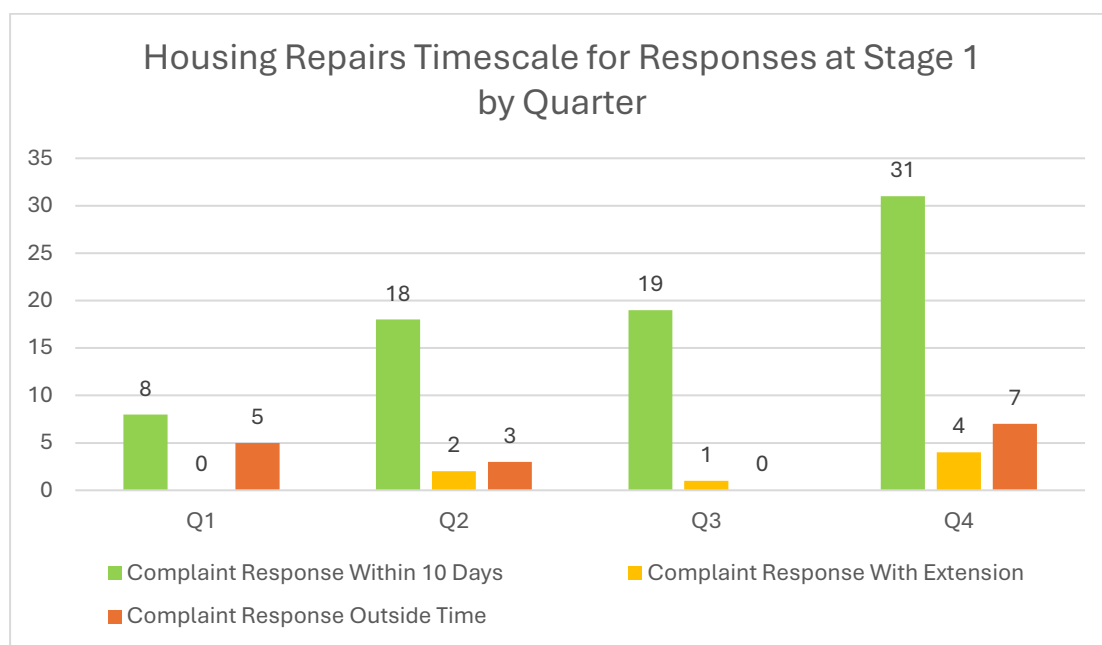
- 9.5 The response time shows a mixed picture. The obvious aspect is that in comparison with last year, there have been a number of complaints where the response time exceeded 10 working days, but no extension was advised to the complainant. As there

should be no circumstances where this need to happen, an improvement plan has been set out at paragraph 10 of this report.

- 9.6 It should be emphasised that when managers examined those complaints that were outside of time without an extension as part of the preparation of this report, in all cases the complaint was responded to by the service. Additionally, in a small number of cases the reason that the complaint went outside of time was due to officers waiting to hear back from the complainant.
- 9.7 When broken down by quarter in 2024/25, the information points to this primarily being an issue in the first two quarters of the year.

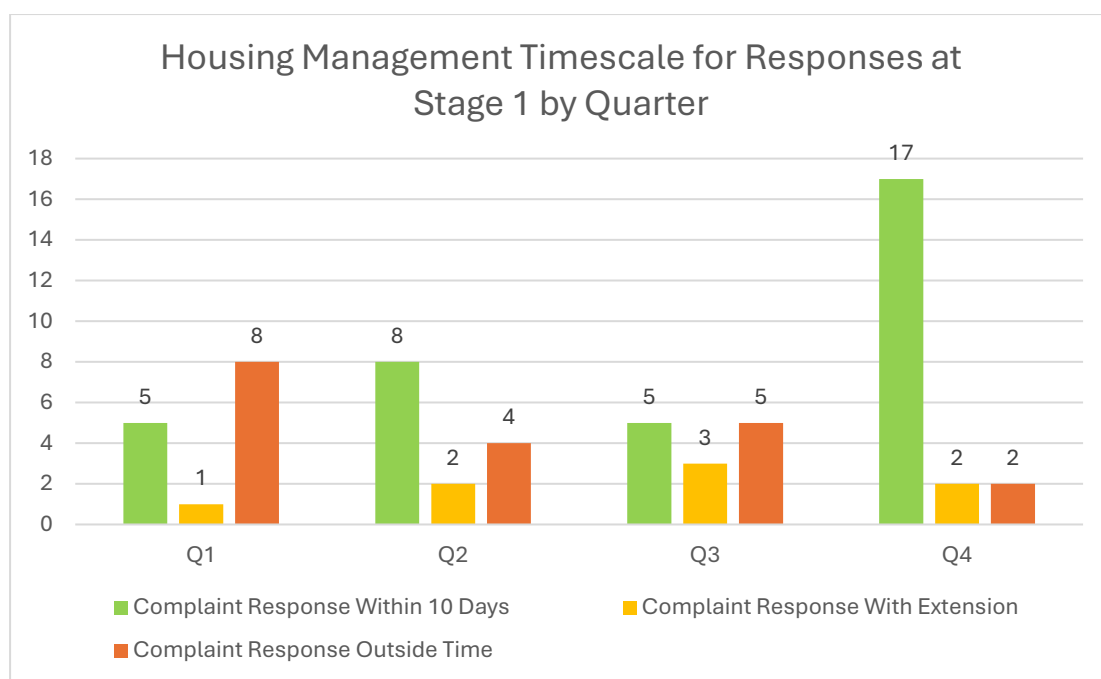


- 9.8 For Housing Rents, since Quarter 3 2024/25, there have been no complaints received.



- 9.9 For Housing Repairs, for Quarters 1 – 4 there was an improving position, with more complaints overall responded to within 10 working days or with an extension each successive quarter. Additionally, for Quarter 3 the service was fully compliant with none of the 20 complaint cases responded to outside of time.

- 9.10 However, in Quarter 4, which saw nearly half of the complaints received for the entire year, although the number of complaints outside of time was the highest (7 cases) for the year, it was a similar percentage of complaints responded to outside of time as in Quarter 2.



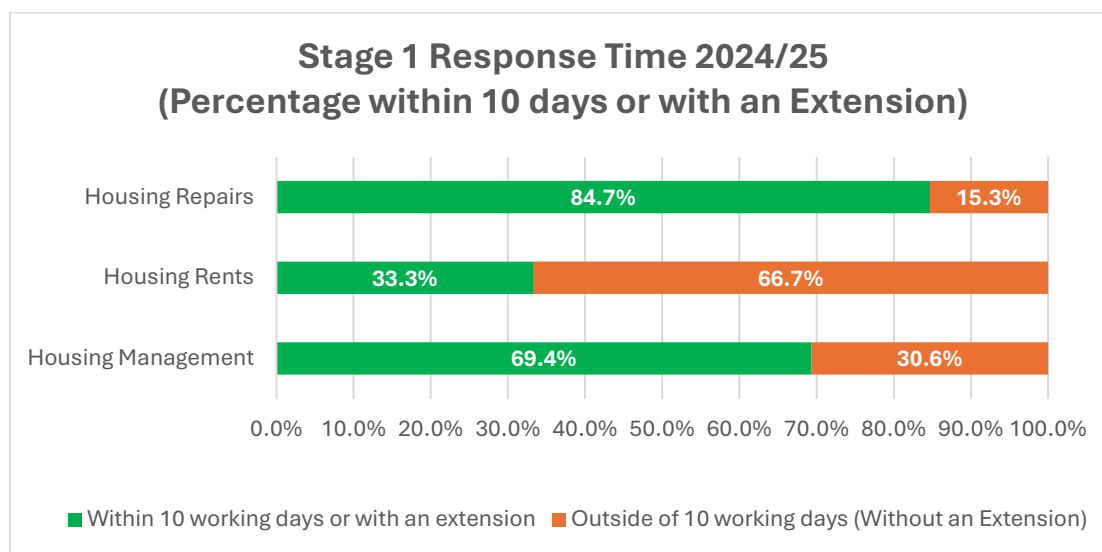
- 9.11 For Housing Management there has been a significant improvement in performance between Quarter 1 and Quarter 4, with the number of complaints responded to outside of time in Quarter 4, being significantly lower despite it being the busiest quarter overall for complaints.
- 9.12 The percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days (without the need for an extension) is only slightly down year-on-year despite the increases in the overall number of Stage 1 complaints.

Percentage of Stage 1 Complaints Responded to within 10 Working Days		
	2023/24	2024/25
Housing Management	57.40%	56.45%
Housing Rents*	100.00%	33.33%
Housing Repairs	78.60%	77.55%

(*) This is based on a sample size of three Stage 1 complaints in 2023/24 and 2024/25

- 9.13 A sampling of the complaints that were responded to outside of the 10 working days but did not have an extension found that there was still on-going communication with the complainant in all cases. In several instance from the sampling, the complaint ran over time due to the officer waiting for a response from the complainant or a third party.
- 9.14 In some cases, sampled there is evidence suggesting a verbal agreement to an extension, but we have not counted these as being extended as they do not meet the requirements laid down in our Complaints Policy for a written confirmation of an extension to the resident with details provided of the Housing Ombudsman.

- 9.15 The next chart shows the percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days or with an extension. The target for is 100% but unfortunately this has not been met. In all cases this is down from the 100% target met in 2023/24.



- 9.16 The average time for responding to all Stage 1 complaints (within time, with extension or outside of time) is as follows:

Quarter 1, 24/25	Quarter 2, 24/25	Quarter 3, 24/25	Quarter 4, 24/25
20.1 working days	13.0 working days	13.3 working days	11.0 working days

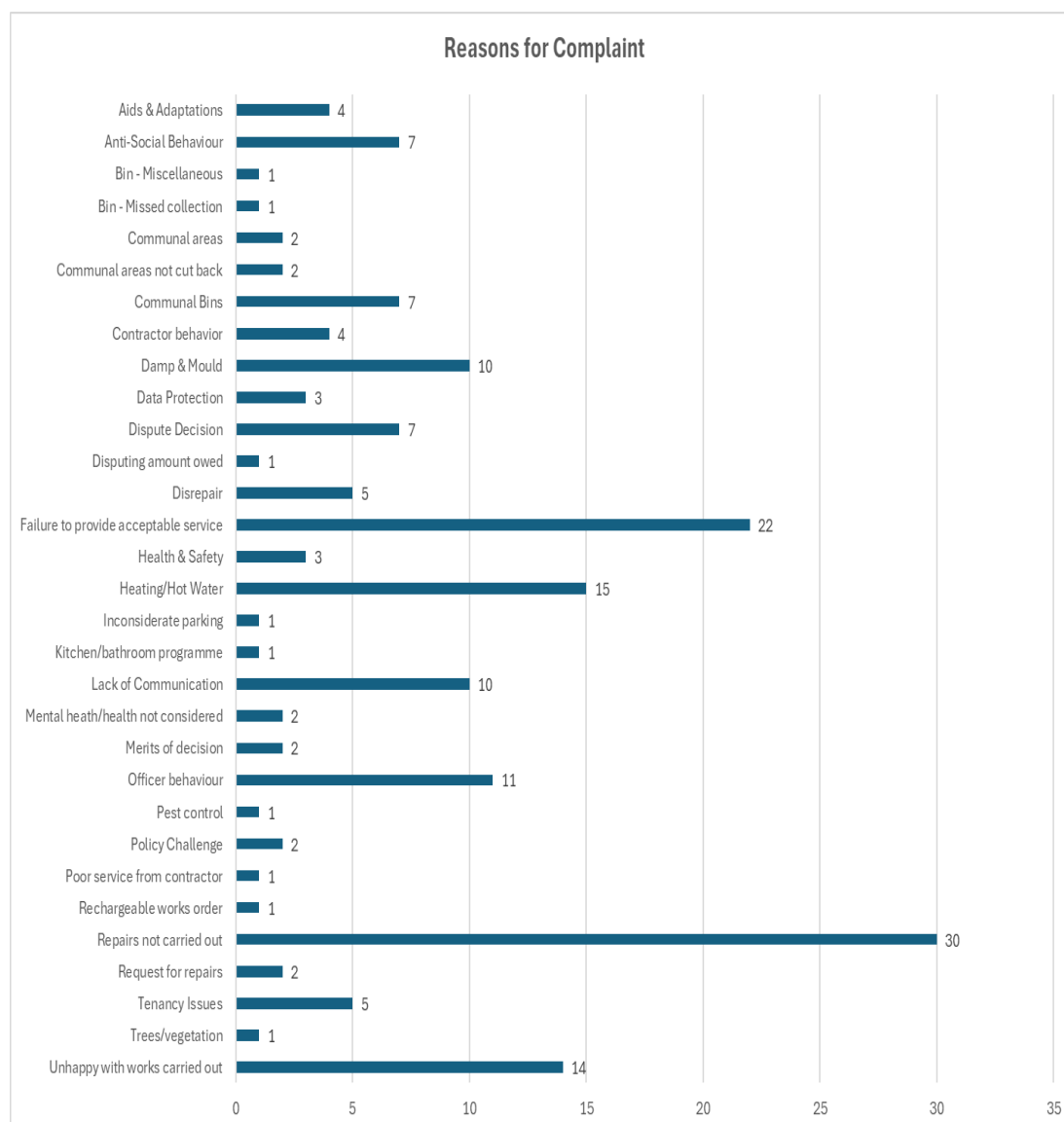
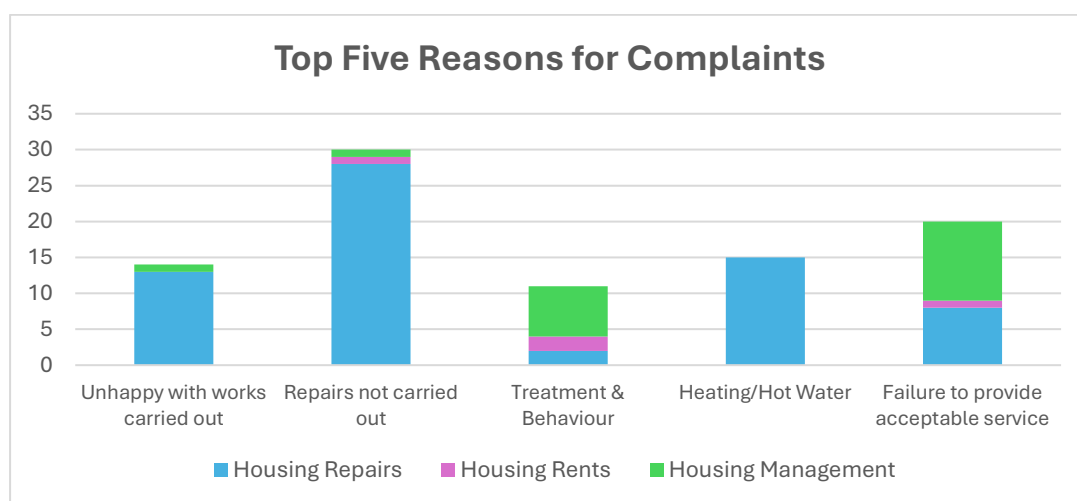
- 9.17 It should be noted that if the three longest complaints were removed from Quarter 1, 2024/25, it drops the average to 13.5 working days.
- 9.18 As you can see from these figures, there has been significant progress made and by Quarter 4, the average time taken to respond is only just outside of 10 working days.
- 9.19 “The Council has seen some issues with staff turnover that has impacted on performance. In respect of Housing Management, the Head of Housing assumed a more direct role in the handling of Stage 1 complaints from Quarter 4, 2024/25 onwards which has seen a significant drive to improve compliance with complaint response times. This improvement in compliance is a priority for the new Housing Manager – Operations who started in mid-2025.”
- 9.20 For Housing Repairs, an issue with one significant contractor had an impact on performance in Quarter 4, 2024/25. The improvement plan below sets out a number of measures to restore full compliance with this target.

10. Improvement Plan for Stage 1 Response Times

- 10.1 During the course of 2024/25 a number of significant improvements have been made within the complaints team, intended to facilitate better monitoring, reporting and support for services. These improvements included:
- Implementation of a new in-house complaints system commenced from January 2024. This included an API link to the online complaints form that allowed the automatic population of complaints data into the database where the online form was used to submit a complaint. The purpose of the API was intended to make it easier to ensure that all complaints were registered within 5 working days and to provide an easier way to send the complaint to the service once the complaint was accepted.

- During the course of 2024/25, further improvements were made to the database to ensure that by the end of Quarter 4, 2024/25 it was fully operational and that the Council could express full confidence in the data held in the database.
 - At the start of 2024/25, there were manual reminders being sent out by email to staff concerning the deadlines for complaints. As a consequence of improvements implemented to the complaints database an automatic reminder feature has been added to send an email to the registered email for each complaint service on the 8th working day if the complaint has not been closed at that point.
 - Additionally, at the start of Quarter 4, 2024/25 the Council employed an additional member of staff for the complaints team. The key focus of that Member of staff has been to monitor the Stage 1 complaints process and ensure compliance. We believe that this starts to be felt in the results of the Quarter 4 2024/25 figures and will show more significantly in the 2025/26 statistics being reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - PowerBI dashboards have been rolled out during Quarter 1, 2025/26 to all key service areas to enable real time monitoring of their live complaints.
- 10.2 Additionally, training on complaints, including emphasising the need to be compliant with the 10-working day target or utilise the extension option, was provided to the Housing Management service in June 2025 and this will be rolled out to further services in Quarter 3, 2025/26.
- 10.3 The Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) will be kept informed at monthly meetings with the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy on performance against response time.
- 10.4 The Head of Housing and Head of Property Assets will work with staff to ensure that compliance with this target remains a priority.
- 10.5 For Quarter 2 onwards, the complaint performance report to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will break down response times by service area rather than provide an overall figure for the Council.
- 10.6 In summary, the Council's path to full compliance will be achieved through the following measures:
- The roll out of further training on the importance of compliance with the 10-working day response time at Stage 1 and the need for an extension.
 - Active compliance monitoring through the complaints team with reminders sent out by the system at 8 working days and manually by a member of the complaints team on day 9 or 10 if the complaint is still not closed or extended.
 - Regular monthly reporting to the Member Responsible for Complaints and quarterly to the governing body (Cabinet) and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - Regular meetings between the complaints team and the Head of Housing and Head of Property Assets to drive compliance forward.
11. **Reason for Complaints**
- 11.1 During the course of 2024/25, the Council made a significant number of improvements to its complaints system. This has allowed for a more comprehensive reporting as to the reasons for a complaint. The data for 2024/25, identified 31 different reasons for complaints (the complaints database contains 85 preset reasons for a complaint). There are more reasons for complaints than there are complaints, as some complaints will have had more than one reason for them.

- 11.2 In respect of the 163 housing related complaints received, we have identified the top five main reasons for the complaint to compare with the top five for 2023/24. Most complaints received related to dissatisfaction with the service provided or works undertaken by the Council. In contrast with 2023/24, disrepair claims and failure to follow procedure no longer make the top five.

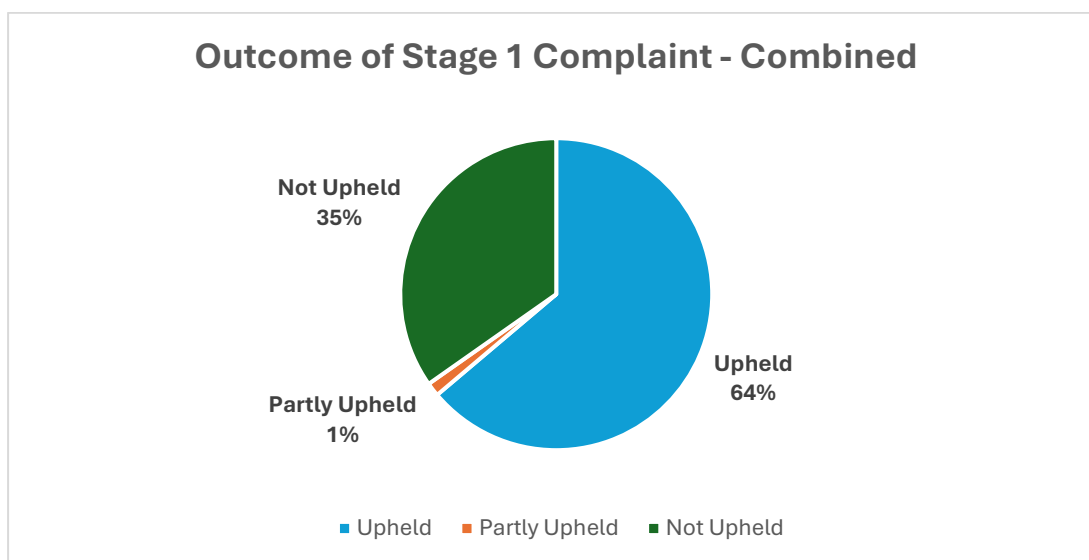


11.3 That complaints relating to dissatisfaction with the service or works are the main reason for complaints is not unexpected and is consistent with many other local authorities.

11.4 The rise in heating/hot water complaints relates to issues with a change of contractor that have now been resolved.

12. Outcomes of Complaints

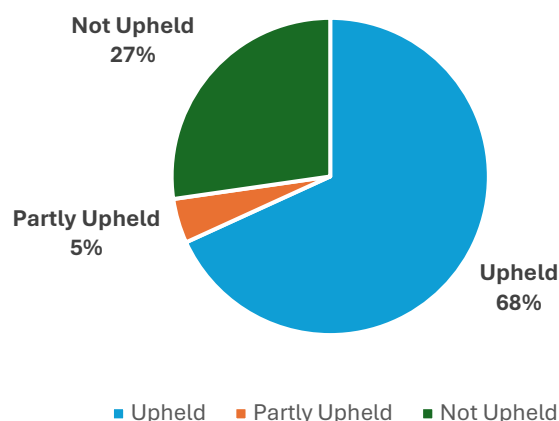
12.1 Complaints received by the Council are resolved in one of three ways – the complaint is not upheld, the complaint is partly upheld, or the complaint is upheld in full.



Stage 1 Complaints	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld
Housing Management	26 (52%)	2 (4%)	22 (75%)
Housing Rents	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	3 (75%)
Housing Repairs	22 (25%)	0 (0%)	65 (44%)
Total	49 (35%)	2 (1%)	90 (64%)

12.2 These figures demonstrate a willingness to acknowledge mistakes at a service level with 65% of complaints either fully or partly upheld. This is a demonstration of a healthy approach to complaint handling, where mistakes are acknowledged and rectified.

Outcome of Stage 2 Complaint - Combined



Stage 2 Complaints	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld
Housing Management	4 (36%)	0 (0%)	7 (64%)
Housing Rents*	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Housing Repairs	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	8 (73%)
Total	6 (27%)	1 (5%)	15 (68%)

(*) There were no Stage 2 complaints for Housing Rents.

- 12.3** These figures demonstrate the robustness of the internal challenge provided at Stage 2 by the complaints officer, with 73% of cases escalated to Stage 2 upheld in part or full.

Housing Ombudsman Cases

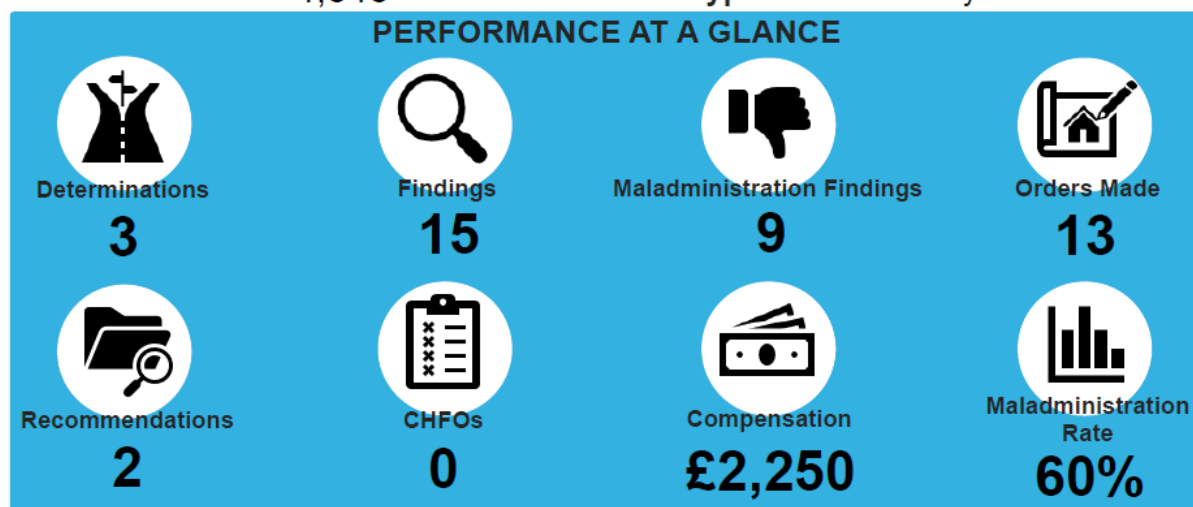
- 12.4** There were three Housing Ombudsman cases determined in 2024/25 resulting in fifteen findings. All three of these cases were originally opened at Stage 1 in the 2023/24 year.
- 12.5** In addition to this, a number of complaints will have been referred to the Ombudsman in 2024/25 that have yet to be determined or were refused after initial assessment (such as for being outside of jurisdiction).
- 12.6** It should be noted that the Council did not have 5 or more findings in the previous two years, so this is the first year under the current arrangements in which the Housing Ombudsman has issued a Landlord Performance Report for the Council.

Complaint No.	Determinations	Maladministration	Order	Compensation	Recommendation	Service Failure
C23-028	0	5	7	£1,900.00	0	0
C23-094	0	4	4	£50.00	1	3
C23-147	3	1	2	£300.00	1	1

Landlord:

Landlord Homes: 4,848

Landlord Type: Local Authority / ALMO or TMO



- 12.7 The 60% maladministration rate (based on the three cases with determinations) is below the national average maladministration rate for Local Authorities with determinations of 79%.
- 12.8 It should be emphasised that these figures relate only to the three Ombudsman cases with determinations and does not mean that 60% of all complaints concerning the Council are due to maladministration.
- 12.9 There were zero Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFO) made against the Council. For information, CHFOs are issued in relation to failings in an individual case where the Housing Ombudsman has taken reasonable steps to seek engagement from a landlord, but the resident remains unable to progress a complaint. They may also be issued where there is evidence of a systemic issue within a landlord's complaint handling. Where a CHFO is issued by the Housing Ombudsman it is shared with the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 12.10 The Landlord Performance Report for the Council containing full details is attached as an appendix to this report.

13. **Lessons Learnt and Service Improvements from Complaints**

- 13.1 The purpose of complaint handling can broadly be described as putting problems right and then learning from those problems to prevent the same problem reoccurring.
- 13.2 A summary of the lessons learnt, and service improvements is set out below:
- Ensure that all information regarding new build properties is passed on to the tenant.
 - To provide further training to staff on dealing with tenants and to ensure that all alerts regarding tenants are reviewed regularly.
 - New procedures were implemented in respect of the storage of personal belongings by the Council to limit their storage to 1 month. Procedures were also reviewed to ensure that the appropriate notices were served on the tenant/property.
 - Procedures were reviewed to ensure that garages were not let before works had been completed.

- Procedures were reviewed to ensure that following the issue of a letter concerning any outstanding payment it was followed up in the following week with a telephone call/text.
- Procedures were reviewed to ensure that clearer advice was provided as to when pests were the Council or tenants responsibility.
- That where a team was short staffed, steps are taken to ensure that maintenance is still carried out regularly.
- To review procedures to ensure that neighbouring properties are contacted before undertaking work on council owned properties.
- To review internal procedures for obtaining access to properties where the Council needed to undertake compliance or other works.
- To ensure the proactive management of any issues with contractors that may arise.
- To review how the repairs and management teams could work together to support and communicate with tenants. As a consequence of this, the areas covered by housing repairs and housing management officers were aligned to ensure consistent points of contact.

13.3 The complaints team with effect from Quarter 1, 2025/26 have started reporting on lessons learned to the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

14. **Looking to the Future – Changes to Better Manage the Complaints Process**

14.1 There are a number of on-going activities intended to improve how the Council reports on complaints for the future. These include:

Continuing to Improve Our In-House Complaint Management System

14.2 Now that the complaint system itself has reached the point that it was intended when first implemented in January 2024, the emphasis has moved to ensuring that services are compliant with the provisions of the Complaints Policy and improving monitoring and reporting. This has seen the roll out of PowerBI dashboards to key services and this will continue during 2025/26 to encompass all service areas.

14.3 Additionally, work is on-going to automate some of the reporting work that will go to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

Improving Tracking of Housing Ombudsman Decisions

14.4 A number of steps have been taken within the complaints team to create a single point of reference document for all housing complaints that have been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. This will allow for better briefing on Ombudsman cases to the Member Responsible for Complaints and to Corporate Management Team.

Monitoring and Reporting

14.5 The Council has reviewed and updated its reporting arrangements for complaints with effect from Quarter 1, 2025/26 as follows:

- A dedicated Quarterly Reports to the governing body (Cabinet) and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee based on the metrics within the Annual Self-Assessment. Previously, complaints were reported as part of the Strategic Performance Report, but it was felt that a separate report better fulfilled the reporting requirements for the governing body.

- Annual Report to the Governance Committee on overall complaint handling performance for both Ombudsmen. As part of this, both Self-Assessment reports will be included as appendices to the Annual Report.
- 14.6 These measures deliver on the aspirations set out in last year's Self-Assessment in relation to how the Council should report on complaints during the municipal year.
- 14.7 The Council remains committed to further strengthen opportunities for learning and service improvement through review and self-assessment.