

This Report will be made public on 10 September 2025

Report Number **C/25/33**

To: Cabinet
Date: 18th September 2025
Status: Non-key Decision
Responsible Officer: Ewan Green – Director: Strategy & Resources
Cabinet Member: Cllr Gary Fuller - Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement and Accountability

SUBJECT: 2024-25 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT

SUMMARY: The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) complaint codes both recommend that all Local Authorities publish an annual complaints and service improvement report on their website which outlines the volume of complaints, the subsequent remedies, the method by which complaints and lessons learnt as a result of complaints investigated. This report sets out the complaints that Folkestone & Hythe District Council has handled in the 2024-25 financial year along with an annual self-assessment of compliance against the complaint handling codes.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) complaint codes set out that Council's should produce an Annual Complaints and Service Improvement report for scrutiny and challenge. The report should then be published on the complaint section of a Council's website.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/25/33.
2. To note the 2024-25 Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report set out in Appendix 1.
3. To note the completed Annual Self Assessments against the complaint codes of both the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) set out in appendices 2 and 3.
4. To note the Governing Body Response to the Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report by the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) and the Corporate Governance Board (CGB) set out in appendix 4.
5. To note the Housing Ombudsman's submission deadline of 30th September 2025 for the documentation set out in recommendations 2, 3 and 4.

1. Overview Of Complaints in 2024-25

1.1 This report outlines the complaints received during the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and covers the following points:

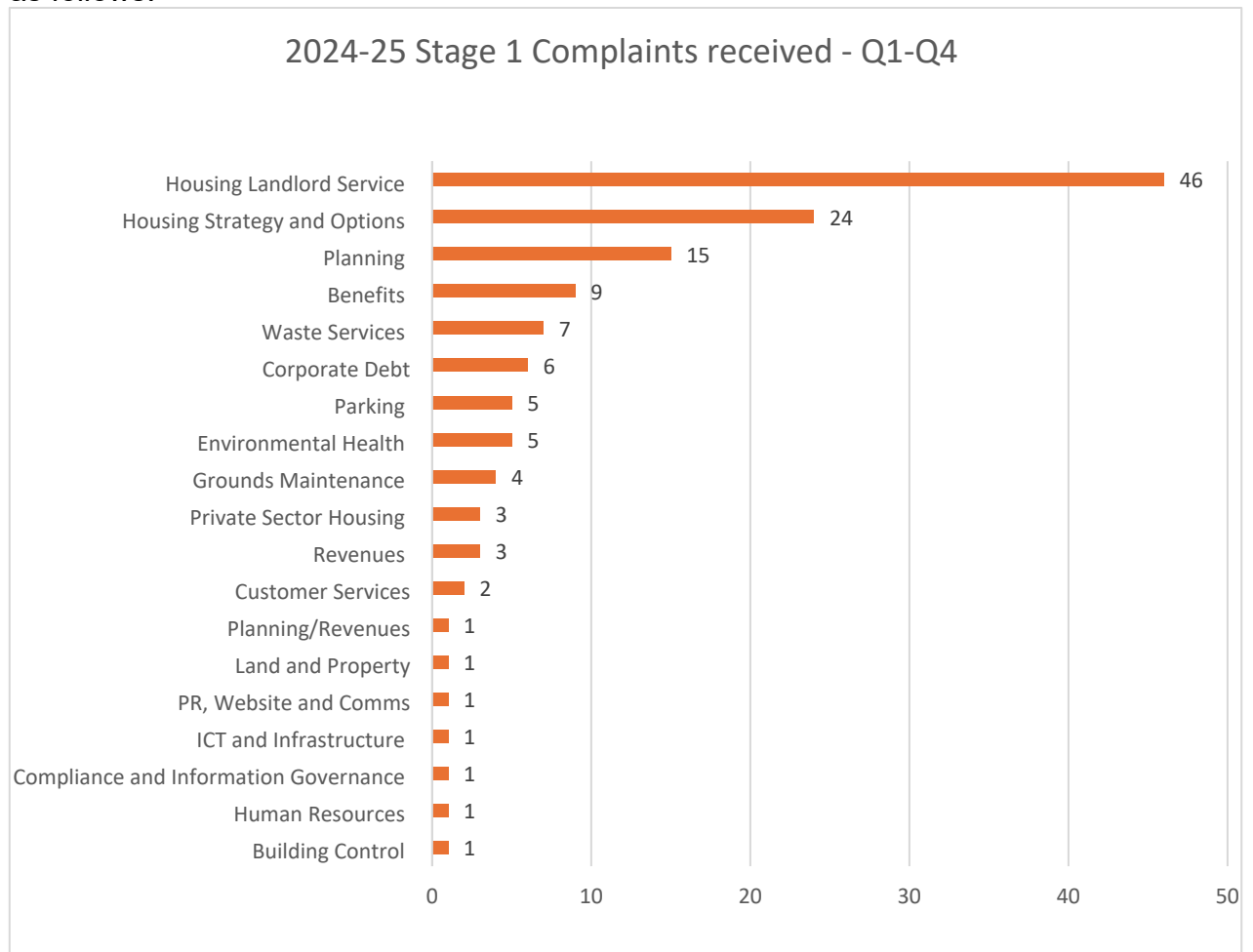
- Number of complaints received
- Number of complaints handled at each stage of the process
- Complaints by type/service area
- Complaints performance
- Learning from Complaints

1.2 The number of complaints and Ombudsman (Enquiries or investigations) received in 2024-25 compared with 2023-24 is as follows:

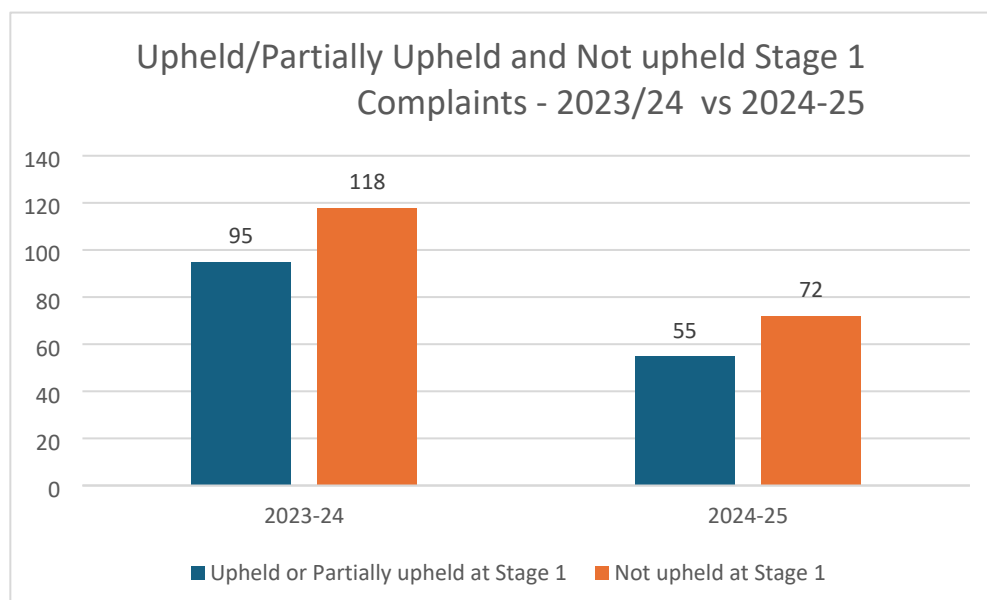
Volumes	2023-24	2024-25
Stage 1 Complaints	239	136
Stage 2 Complaints	38	32
Ombudsman (Enquiries or investigations)	14	7

2. Stage 1 Complaints

2.1 A total of 136 Stage 1 complaints were received during the 2024/25 year. The number of complaints received by service area at Stage 1 is set out in the graph as follows:



- 2.2 The largest numbers of stage 1 complaints received in the year were from the following service areas: Housing Landlord Service (46), Housing Strategy and Options (24), Planning (15), Benefits (9) and Waste Services (7).
- 2.3 The overall number of Stage 1 complaints upheld and not upheld in 2024/25 compared with 2023/24 is set out below:



- 2.4 40% of stage 1 complaints were either partially or fully upheld during the year in comparison to 39% in 2023/24. The percentage breakdown by service area for upheld or partially upheld complaints in 2024/25 is shown below:

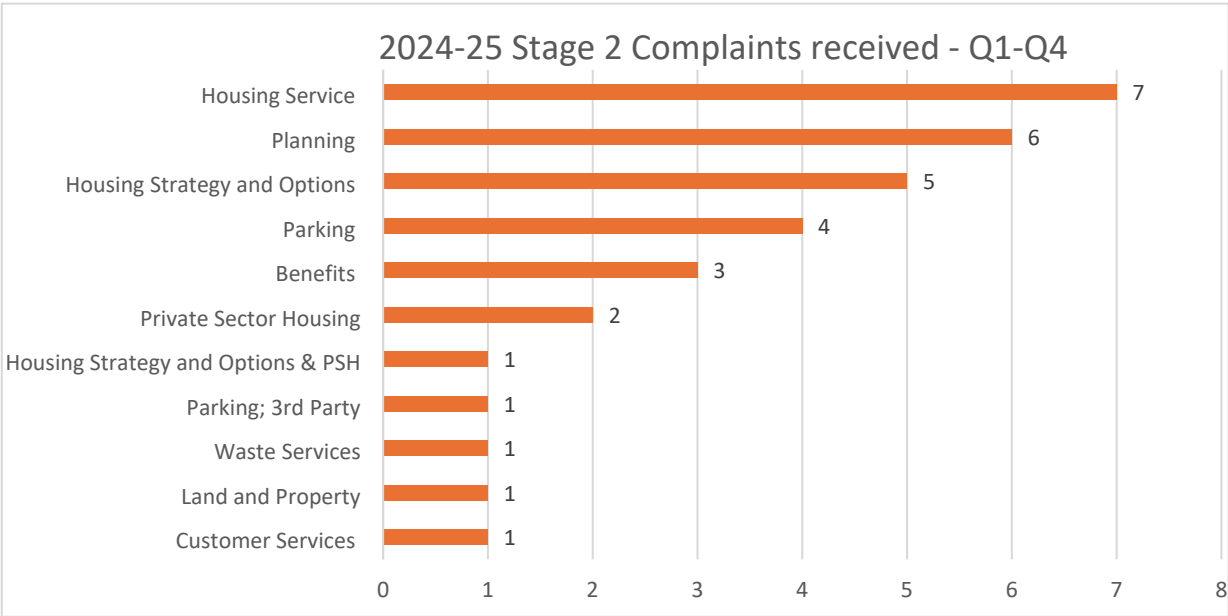
Stage 1 complaints – Upheld or Partially upheld in 2024/25:

Service Area	Total Stage 1 complaints received	Stage 1 complaints upheld or partial upheld	Total upheld or partial upheld (%)
Housing Service	46	27	58.6%
Housing Strategy & Options	24	6	25%
Planning	15	3	20%
Benefits	9	2	22%
Waste Services	7	3	42%
Corporate Debt	6	2	33%
Parking	5	1	20%
Environmental Health	5	4	80%
Grounds Maintenance	4	3	75%
Private Sector Housing	3	0	-
Revenues	3	1	33%
Customer Services	2	1	50%
Planning/Revenues	1	0	-
Land and Property	1	0	-
PR, Website & Comms	1	1	100%
ICT & Infrastructure	1	0	-
Compliance & Information Gov	1	0	-
Human Resources	1	0	-
Building Control	1	1	100%
2024-25 Stage 1 Total	136	55	40%

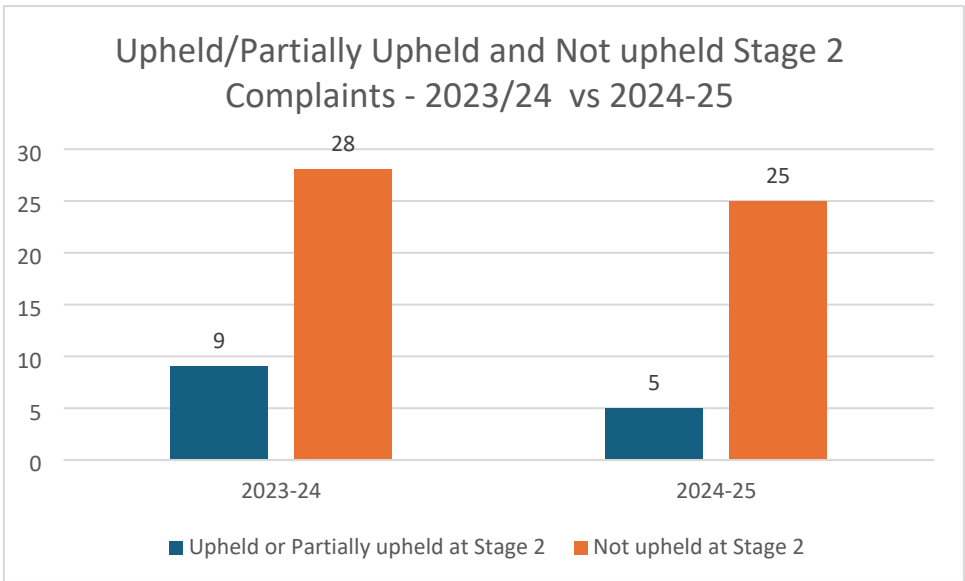
2.5 In comparison with 2023/24 year, the total number of Stage 1 complaints received during the 2024/25 year has decreased by 43%. In 2023/24, a total of 239 complaints were received in comparison to 136 in 2024/25. The largest number of stage 1 complaints received in 2023/24 were for *Housing Service (68)*, *Waste Services (35)*, *Housing Strategy and Options (27)*, *Parking (26)*, *Planning (21)* and *Grounds Maintenance (13)*. A full breakdown can be found in appendix 1.

3. Stage 2 Complaints

3.1 A total of 32 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 during the year. The number of complaints received by service area is set out in the graph as follows:



3.2 The overall number of Stage 2 complaints upheld and not upheld in 2024/25 compared with 2023/24 is set out below:



- 3.3 16% of stage 2 complaints were either partially or fully upheld during the year in comparison to 23% in 2023/24. The percentage breakdown of the number of complaints at Stage 2 being partially upheld or in their entirety by service area is shown as follows:

Stage 2 complaints – Upheld or Partially upheld in 2024/25:

Service Area	Total Stage 2 complaints received	Stage 2 complaints upheld or partial upheld	Total upheld or partial upheld (%)
Housing Service	7	3	43%
Planning	6	0	-
Housing Strategy & Options	5	1	20%
Parking	4	0	-
Benefits	3	0	-
Private Sector Housing	2	0	-
Housing Strategy & Options/PSH	1	1	100%
Parking (3 rd Party)	1	0	-
Waste Services	1	0	-
Land and Property	1	0	-
Customer Services	1	0	-
2024-25 Stage 2 Total	32	5	16%

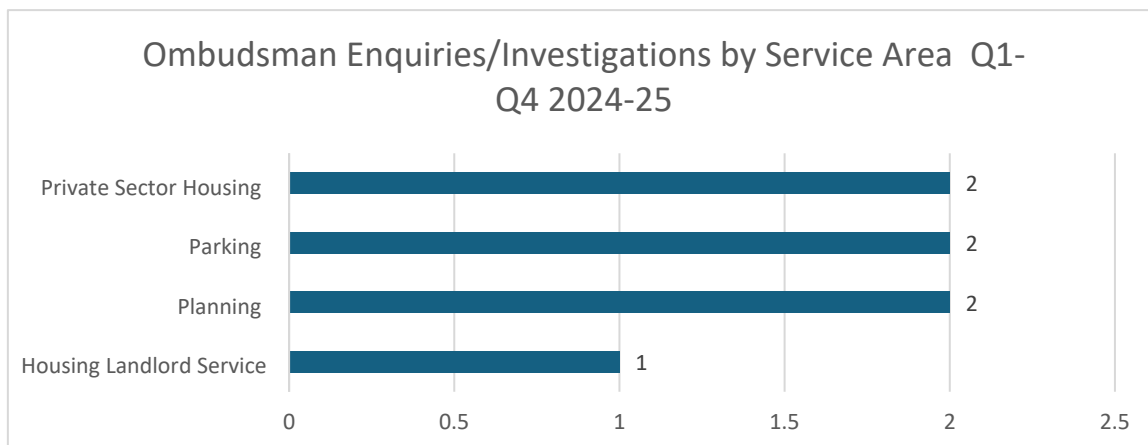
- 3.4 In comparison with 2023/24 year, the total number of Stage 2 complaints received during the 2024/25 year has decreased by 15.7%. In 2023/24, a total of 38 complaints were received in comparison to 32 in 2024/25. The largest number of stage 2 complaints received in 2023/24 were for Housing Service (10), Planning (9), Environmental Health (5), Housing Strategy and Options (3). A full breakdown can be found in appendix 1.

4. Refused Complaints in 2024-25

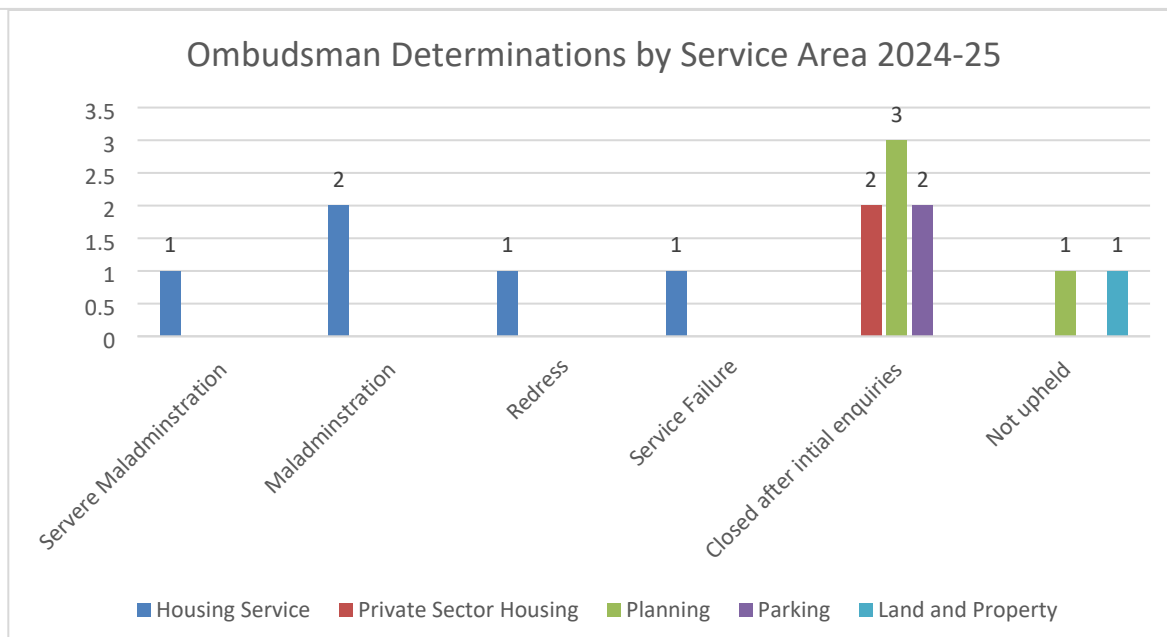
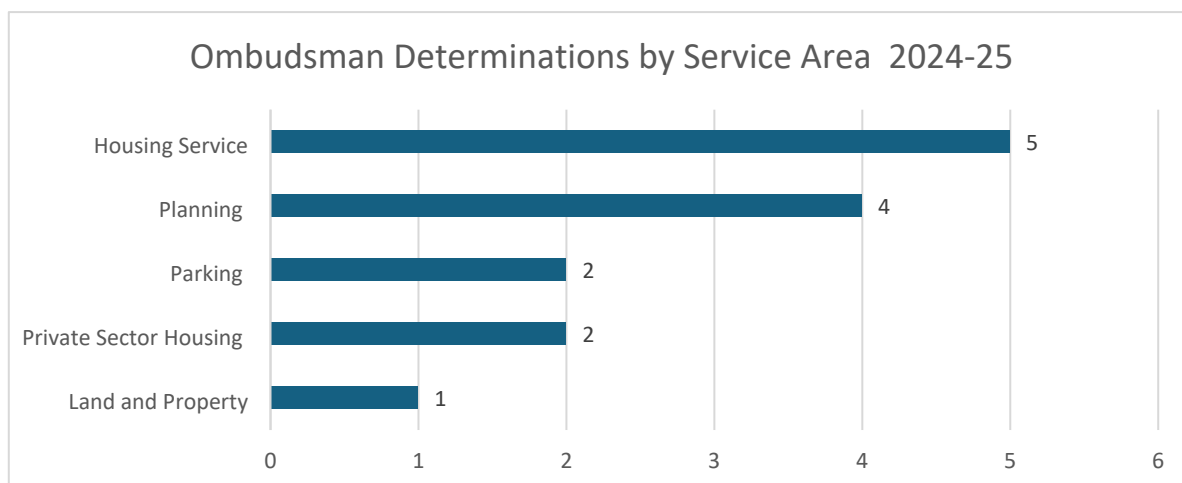
- 4.1 A total of one complaint was refused during 2024-25 year under council's complaints policy due to the complaint relating to an issue that is more than 12 months old.
- 4.2 Where the Council does not accept a complaint, the resident/individual will be provided with an explanation setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and will be advised of their right to take the decision not to accept the complaint to the appropriate Ombudsman. Where the HO or the LGSCO (as appropriate) does not agree with the Council's decision not to accept a complaint, the Council may be instructed to accept the complaint.

5. Ombudsman Investigations, Enquiries and Determinations

- 5.1 A total of 7 enquires or investigations were received by the Ombudsman (Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman) during the year. An enquiry is where the Ombudsman request information from the council to investigate a complaint it has received from a complainant. An investigation is where the Ombudsman has investigated and determined an outcome.



5.2 A total of 14 determinations were made overall during the year: Housing Ombudsman (HO) (5) and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) (9). The graphs below show number received by service area and by determination:



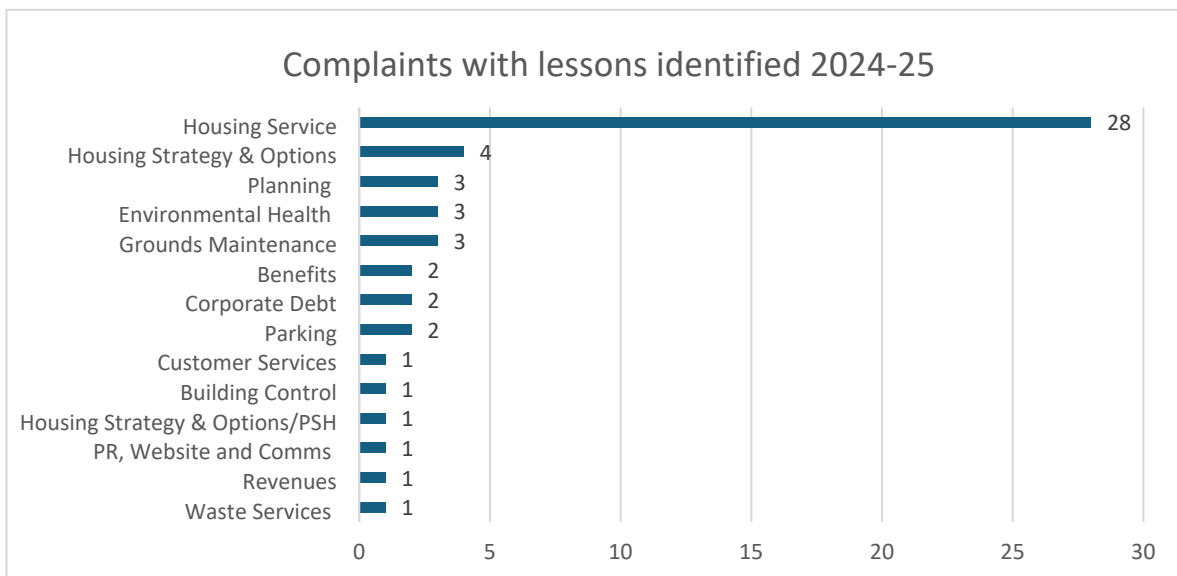
5.3 The full details of the 14 determinations provided by the Ombudsman along with actions that have been put in place to support continuous improvement in service delivery are set out in appendix 1 of this report. The annual reports from both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman regarding council complaints for 2024-25 are linked here:

- [LGSCO 2024-25 Annual Complaint Report](#)
- *HO 2024-25 Annual Complaint Report. (awaiting final publication by Ombudsman)*

6. Learning from Complaints

6.1 The Council has embedded culture of continuous improvement in the services it delivers to residents, and this is reflected within its corporate plan commitment to being a 'Well Run Council that delivers high value services for all' and through the behavioural values it expects staff to uphold in delivering those services, which includes the principle of 'always improving' to continuously look at ways to improve service delivery. During the 2024/25 year, a new learning log was introduced to record any stage 1 or stage 2 complaints that have either been determined as 'partially or fully upheld' where we have got things wrong following the consideration of a complaint. The log is updated on a monthly basis and the information is shared with the relevant teams to identify the lessons and improvements.

6.2 In 2024/25 year, a total of 53 lessons were identified, the following graph shows a breakdown by service area with the Housing service receiving the largest number (28)



6.3 The themes that have arisen from complaints with lessons identified during the year have included– communication in providing service provision, staff conduct and contractor performance when carrying out works. An overview of the improvements that have been noted as result of complaints learning during they year is set out in appendix 1.

7. Benchmarking for housing complaints

7.1 We benchmark our performance on housing landlord complaints, in-line with the new Consumer Standards as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing. We measure overall satisfaction through tenant perception survey as well as volumes and performance.

7.2 The results for 2024/25 compared to our two main benchmarking peer groups is as follows:

Peer group	England	Southern LAs ALMOs <15K homes	F&HDC Result
Perception survey (satisfaction)	Median	Median	2025 Survey
Landlord's approach to complaints handling	35%	30%	36.4%
Complaints performance	Median	Median	2024/25
Number of Stage 1 housing complaints per 1,000 homes	55.2	34.9	13.8
Number of Stage 2 housing complaints per 1,000 homes	8.8	5.4	2.3
Stage 1 housing complaints responded to within Handling Code timescales (10 working days)	89.3%	85.3%	95.7%
Stage 2 housing complaints responded to within the Handling Code timescales (20 working days)	88.6%	82.7%	100%

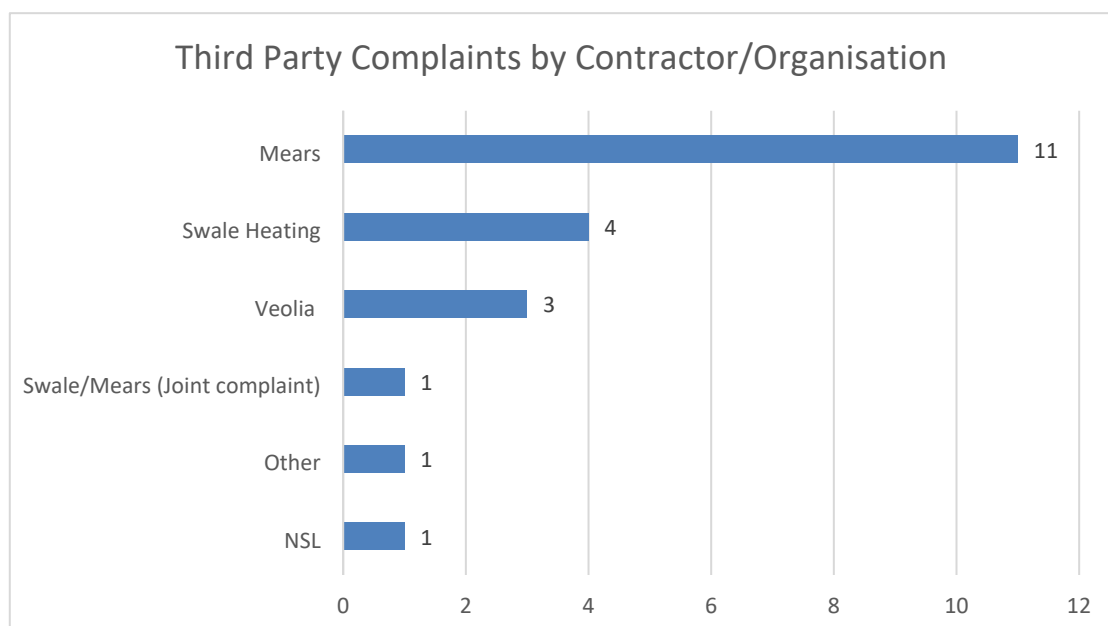
7.3 Satisfaction with complaints handling consistently scores quite low across the housing sector. However, we score slightly higher than the sector based on a tenant-wide satisfaction survey undertaken in 2025.

7.4 Compared to our peer group and the housing sector as a whole, we receive fewer housing complaints, and our response times are better (96% Stage 1 and 2 combined).

8. Third Party Complaints:

8.1 Third Party complaints received under the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy adopted in April 2025 now ensures that an individual or resident when making a complaint does not go through two separate complaints processes to resolve their complaint. A third party, such a contractor will respond at Stage 1 on the Council's behalf and if the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily, it will then be progressed to Stage 2 where Council will respond, one stage 2 complaint was dealt with in the year that has been included as part of the figures set out in section 3.3 of this report.

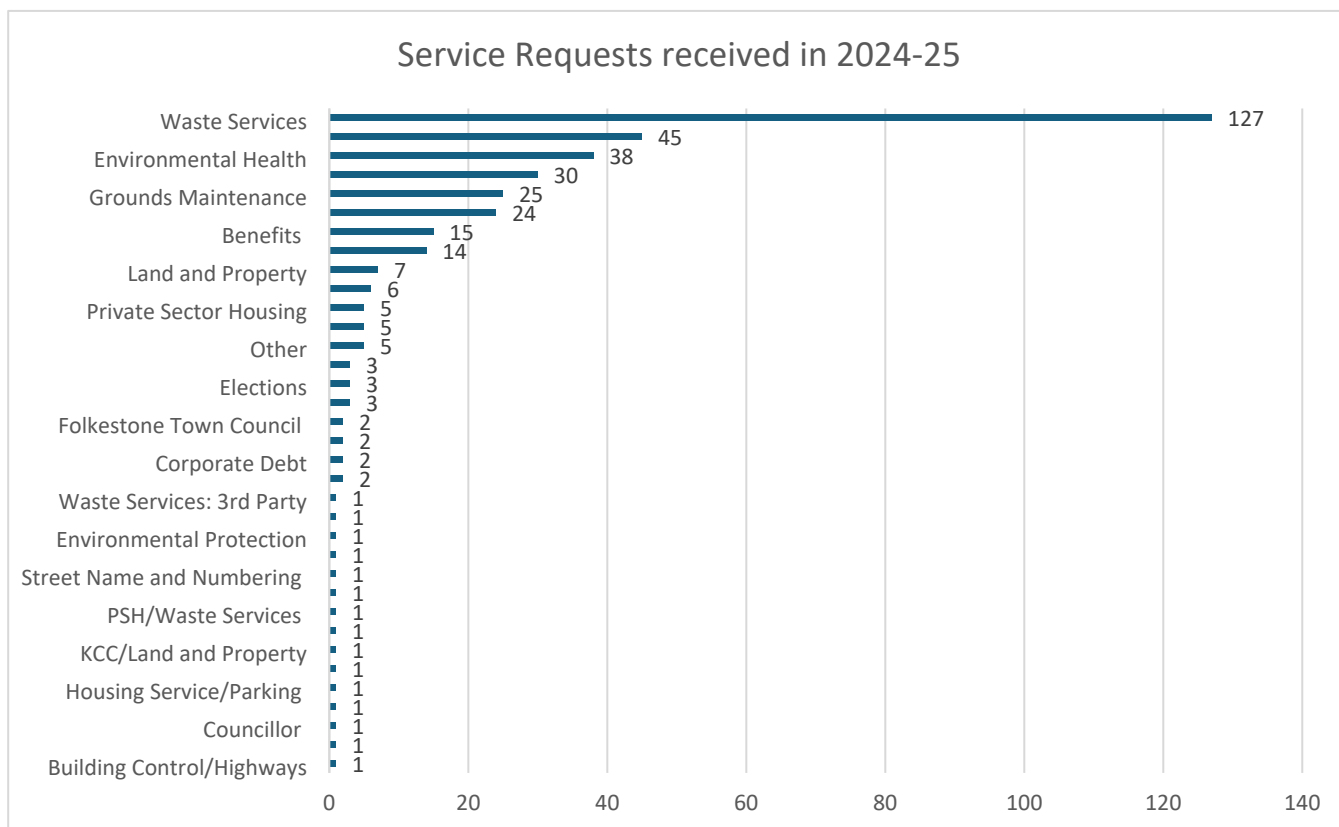
- 8.2 A total of 21 complaints were referred to a relevant third-party or organisation at stage 1 during 2024-25. A breakdown of third-party complaints related to service area and contractor/organisation is as follows:



- 8.3 The largest number of third-party complaints referred were in relation to complaints about Mears (11) and Swale Heating (4) regarding repairs and servicing provided. The third largest number of this complaint type was in relation to Veolia (3) for conduct of collection staff and the mistaken removal of a baby carrier as household waste item.

9. Service Requests

- 9.1 Service requests are not complaints but may contain expressions of dissatisfaction. A Service Request provides the Council with an opportunity to resolve matters to an individual's satisfaction before it becomes a complaint. Service requests defined under Council's policy as follows: 'A request that the Council provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision.'
- 9.2 Upon receipt of a complaint from a customer, the complaints officer will determine whether it is a service request or if it should be processed as a formal Stage 1 complaint under the Council's policy. If it is a service request the complaints officer will either respond to it directly or pass it to the relevant service area to respond.
- 9.3 A total of 378 service requests were received and recorded by the complaints team during the 2024-25 year compared with the 366 in 2023-24. The largest number of service requests received in 2024-25 year was for Waste Services (127), Housing Service (45), Environmental Health (38), Parking (30), Grounds Maintenance (25), Kent County Council (24), Benefits 15 and Housing Strategy and Options (14).



10. Changes and Improvements in 2024-25

10.1 In the 2024-25-year work was undertaken on comprehensively reviewing the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy to ensure its alignment with the codes of practice issued by both Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO). The policy was presented to Cabinet in March 2025 and then for final adoption at Full Council on 2nd April 2025 (Report ref: A/24/28) An overview of the reworking of the policy is as follows:

- Definition of a 'Service Request' defined by the Joint Handling Code.
- Definition of a 'complaint' as defined by Housing Ombudsman Code
- Definition of 'complaint' as defined by Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Code
- Clearer detail of the complaints handling process, acknowledgment and responses to complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2 in line with the codes.
- Definitions of what will happen at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the process.
- Move from 20 to 10 working days response to all stage 1 complaints across the Council (Stage 2 remain at 20 working days). Note response time for Housing Landlord Service is already 10 working days.
- Complaints handled by a contractor/third party must form part of the council's two stage process to ensure there is no separate complaints process for an individual/resident to follow. Contractors will still have the opportunity to respond in first instance and if unhappy a complaint would be escalated to stage 2 of the Council's complaint process.
- Contact details of both Local Government and Social Care and Housing Ombudsman in the policy and on responses.
- Section on annual performance reporting of complaints

10.2 The key operational change emerging from the introduction of the new policy on 1st April 2025 was the reduction in the working day response time for all non-Housing

Landlord Service-related Stage 1 complaints from 20 working days to 10 working days to ensure the Council is fully aligned on response times ahead of the LGSCO April 2026 deadline set out in their code.

- 10.3 Complaints surveys on the conclusion of complaint were previously sent on Housing Landlord Service complaints only 14 days after the date of complaint closure, in line with best practice set out in complaint handling guidance by the LGSCO, all corporate complaints closed are now issued with a survey to capture any feedback about the way the complaint was handled to assist with learning and continuous improvement from complaints.

11. Ombudsman Self-Assessment and Governing Body Response

- 11.1 To ensure annual compliance with the Ombudsman, the council is required to publish the following documentation on the complaints page of its website:
- Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report (Appendix 1)
 - Annual Self-Assessment against the Ombudsman complaint handling codes for both HO and LGSCO. (Appendices 2 and 3)
 - Governing Body Response (Appendix 4)
- 11.2 The Housing Ombudsman has set a deadline of 30th September 2025 to ensure the above documentation in relation to its compliance is received, therefore following consideration by Cabinet, all documentation set out in section 11.1 will be published on the council's website.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 12.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
The council is not compliant with Housing Ombudsman's annual submission deadline for the Annual Complaints and Service Improvement report along with supporting documentation.	Medium	Low	Consideration of the Annual complaints and service improvement report by the Member Responsible for Complaints and Cabinet ahead of 30 th September 2025 deadline.

13. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

- S **Legal Officer's Comments (NM)** -There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.
- 13.2 **Finance Officer's Comments (DL)** - There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

- 13.3 **Human Resources (RB)** - There are no HR implications arising directly from this report.
- 13.4 **Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)** - There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report. Ongoing complaints learning will enable the identification of any equality and diversity related issues.
- 13.5 **Climate Change Implications (JWi)** - There are no direct climate implications arising from this report.

14. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Gavin Edwards, Senior Performance Officer

Telephone: 01303 853436

Email: gavin.edwards@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

- *Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaint Handling Code*
- *Housing Ombudsman (HO) Complaint Handling Code*

Appendices:

Appendix 1: 2024-25 Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report

Appendix 2: HO Annual Self-Assessment

Appendix 3: LGSCO Annual Self-Assessment

Appendix 4: Annual Governing Body response 2024-25

APPENDIX 1: Annual Complaints Report and Service Improvement Report 2024-25

Complaint Volumes 2023-24	2023-24	2024-25
Stage 1	239	136
Stage 2	38	32
Ombudsman (Enquiries and Investigations)	14	7

Reduction of 43% in Stage 1 complaints

There has been an 43% overall reduction in the number of stage 1 complaints received, the largest fall in complaints continues to be from Waste Services which saw 35 stage 1 complaints received in 2023/24 compared with 7 received for 2024/25. Parking saw a decrease in complaints at this stage compared with 2023/24 where 26 stage 1 complaints were received compared with 5 received in 2024/25. The Housing Landlord service also saw a decrease in number of stage 1 complaints received with 68 received in 2023/24 and 46 in 2024/25.

The number of service requests received and dealt with by the Complaints team before escalation to a formal complaint as part of the Council’s two stage complaint process in these service areas is either equal or greater than number of stage 1 complaints received during the year: Waste Services (127) for issues relating to missed bin collections and damaged bins, Housing Service (45) for issues relating to rubbish in communal property areas, neighbour issues, dog noise and fouling. Parking (30) for issues relating to parking permits, penalty charge notices (PCNs) and vehicles causing an obstruction on the highway.

Stage 1 Complaints upheld or partially upheld have decreased by 42%

The number of complaints being upheld or partially upheld at stage 1 have decreased by 42% in 2024-25 compared with the 2023-24 year. The largest number of upheld and partially upheld complaints at stage 1 were for the following departments -Housing Landlord Service (27), Housing Strategy and Options (6), Environmental Health (4).

2024/25 Complaints breakdown compared with 2023/24 Year:

Key	 <u>Improved Performance</u>	 <u>Worsened Performance</u>	 <u>No Change from previous year</u>		
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with year
Benefits	Stage 1	7	9	Upheld – 2 Not upheld – 5 No further action – 2	
	Stage 2	1	3	Not upheld – 3	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with year
Building Control	Stage 1	0	1	Upheld – 1	
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	

Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Community Safety	Stage 1	0	0	Nil	
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Compliance & Governance	Stage 1	1	1	Not Upheld – 1	
	Stage 2	1	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Corporate Debt	Stage 1	8	6	Upheld – 1 Not upheld – 4 Partially upheld – 1	
	Stage 2	2	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	2	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Customer Services	Stage 1	2	2	Upheld – 1 Not Upheld - 1	
	Stage 2	0	1	Not Upheld - 1	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Economic Development	Stage 1	0	0	Nil	
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Elections	Stage 1	1	0	Nil	
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year

Environmental Health	Stage 1	5	5	Upheld – 1 Not upheld – 1 Partially upheld – 3	
	Stage 2	5	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Grounds Maintenance	Stage 1	13	4	Upheld – 1 Not upheld – 1 Partially upheld – 2	
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Highways	Stage 1	3	0	Nil	
	Stage 2	1	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Housing Service	Stage 1	68	46	Upheld – 13 Not Upheld – 17 Partially Upheld – 14 No further action – 1 Withdrawn – 1	
	Stage 2	10	7	Upheld – 1 Not Upheld – 3 Partially Upheld – 2 Withdrawn – 1	
	Ombudsman	5	1	Upheld – 1	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Housing Strategy & Options	Stage 1	26	24	Upheld - 4 Not Upheld – 18 Partially Upheld – 2	
	Stage 2	3	5	Not Upheld – 4 Partially Upheld – 1	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	

Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Housing Strategy and Options/Private Sector Housing (Joint complaint)	Stage 2		1	Partially Upheld – 1	No comparison with previous year
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Human Resources	Stage 1	1	1	No Further Action -1	=
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Hythe Pool	Stage 1	5	0	Nil	↑
	Stage 2	1	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
ICT and Infrastructure	Stage 1	0	1	Not Upheld - 1	↓
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Land & Property	Stage 1	1	1	Withdrawn - 1	↓
	Stage 2	0	2	Not Upheld - 2	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	

Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Legal Services	Stage 1	0	0	Nil	
	Stage 2	2	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Licensing	Stage 1	1	0	Nil	
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Lifeline	Stage 1	2	0	Nil	
	Stage 2	0	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Parking	Stage 1	26	5	Upheld - 1 Not Upheld - 4	
	Stage 2	1	4	Not Upheld - 4	
	Ombudsman	0	2	Not Upheld - 2	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Parking (3rd Party)	Stage 2		1	Not Upheld - 1	No comparison with previous year
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Planning	Stage 1	21	15	Upheld - 3 Not Upheld - 12	
	Stage 2	9	6	Not Upheld - 5 No further action - 1	
	Ombudsman	6	2	Not Upheld - 2	

Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Planning/Revenues (Joint complaint)	Stage 1		1	No further action - 1	No comparison with previous year
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Private Sector Housing	Stage 1	3	3	Not Upheld - 3	
	Stage 2	3	2	Not Upheld - 2	
	Ombudsman	1	2	No further action - 2	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
PR, Website and Comms	Stage 1		1	Partially Upheld - 1	-
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Revenues	Stage 1	7	3	Upheld – 1 Not Upheld – 1 Withdrawn - 1	
	Stage 2	1	0	Nil	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	
Service Area		2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Remedy	Performance compared with last year
Waste Services	Stage 1	35	7	Upheld – 3 Not Upheld - 2 No further action - 2	
	Stage 2	0	1	Not Upheld - 1	
	Ombudsman	0	0	Nil	

Third Party Complaints in 2024-25

A total of 21 complaints were referred on to the relevant third-party or organisation to respond at first on the council’s behalf during 2024-25 in line with council’s complaints policy and the Ombudsman code, this ensures that an individual or resident when making a complaint does not go through two separate complaints processes to resolve their complaint. If a complaint is not resolved satisfactorily at Stage 1, it will then be progressed to Stage 2 where Council will respond.

Third Party	Number of complaints
Mears	11
Swale Heating	4
Veolia	3
Swale & Mears (Joint complaint)	1
NSL	1
Other	1
Total	21

Complaint Contact Methods 2023-24 vs 2024-25

Contact Methods	2023-24	2024-25
Email/ Online Form	93%	96%
Letter (Post)	5%	2%
Telephone	2%	1.8%
In Person	0.3%	0%

Learning from Complaints:

Our complaint investigations have enabled us to identify ways in which we can improve the service we deliver as part of our commitment to continuous improvement in service delivery. Below are outlined the lessons we have learnt during the last year and the steps we have taken to improve our processes:

Service Area	Improvements
Housing	- Regular monitoring meetings with housing surveyors and Mears to ensure works to tenants properties are carried out in time and ensuring any delays or missed works are identified and acted upon. - Mears have been advised to send out letters to advise housing tenants of start dates for works to their properties, at least one week before the commencement date. In this letter and/or during the visit Mears should explain the work process and what facilities will be available whilst the work is underway. - Ensuring housing inspections are booked in when requested, even if they are awaiting input from other teams where property works are overlapping. - Calls should be made to tenants by housing surveyors within two weeks to update them regarding repair works to their properties. - Appointment of a designated Housing Voids Surveyor who oversees property works from start to completion. All property works must be signed off with any defects noted completed within 7 days of a tenancy starting.
Housing Strategy and Options	- Development of the council's working relationships with other agencies to ensure that anyone applying to the housing register can be offered the correct advice and support, not just in terms of applying to the housing register, but also when they are housed. Cases to be regularly reviewed with the Housing Allocations team to ensure that the policy is applied correctly, fairly and consistently. - Communication training for staff to ensure that in future they communicate the right information to customers in a format that is the most suitable for each customer's needs.
Customer Support	- Change of address requests for garden waste subscriptions are now being logged by the Customer contact team via the Salesforce system to ensure there is a recorded log of change of addresses for subscriptions. A supporting checklist to support the Customer Contact Officers in handling these requests has been developed to follow that will allow them to change the garden waste addresses and on the direct debit system. - Staff have been reminded of the importance of being vigilant with the details being entered into our financial system and double-checking any manually input details to avoid customer errors. - Training in customer call standards for Customer Support team and communication of the Council's expectations when taking phone calls through staff 1-2-1 meetings with their line managers.
Planning	Building resilience in the Planning team to support casework following the recruitment of seven new officers last year.
Building Control	- Building Control Chief Officer meetings to be resumed and future use of Submitaplan platform to be reviewed. - Introduction of the Planning Portal platform for users to submit building control applications. - Reminding the Support Team the importance of appropriate customer service and reputational risks of providing poor service as well as the correct process for handling calls.
Environmental Health	Advice and training to officers about the length of time taken to respond to customers and use of holding letters to advise customers that we have received either the call, email or letter and if there is a delay on responding.
Parking	- Introduction of a new system for managing disabled bay applications so future applications will be monitored by the back-office team more efficiently. - Looking at using a different contractor to undertake dropped kerb works that can support any outstanding jobs in order to ensure they are done sooner rather than later.
PR, Website and Comms	- When designing our own online forms more consideration to be given to language used and explanations if it is in relation to legal terminology. - More awareness of dyslexia when assisting customers in person or on the phone.

Ombudsman determinations and Learning:

14 determinations provided by the Ombudsman (Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman) during 2024/25 year along with any actions that have been put in place to support continuous improvement in service delivery are set out as follows:

Ombudsman Case number	Ombudsman	Service Area	Subject of complaint	Result/Determination	Learning put in place from the determination
202231756	Housing	Housing Service	Landlord's handling of works to refurbish the resident's kitchen.	- Arrange for its contractor to re-offer the resident the £100 they previously awarded to recognise outstanding concerns about them and increased food costs from the kitchen refurbishment. - Arrange for its contractor to write to the resident to apologise for their failings in this case, accept responsibility for these, acknowledge the impact on her and her family, express sincere regret, and outline their learning from this. - Review its staff's and contractors' training needs in relation to the application of its repairs and maintenance policy and all other relevant policies and procedures to planned works programmes to ensure these are timely, effective, and residents are updated on any delays. Determination: Redress <i>(Redress definition: where the landlord made redress to the resident which resolved the complaint satisfactorily in the Ombudsman's opinion)</i>	- Weekly operation meetings are undertaken by the Major Works Surveyor, managing the planned kitchen works, and Mears Contract Manager. - Monthly planned Work contract meetings are undertaken by the Major Works Surveyor, Mears Contract Manager and Asset & Major Works Manager. - Monthly Full contract meetings (covering all areas of work: response and planned) with Mears Contract Manager, Mears Area Director, Mears Resident Liaison Manager, Asset & Major Works Manager, Repairs Manager and Lead Aset Manager. - Joint visits and post inspection visits with Major Works Surveyor and Mears Supervisor. Defect and customer satisfaction recorded on site for KPI's. Payment not authorised until all work is complete. - Information leaflets issued to tenants prior to works, explaining the process and what is expected from them.
202327295	Housing	Housing Service	Landlord's handling of the resident's proposed adaptation works, and its associated communications.	- Writes to the resident to apologise for the service failings identified in this report. - Pays the resident £450 compensation for the time, trouble, and distress caused by the service failings identified in this report. Determination: Service failure <i>(Service Failure definition: A single or very limited number of minor failings in the landlord's service delivery which we determine have had a minimal detrimental impact on the resident.)</i>	We will improve our communication with tenants in this situation and ensure they are fully aware that we cannot commit to approving such major works until tenders are returned, in case expectations cannot be met. Clear timescales will be communicated as set in the Disabled Adaptations policy.

202336218	Housing	Housing Service	Landlord's handling of the resident's: Reports of repair and cleanliness issues in the property at the start of the tenancy. Reports of damp and mould. Associated formal complaint.	Landlord is ordered to pay compensation totalling £1500 directly to the resident. A senior manager of the landlord must write to the resident, acknowledging and apologising for its failings in this case. It must also provide an explanation of what went wrong and how it intends to improve from this. The landlord must provide proof of compliance with the above orders to this Service within 4 weeks of the date of this decision. The landlord must arrange with the resident a full and thorough survey of the property to identify and arrange any outstanding and additional required works. It should provide a timescale for the completion of the works and consider whether a temporary decant is required for the family. Determination: Maladministration <i>(Maladministration definition: A formal decision by the Ombudsman that a landlord has failed to do something, done something it shouldn't have or, in the Ombudsman's opinion has delayed unreasonably)</i>	- We had issues here with the void handover, works were missed but were carried out when reported. The surveyor at that time had handed in their notice and quality dropped off. This has since been improved with new recording and monitoring methods now in place. - With regards to the damp, we had already engaged a specialist to provide a survey and had the works booked in with Mears enabling. We worked hard with the resident at the time, provided regular updates and even appealed the decision of the Ombudsman. - In preparation for Awaabs Law we have undertaken both internal and external training. We are updating the inspection criteria to allow for reports to be shared with our tenants, working with Mears to ensure works are completed within the timelines and follow up inspections will be carried out to ensure there are no further issues. - We are updating our guidance on the web site, to also include direct reporting of damp and mould. Mears are also updating their systems to capture damp and mould concerns whilst on site which will allow us to intervene and resolve early. This is also relevant to any contractors, staff, or representative of the council to report. - We are currently piloting Aico Homelink which allows for remote monitoring of the internal environment in homes. This system monitors heat and humidity within the property and sends alerts to an online platform and the tenants' mobile phones. It also has the capacity to link to smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms.
202305898	Housing	Housing Service	Landlord's: Response to the resident's concerns about major works to the property's bathroom. Complaint handling.	A relevant member of the landlord's executive team to apologise to the resident's widow. The apology should recognise the key delays and failures identified in this report. The landlord should share a copy of its relevant correspondence/call summary with the Ombudsman within 4 weeks. The landlord to pay the resident's estate a total of £1,200 in compensation within 4 weeks. In accordance with paragraph 54(g) of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, the landlord should conduct a review of the key failures highlighted in this report. Within 8 weeks, it should present this review to its senior leadership team and	- Bathroom refurbishments should be completed within 16 calendar days as per our contract terms. Any delays or issues are reported to the Major Works Surveyor immediately. - The contractor carrying out the work, Mears, understand that they should not alter the layout to any bathroom (adapted or not) without the consent of the Council's Major Works Surveyor, this was conveyed to them in December 2022, and again following the Ombudsman report. - If the bathroom is adapted and the tenant requests alterations to be carried out, we would advise them to contact their Occupational Therapist for a review of their medical needs and await formal recommendations before undertaking any works. - Works in progress inspections are undertaken by Mears Supervisor. - Post-inspections are carried out by the Major Works Surveyor and Mears Supervisor.

				provide the Ombudsman a report summarising its identified improvements. Determination: Severe maladministration <i>(Severe maladministration definition: Evidence of a single significant failure in service or a series of significant failures in service which have had a seriously detrimental impact on the resident.)</i>	• The HouseMark app records the completed works and notes if there is any snagging to be undertaken. • The Major Works Surveyor meets with Mears on a weekly basis to formally discuss issues, in addition to standard monthly contract meetings. • A tracker has been formulated and used since this incident – to track completed works and ensure the programme is adhered to. • Mears and the Major Works Surveyor have a monthly meeting in person to discuss the programme and what stage the property install is at so none get installed or signed off without our knowledge. • Grab rails remain in place until the point that they need to be removed to carry out works. They are replaced the same day to allow continuous ease of use of facilities.
20209379	Housing	Housing Service	Complaint is about the landlord's: Response to the resident's report of hazards at the property. Handling of proposed temporary accommodation. Handling of the resident's associated complaint.	Arrange for an apology in writing to the resident from its chief executive for the failings identified Pay the resident £775 compensation. Carry out an assessment of the resident's vulnerabilities and consider any reasonable adjustments required. This assessment must be conducted by a member of the landlord's staff appropriately trained in the landlord's Equality Act 2010 obligations and independent of the service area responsible for the above identified failings. The landlord must update its records with a copy of the assessment to inform the identification and handling of any further decant offer. Write to the resident to set out the process for him to follow to submit a request for compensation for damage to his belongings. Within 6 weeks of the date of this decision, the landlord is ordered to review the adequacy of its staff training and identify any updating training required for members of staff. Within 10 weeks of the date of this determination, the landlord is ordered to carry out a review of its handling of this case Determination: Maladministration <i>(Maladministration definition: A formal decision by the Ombudsman that a landlord has failed to do something, done something it shouldn't have or, in the Ombudsman's opinion has delayed unreasonably)</i>	• Tenancy Team – we have learned that if we become aware that a customer has health or medical conditions, we should take extra steps to find out how those conditions may affect how we interact with that person, or how we deliver services. • Works were identified following the stock condition survey. Our team reported on the works required and it was agreed with the resident to provide alternative accommodation for the duration of the works. They were offered various properties which were suitable for the family, all were refused. We have since be able to carry out some external repairs but the internal ones are still on hold as the family has not allowed full access.

Appendix 1

23020583	Local Government and Social Care	Private Sector Housing	Complaint about action the Council took about disrepair at a rental property	We will not investigate the complaint because it is reasonable to expect her to have appealed against the financial penalty to the First Tier Tribunal. Determination: Closed after initial enquiries	
24001213	Local Government and Social Care	Private Sector Housing	Complaint about the Council's handling of disrepair in her private rented property and the priority awarded on its housing register	We will not investigate the complaint because it is too late. It is unlikely there will be sufficient information to reach robust conclusions or that we could achieve a worthwhile outcome given the lapse of time since the events complained about. Determination: Closed after initial enquiries	
24002991	Local Government and Social Care	Planning	Complaint about the Council deciding not to ask his neighbour to submit a further planning application regarding the use of a garden outbuilding and how it explained that decision.	We will not investigate the complaint because there is not enough evidence of fault in the Council's planning decision-making process, nor in how it explained its decision, to warrant us investigating. Determination: Closed after initial enquiries	
24003854	Local Government and Social Care	Planning	Complaint about the decision to grant planning permission, the operation of the planning appeal process and the lack of planning enforcement action.	We will not investigate the complaint because: - any complaint about the decision to approve the Planning Inspector's decision to approve the planning application is outside our jurisdiction - any complaint about the planning appeals process is a matter for the Planning Inspector and is outside our jurisdiction - there is insufficient evidence of fault in the way the Council considered reports of breaches of planning control; and - we cannot require the developer to demolish the houses. Determination: Closed after initial enquiries	
23016286	Local Government and Social Care	Planning	Complaint about the Council delaying seeking compliance with a planning Enforcement Notice.	We have not found evidence of fault by the Council and have completed the investigation and not upheld the complaint. Determination: Not upheld	
24004271	Local Government and Social Care	Planning	Complaint about the Council's consideration of a planning application for an outbuilding and associated works at a nearby property.	We will not investigate the complaint because there is not enough evidence that any fault in the way the application was determined has affected the planning outcome. Determination: Closed after initial enquiries	
24006519	Local Government and Social Care	Parking	Unhappy the Council withdrew a different amount of money from his bank account, for a season parking ticket than was shown on the Council's website.	We will not investigate the complaint because there is not enough evidence of fault.	

			He now wants the Council to refund the price difference and change how it deals with applications.	Determination: Closed after initial enquiries	
24006872	Local Government and Social Care	Parking	Complaint the Council failed to properly consider the needs of drivers who were Blue Badge holders, when it installed an automatic barrier system in a car park. The Council delayed providing a facility to allow Blue Badge holders to register online and this meant he had to unnecessarily queue for an available ticket machine.	We will not investigate the complaint because further investigation would not lead to a different outcome. Determination: Closed after initial enquiries	
24015546	Local Government and Social Care	Land and Property	Complaint the Council lied about the removal of missing person posters and about the removal of items from a different location. Ms X wants a full apology for the cover-up and for officers to be sacked.	We will not investigate this complaint because the Council has provided a satisfactory response, and we cannot achieve the outcome the complainant would like. Determination: Not upheld	

Appendix 2

Housing Ombudsman Self-assessment form (Updated August 2025)

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	Page 5 of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy section 3.2 sets out the definition of a complaint in line with Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	The council policy is a corporate wide customer feedback and complaints policy that covers all council services, including the housing landlord service.
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	Page 5 section 3.3 of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints policy states that a resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such: Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	The council policy is a corporate wide customer feedback and complaints policy that covers all council services, including the housing landlord service.
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	Yes	Pages 4-5 of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 2 sets out definition of a service request (sections 2.1-2.5) Definition of a service request set out in section	The council has corporate wide customer feedback and complaints policy that covers all council services, including the housing landlord service.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
	a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.		2.4 in line with joint complaint handling code: Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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 Feedback and Complaints Policy – Page 4 section 2.3: Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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	We send surveys out as part of the conclusion of housing landlord service complaints	Any feedback obtained in survey responses is not counted as a complaint. Our TSM survey is anonymous so we are unable to directly feed back to the person completing the survey. Our 2025 TSM survey included the following wording in the covering letter:

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
				<i>If you need to report a specific issue or make a complaint, please contact us directly at</i> <i>housing.service@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk for general issues, or at</i> <i>complaints@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk for complaints, or by telephone on 01303 853300.</i>

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	Page 7 (section 4.1) of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy clearly sets out issues that cannot be considered under the policy. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	We would only refuse a complaint on the grounds if it was a duplicate and had already been responded to under the complaints process previously.
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: • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.	Yes	Page 7 the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (section 4.2) set out list of matters falling outside of the scope of the complaints procedure: Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	

2.3	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.	Yes	Page 7 (section 4.2) first bullet point of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy states, the following for not accepting a complaint: Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	See comment under 2.1 above. Yes sometimes people say they wish to escalate but have come out of hospital or had a personal issue and we advise they can complain whenever they are ready.
2.4	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.	Yes	Page 7 (section 4.3) first bullet point of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Page 8 (Section 6 – The Complaint handling process) of Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy point 6.2 (b) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Each complaint case is treated on its individual merit and not on a blanket approach.

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	Page 7 (section 5.1) of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. Page 9 (section 7.2) of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy sets out methods to make a complaint. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Our January 2025 tenant newsletter included an article on page 7 explaining what is and what is not treated as a complaint, and details of the different channels residents can use to make a complaint.
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	Page 9 (Section 7 – The Complaints procedure) of Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy – Page 9 Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Residents can make a complaint by online form, by email, in writing, by phone or in person. All staff are aware that complaints must be directed to complaints@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk to ensure they are logged and processed correctly. The Customer Feedback and Complaints policy and overview of the process is published on the council website here: All service leads in the Council have been issued with the latest version of the policy (April 2025) that was updated in line with the code.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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	Housing complaints and learning are reported to Housing Landlords – Strategic Tenants Advisory Panel on a quarterly basis throughout the financial year and at Housing Management Team bi-monthly meetings. The annual complaints and service improvement showing volumes for the previous financial year is published on the council website*	*The 2023/24 Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report is currently published on the website. The 2024-25 Report will be published by end of September 2025.
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	The council's customer feedback and complaints policy is published on the council's website here: Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) The complaints webpage – Sets out the two stage process of dealing with complaints here: Council's complaints procedure Folkestone & Hythe District Council (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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	Page 15 Section 14.1 of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy sets out the contact details and website link to the Ombudsman. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
			Details of the Ombudsman have been added to complaints page of the council website here: Council's complaints procedure Folkestone & Hythe District Council (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	Section 3.6 (Pages 5-6) of Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy sets out who we accept complaints from. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy on Page 12 (section 9.9 bullet point g) sets out that as part of the stage 2 complaint response letter from the council, it will provide details on how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman should the resident remain dissatisfied. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) The complaints webpage – Sets out the two stage process of dealing with complaints here: Council's complaints procedure Folkestone & Hythe District Council (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	All responses to Stage 2 complaints advise residents that if they are unhappy with the Stage 2 response, they can refer their complaint to the Ombudsman and contact details for the Ombudsman are included in the response.

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	The council has a dedicated Housing and Corporate Complaints officer that resides within the Governance, Performance and Risk Team.	
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	The Housing and Corporate Complaints officer has access to staff at all levels to ensure prompt resolution of complaints. A dedicated contact list of staff is in place ensure complaints are escalated to the correct person for investigation.	
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	Yes	We almost always respond to 100% of complaints within our target response times, as shown in our TSM data for 2024/25. Our Housing and Corporate Complaints Officer has undertaken	All Stage 1 complaints are dealt with by our Housing & Corporate Complaints Officer who is fully trained. Stage 2 complaints are dealt with by the relevant manager in the

	must be resourced to handle complaints effectively		training provided by the Ombudsman. Details on complaints responses and learning outcomes are reporting to a STAP, Housing Management Team our Corporate Governance Board.	housing team, all of whom are trained.
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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 feedback and complaints policy is published on our website here: Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	The council has corporate wide customer feedback and complaints policy that covers all council services, including the housing landlord service.
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	The council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (Sections 8 and 9) on pages 10 and 11 sets out Stage 1 and 2 process for complaints. The policy does set out a process on service requests (Section 2) Pages 4-5 to ensure we can resolve complaints on the spot before a formal process.	As defined in our policy and on our website, we only have Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. Resolution of issues, particularly repairs and maintenance are treated as service requests and resolved as quickly as possible.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
			Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	The council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (Sections 8 and 9) on pages 10 and 11 sets out Stage 1 and 2 process for complaints. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) This is also publicised on our website here: Council's complaints procedure Folkestone & Hythe District Council (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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	The council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (Section 8.8) page 10. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Updated in latest Customer Feedback and Complaints policy approved in April 2025.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	See above.	Updated in latest Customer Feedback and Complaints policy approved in April 2025.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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	Our complaint responses by letter or email always start by setting out what our understanding of the resident’s complaint is. The Council’s Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy sections 8 and 9 defines the handling process for Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints (Pages 10-12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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	Page 7 of the Council’s Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (section 4.2) set out list of matters falling outside of the scope of the complaints procedure. Page 8 of Council’s Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (Section 6.2) – Bullet point B Page 11 of Council’s Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (Section 8.12). Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	If elements of a complaint do not fall within our remit, this is clearly communicated to the resident along with what has been investigated.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: 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	Page 8 of Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (Section 6.2) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	The council has a housing and corporate complaints officer that resides in the Governance, Performance and Risk team. The officer is independent from any operational functions of the Housing Landlord Service allowing them to act independently and consider all information carefully.
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	Page 10 of Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (Sections 8.2-8.6) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	We have an established extension response template that is used. If a complaint is not going to be answered on time an e- mail is sent to them advising them of the reason why and a new expected response date.
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	Page 8 of Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (Section 6.2d) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Reasonable adjustments are made where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010 when dealing with resident complaints. Salesforce system for logging complaints has a dedicated 'Equality and Diversity' category to help identify complaints associated to this. All adjustments and lessons learnt from complaints

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
				are recorded where applicable in the system. A record of equality and diversity related complaints is reported in the annual Equality and Diversity Report. 2023-24 Annual Equality and Diversity Report with complaints is currently published. 2024-25 report to published in late 2025.
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		The stage 1 response says the complainant can escalate and advises them to say what was wrong with the stage 1 response specifically so we can address it in the stage 2 response
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	All evidence is stored on a platform called Salesforce including reports and previous correspondence that has helped formulate a response Reports are run on a monthly basis on the subject and response times for stage 1, stage 2 and Ombudsman complaints to support the council's performance reporting.	
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords	Yes	Our customer feedback and complaints policy on pages 12 and 13 (Section 10) sets out a section	

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
	must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.		explaining what the council will do when it gets things wrong. This applies to both stages of the complaints process. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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	Section 11 of Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Pages 13-14. The Council has a corporate for policy for with unreasonable complaints: Dealing Unreasonable Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) - The policy clearly sets out examples of what is considered unreasonable complaints, when the policy will be applied, lifting of restrictions and right of review.	Our Unreasonable Complaints Policy sets out our approach to dealing with unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonably persistent behaviour.
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	Dealing Unreasonable Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) - Policy sets out options for council to use if behaviour of complainant is deemed unreasonable. All assessed decisions of limiting contact are clearly set out per section 9 of policy.	Any decisions to impose restrictions are made on a case-by-case basis and with due regard to Equality & Diversity.

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	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy ensures that we acknowledge all housing landlord complaints within 5 working days and respond within 10 working days. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 8.1 on Page 10. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy section 8.2 on Page 10.	

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
			Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an 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	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy sections 8.4-8.6 on Page 10. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	When we send a request for the extension a date, we set out the reasons why and the new date of response. The new date set by Housing and Corporate Complaints Officer for a response does not exceed the 10 day limit without exception. Any records of extensions are logged on the case file on Salesforce system.
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.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy section 8.6 on Page 10. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Extension template has now been updated with the Ombudsman contact details

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy section 8.9 on Page 10. Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	We respond to complaints with 10 working days and explain any outstanding work due to be completed. This tracked by our Housing and Corporate Complaints officer in relation to housing repairs complaints with contractors and this tracked through to completion by the officer. Letter templates include a section for outstanding actions to be addressed.
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	The Complaint letter templates set out the following: Upheld complaints: • Subject of complaint <i>Points investigated as part of complaint</i> • What will happen next • Chronological summary of complaint in short points • Response to all the points detailed in the complaint • What we are doing to avoid this happening again • What happens now	

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
			Not upheld complaints: • <i>Subject of complaint Points investigated</i> • <i>Chronological summary of complaint in short points</i> • <i>Response to all the points detailed in the complaint</i> Any references to appropriate legislation will be used in upheld and not upheld complaints cases to support the decision made to a resident.	
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	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy – Section 8.10 (Page 10) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Additional complaints during an investigation are considered if they are related otherwise a separate stage 1 complaint is raised.
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; b. the complaint definition;	Yes	Our Stage 1 complaint response template ensures that all of these points are addressed.	

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
	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.			

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	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy on section 9.9 Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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	The Customer Feedback and Complaints policy sets out Stage 2 procedure section 9.2 (page 11) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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	Customer Feedback and Complaints policy section 9.4 (page 11) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy – Section 9.5 (page 12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy section 9.6 (page 12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
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	Customer Feedback and Complaints policy sections 9.7 (page 12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	We would extend a complaint if a surveyor or neighbourhood officer is on leave or off sick to clarify conversations that have been had with the resident that are required to process the complaint. The resident would be informed of the date the officer is returning to work and

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
				the expected date the complaint response will be provided.
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	Customer Feedback and Complaints policy section 9.8 (page 12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Extension correspondence templates have been updated with the Ombudsman contact details
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	Customer Feedback and Complaints policy section 9.9 (bullet point f) (page 12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	The response provided would include dates for further works to take place surrounding outstanding actions, for example in relation to housing repairs complaints.
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	Customer Feedback and Complaints policy section 9.9 (page 12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Folkestone and Hythe Complaint correspondence template for Stage 2.
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language:	Yes		Folkestone and Hythe Complaint correspondence template for Stage 2.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
	a. the complaint stage; 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 the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.		Customer Feedback and Complaints policy section 9.9 (page 12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints policy sections 9.1 and 9.9 (pages 11 and 12) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	A stage 2 response as per Customer Feedback and complaints policy will be investigated by senior officer of the service area to which the complaint relates. The Housing and Corporate Complaints Officer liaises with all relevant departmental contacts a complaint is related to that ensures a response is issued within timeframe set.

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: • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 10 – (Pages 12 and 13) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Our complaint response templates ensure that all of these points are addressed. Recording of lessons learnt from upheld and partially upheld complaints on a learning log.
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.		Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 10 – (Pages 12 and 13) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Our Housing Compensation Policy sets out our approach to financial remedies. Other remedies offered are considered on a case-by-case basis when investigating each complaint, and communicated to tenants in our response to their complaint.

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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.		Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 10.8 – (Page 13) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 10.10 – (Page 13) Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)	Our Housing Compensation Policy categorises compensation in the form of mandatory, quantifiable loss or discretionary payments, in line with the Ombudsman's guidance

Section 8: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. 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; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.	Yes	The council produces a corporate wide annual complaints and service improvement report that includes complaints from received by Housing Landlord Service as well as learning from any complaints upheld. Annual Complaints and Service Improvement report presented to Cabinet on 18 th September 2025 (see item 6 on below agenda): Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 18th September, 2025, 5.00 pm Folkestone & Hythe District Council	
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.	No	Annual Complaints and Service Improvement report presented to Cabinet on 18 th September 2025 (see item 6 on below agenda):	Report is due to be presented to Governing Body and Member responsible for complaints and Cabinet in September 2025 and will then

	The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.		Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 18th September, 2025, 5.00 pm Folkestone & Hythe District Council	be published with governing body response alongside.
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	See comment in next column	This has not happened so far, but if it were to arise, we would complete a new self-assessment setting out timescales for completion.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	See comment in next column	See 8.3 above.
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 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.	Yes	-	See 8.3 above.

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	Lesson learning log updated by the Senior Performance Officer and Housing & Corporate Complaints Officer	We have lessons learned log which allows us to identify service improvements we can make as a result of complaints.
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	Our Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel and Housing Management Team receive regular reports on learning from complaints based on information from the learning log.	See 9.1 above.
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	Our Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel and Housing Management Team receive regular reports on learning from housing landlord complaints.	Complaints and learning reports go quarterly to our Strategic Tenant and Advisory Panel to scrutinise.
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	Senior Performance Officer have overall accountability for complaints and analyse complaints received to identify trends and learning outcomes.	
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	Yes	The Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) has been identified as Cllr Gary Fuller – Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement and Accountability.	

	as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').			
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	We provide performance stats on response times, number of complaints received for housing as part of performance indicators to MRC as part of their monthly portfolio meetings.	
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: 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.	Yes	We provide performance stats on response times, number of complaints received for housing as part of performance indicators to MRC as part of their monthly portfolio meetings. Quarterly complaints reports to MRC will include complaints data and any ombudsman investigations.	
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;	Yes	The council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy is designed to ensure that we are accountable, apologise when we get things wrong and work towards learning to improve our processes. The Housing and Corporate Complaints officer works with members across all departments in	

	b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.		the escalation and processing of complaints to ensure they are investigated and residents are provided with an outcome. We keep log of the lessons of complaints where we have got things wrong.	
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Appendix 3 – LGSCO Self-assessment against the requirements of the Code (August 2025)

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
1: Definition of a service request and complaint	We recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint, and these are defined in our policies and procedures.	Yes	Page 4 of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy section 2.1: <i>'A request that the Council provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision.'</i> Page 5 of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy section 3.1 sets out the definition of a complaint in line with LGSCO Code: <i>"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 an individual or group of individuals."</i> Source: FHDC Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
2: Exclusions	Our complaints policy sets out circumstances where we would not consider a complaint. These are reasonable and do not deny individuals access to redress.	Yes	Page 7 the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy (section 4.2) set out list of matters falling outside of the scope of the complaints procedure. Source: FHDC Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy
3: Accessibility and awareness	We provide different channels through which individuals can make complaints. These are accessible and we can make reasonable adjustments where necessary	Yes	Page 7 (section 5) of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. Page 9 (section 7.2) of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy sets out methods to make a complaint. Source: FHDC Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy
4: Complaint handling resources	We have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. Complaints are viewed as a core service and resourced accordingly.	Yes	The council has a dedicated Housing and Corporate Complaints officer that resides within the Governance, Performance and Risk Team. The officer has access to staff at all levels to ensure prompt resolution of complaints. A dedicated contact list of staff is in place ensure complaints are escalated to the correct person for investigation.

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
5: The complaint handling process	We have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code and individuals are given the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction that meets the definition of the complaint in our policy.	Yes	The council policy is a corporate wide customer feedback and complaints policy that covers all council services, including the housing landlord service. Source: FHDC Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy
6: Complaints stages (Stage 1)	We process stage 1 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 8 (Pages 8-11) sets out the Stage 1 timescales and processes. Source: FHDC Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy
6: Complaints stages (Stage 2)	We process stage 2 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 9 (Pages 11-12) sets out the Stage 2 timescales and processes. Source: FHDC Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy
7: Putting things right	When something has gone wrong we take action to put things right.	Yes	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy Section 10 (Pages 12-13) sets out 'Putting things right' Source: FHDC Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
8: Performance reporting and self-assessment	We produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes a self-assessment against the Code.	Yes	Annual complaints performance and service improvement report is produced and presented to the Council's Corporate Governance Board (CGB) and Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). The 2024/25 report was also presented to Cabinet on 18 th September 2025 and is published at link here...
9: Scrutiny & Oversight	We have appropriate senior leadership and governance oversight of the complaints process and performance.	Yes	Annual complaints performance and service improvement report is produced and presented to the Council's Corporate Governance Board (CGB) and Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). 2024-25 report to be presented to Cabinet on 18th September 2025. Quarterly reports on complaints performance are presented to our Corporate Governance Board (CGB), Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). Performance data on complaints shared with the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) as part of monthly portfolio meetings.

Date: xx September 2025

Subject: Governing Body Response to 2024-25 Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report and supporting self-assessment against Housing Ombudsman Code.

Summary:

This document sets out the response by the Governing Body, the council's Corporate Governance Board (CGB) and Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), the Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement to Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report covering the 2024-25 financial year and the supporting self-assessment form against the Housing Ombudsman code.

Response Statement:

The 2024-25 Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report encapsulates the council's complaint handling performance, volumes and learning identified during the previous financial year. Both the Corporate Governance Board and the Member Responsible for complaints have considered the reports and find and recognise them as a true and accurate reflection of the council's complaint handling and the lessons that have been learnt.

The supporting self-assessment form undertaken against the Housing Ombudsman code has also been reviewed by both the Corporate Governance Board and Member Responsible for Complaints acknowledging the areas where the council is compliant in its complaint handling process, previous areas of non-compliance identified within the 2023-24 self-assessment have now been addressed as part of the review and approval of the Council's Customer Feedback & Complaints Policy by Full Council on 2nd April 2025 (Report ref: A/24/28).

The 2024-25 Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report and supporting self-assessment has also been reported for consideration by the Council's Cabinet on 18th September 2025.

Signatures:

<i>Name: xx</i>	<i>Name: Cllr Gary Fuller</i>
<i>Signature: xx</i>	<i>Signature: xx</i>
<i>Title: Director – (Corporate Governance Board)</i>	<i>Title: Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement and Accountability (Member Responsible for Complaints)</i>