

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 9 July 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Annual complaint monitoring and service improvement report 2024/25

Report summary:

The council's annual complaint monitoring and service improvement report for 2024/25 is attached as Appendix A

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Cabinet note the numbers and trends in terms of formal complaints dealt with during the year; the learning points which have been identified; and actions taken to address these.

Reason for recommendation:

The council is required by the Housing Ombudsman to publish our self-assessment against their complaint handling code, on an annual basis, as part of the complaint performance and service improvement report. This should be accompanied by Cabinet's response to the report.

The purpose of publishing the Council's response to the self-assessment and to the report is to provide assurance that it is a true reflection of the council's complaint handling.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance

- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

As this report is only updating on the Council's complaints performance no equalities issues arise. The Council, does however, ensure that it's processes and procedures in dealing with complaints are compliant with Equality legislation.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; It is important that the Council has robust complaints procedures in place and that members have regular oversight in relation to complaints and how the Council is performing.

Links to background information [Governing-bodies-guidance-published-March-2022.pdf \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ Better homes and communities for all
- ☐ A greener East Devon
- ☐ A resilient economy
- ☒ Quality Services

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in the report

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to the report.

Appendix A

Annual complaint monitoring and service improvement report 2024/25

1. Complaints received

The council operates a two stage complaints process, with complaints initially being considered at stage 1 by the relevant Assistant Director (or equivalent post where there is no AD).

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response they receive they are entitled to ask for the complaint to be considered at the second stage of the process and a response is sent out by the relevant Director.

During the year 2024/25

We received:

372 Stage 1 complaints

135 Stage 2 complaints

63% of complaints were resolved at the first stage with the remaining complainants exercising their right to progress to the second stage of the complaints procedure

Stage 1 complaint average response time 25 working days

Stage 2 complaint average response time 46 working days

65% of Stage 1 complaints were upheld/partially upheld

73% of Stage 1 Housing Complaints were upheld/partially upheld

2. All corporate complaints Stage 1

Department	Apr 22 - Mar 23	Apr 23 - Mar 24	Apr 24 - Mar 25	Complaints % 2024-25
Housing	117	207	276	74.19%
Planning	27	38	35	9.41%
Rev & Bens	15	15	17	4.57%
Waste Management	6	12	5	1.34%
Env. Health (incl. Car parks PSH)	7	9	13	3.49%
Streetscene	4	9	15	4.03%
Building Control	3	2	3	0.81%
Licensing	2	2	1	0.27%
Information & Complaints	0	1	2	0.54%
Property	1	1	0	
Trees	0	1	2	0.53%
Countryside	0	1	0	
Democratic Services	0	1	1	0.27%
Legal	0	1	1	0.27%
Electoral Services	0	0	1	0.27%
Total	182	300	372	100%

Housing complaints stage 1

Sub department	2023-24	2024-25	Complaints % 2024-25
Repairs	144	233	84.40%
Estate Management	29	26	9.40%
ASB	16	0	
Housing Allocations	6	6	2.80%
Housing Options	6	1	0.36%
MSO/HSG	4	3	1%
Rental	2	3	1%
Community Development	0	1	0.36%
DFG	0	1	0.36%
Resettlement Scheme	0	1	0.36%
RTB	0	1	0.36%
Total	207	276	100%

3. All corporate complaints Stage 2

Department	Apr 22 - Mar 23	Apr 23 - Mar 24	Apr 24 - Mar 25	Complaints % 2024-25
Housing	35	40	96	71.11%
Planning	9	18	23	17.04%
Rev & Bens	4	1	2	1.48%
Waste Management	1	3	3	2.22%
Env. Health (incl. Car parks PSH)	2	3	5	3.70%
Streetscene	1	2	0	
Building Control	0	2	1	0.74%
Licensing	1	0	0	
Information & Complaints	0	0	3	2.22%
Democratic Services	2	0	1	0.74%
Electoral Services	0	0	1	0.74%
Total	55	69	135	100%

Housing complaints stage 2

Sub department	2023-24	2024-25	Complaints % 2024-25
Repairs	24	82	85.42%
Estate Management	10	9	9.38%
ASB	0	1	1%
Housing Allocations	3	1	1%
Housing Options	2	0	
MSO/HSG	1	1	1%
Rental	0	1	1%
Community Development	0	0	
DFG	0	1	1%
Total	40	96	100%

4. Learning Points

a. Planning Service

The Planning Service complaints are holding at the same level and there is a fairly even split between decision making complaints and complaints relating to alleged service failure. The service failure complaints have mostly been driven by delays in determining planning applications. This has been attributed, on the whole, to an issue with staffing levels, volume of work being processed and changes to the legislation such as the introduction of bio-diversity net gain which have all impacted on capacity.

Key Planning Actions:

- New officers have been recruited and the number of complaints for delays in determining planning applications is beginning to fall.

b. Housing Service

There has been a significant increase in the number of housing complaints in the last two financial years. The trends that are driving the complaints remain the same and these are related to the condition of properties; delays in carrying out repairs; quality of repairs; and communication challenges around appointments that ensures we are communicating efficiently and promptly with tenants.

The Senior management team in Housing are implementing a number of changes and bringing in new officers to better manage the volume of complaints coming into the service. This has already seen a significant reduction in the backlog of Housing complaints at stage 1. The focus is now on reducing the number of overdue stage 2 complaints and then the aim is to respond within the time frames set by the Housing Ombudsman to both stage 1 and 2 complaints going forward.

We are taking a “lessons learnt” approach to how we deal with the complaints. We have revised our approach to how we respond to complaints in order to demonstrate an open, honest approach to where things have gone wrong. We are providing customers with more information in relation to what learnings we have taken from the complaint they have raised and this is positively raising the profile of changes we are making across the service.

We therefore consider this focus on resolution is driving a renewed energy for customers to access the complaints system with a confidence that they are being heard. This is likely in the short term to continue to drive higher numbers of complaints coming through but in the longer term we would hope to start to see complaint numbers in each category coming down.

Key housing actions:

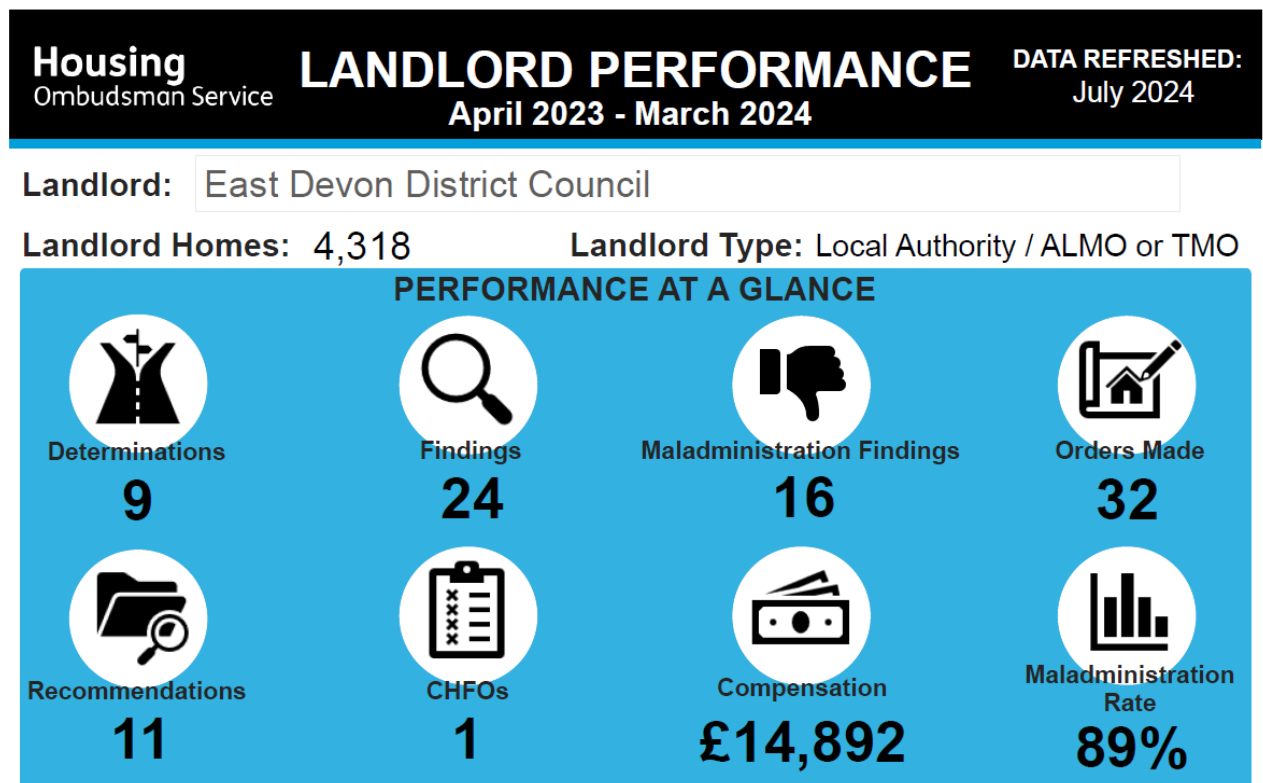
- Weekly meetings with contractors to discuss high profile cases and complaints and ensure complex repairs are on track.
- Staff training to improve communication both internally and externally with customers.
- Improvements in the sharing of information between teams relating to void properties
- Review of team set-up to ensure we have the right resources available to deal with demands coming into the service.
- Expanding the sub-contractor network to ensure no unnecessary delay in completing works
- Updating the asset management strategy with a focus on the planned and cyclical maintenance programme
- Working more closely and frequently with our contractors to learn from poor customer experiences
- Weekly meeting between complaints team and housing service to discuss complaints and weekly priorities.

5. Landlord Performance Report from the Housing Ombudsman

A copy of the most recent landlord performance report is available here [Complaint outcomes – East Devon](#) This shows the council's performance for the period 2023/24 as this is currently the most up to date performance data available. The Housing Ombudsman requires the council to make a copy of this report available with our annual self-assessment

submission and they are therefore reviewing the timing of the publication of their performance reports, going forward.

In terms of our performance in 2023/24, this is summarised below:



Key to definitions:

- Determinations: The number of cases decided upon during the year
- Findings: The number of findings on cases determined. Each category on a determined case has one finding
- Orders: Orders are made where the investigation has resulted in a finding on some level of maladministration. They are intended to put things right for the resident
- Recommendations: Can be made in any case as a way to improve service delivery and promote learning
- CHFO: Complaint handling failure order

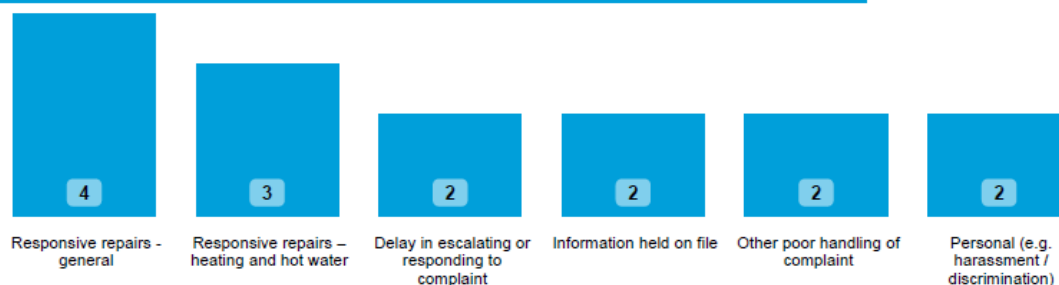
Landlord Findings by Category | *Cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024*

Table 2.3

Category	Severe Maladministration	Maladministration	Service failure	Mediation	Redress	No maladministration	Outside Jurisdiction	Withdrawn	Total
Property Condition	0	6	2	0	0	1	1	0	10
Complaints Handling	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
Information and data management	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Anti-Social Behaviour	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Moving to a Property	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Buying or selling a property	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Estate Management	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Staff	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	1	10	5	0	0	2	6	0	24

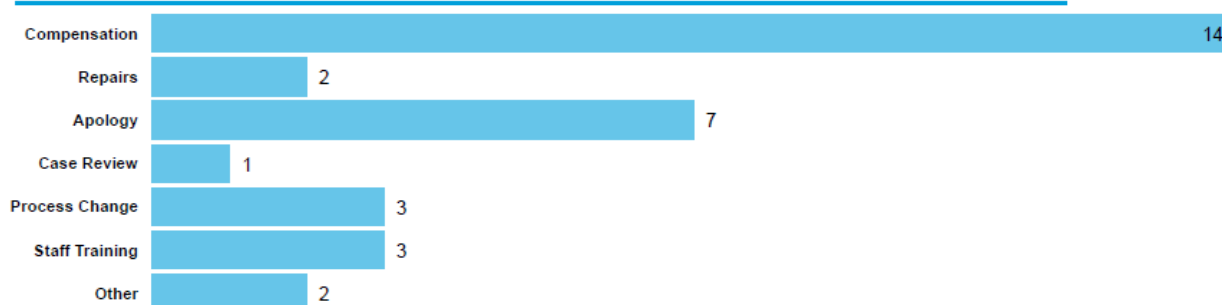
Top Sub-Categories | Cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024

Table 3.5



Orders Made by Type | Orders on cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024

Table 4.1



Order Compliance | Order target dates between April 2023 - March 2024

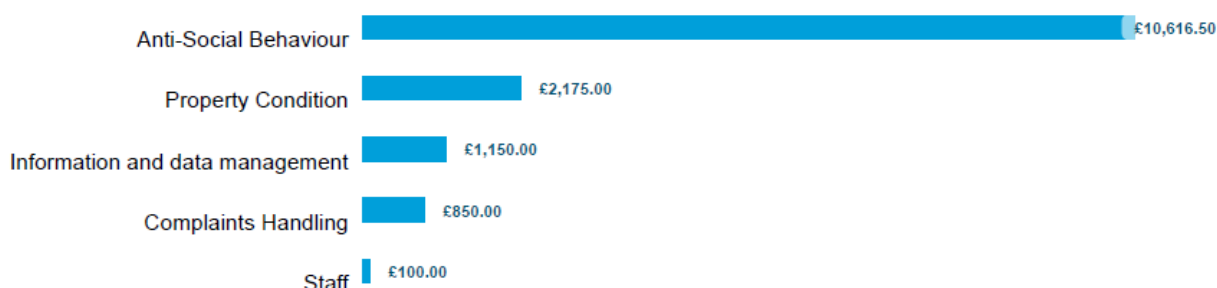
Table 4.2

Order Complete?	Within 3 Months	
	Count	%
Complied	32	100%
Total	32	100%

Compensation Ordered | Cases Determined between April 2023 - March 2024

Table 5.1

● Ordered ● Recommended



6. Annual performance report from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2023/24

A copy of the most recent **Annual Review letter 2024-25** is available here [Complaint outcomes – East Devon](#) (the link needs to be added) This shows the council's performance for the period 2024/25 as this is currently the most up to date performance data available.

During 2024/25 there were 30 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints. Of those 11 were not for the Ombudsman or not ready for them to investigate, 16 complaints were closed after initial enquiries where the LGO decided not to investigate further. 3 complaints were investigated and 1 was upheld. The one complaint that was

upheld related to the approval of planning permission based on inaccurate plans. Whilst fault was found, the Ombudsman did not consider this caused injustice to the complainant and was satisfied that the apology provided by the Council was a suitable remedy.

In terms of our performance in 24/25 this is summarised as follows:-

