



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Annual Report

April 2025 – March 2026

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Introduction:

All local authorities are required to implement and maintain a formal Complaints Policy to ensure that complaints are recorded, investigated and responded to in a transparent, consistent and timely manner, in line with relevant legislation, regulatory requirements and recognised best practice. Effective complaint handling plays a vital role in strengthening accountability, identifying opportunities for service improvement and maintaining public confidence in council services.

For the purpose of this report, a complaint is defined as *an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.*

This report provides an overview of the corporate complaints, compliments and comments received by Ipswich Borough Council between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. It presents analysis of complaint volumes, response performance, and outcomes, alongside key themes identified across Council services during the reporting period.

It also includes details of complaints escalated to Stage Two and the Ombudsman, as well as recurring issues and trends across service areas.

Learning from complaints is used to drive service improvement and strengthen practice. The report outlines some actions taken in response to customer feedback, highlighting the steps the Council has taken to improve services, enhance communication, and develop its online processes.

The information contained within this report supports ongoing organisational learning and reinforces the Council's commitment to delivering high-quality, customer-focused services.

Complaint Process Overview:

The Council operates a two-stage formal complaints process in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaint Handling Code. This ensures a consistent and transparent approach to complaint handling, with complainants kept informed of their rights throughout. Where dissatisfaction remains, complainants are signposted to the appropriate Ombudsman for independent review.

- **Stage One** – Initial investigation and response following first contact from the complainant.
- **Stage Two** – Escalated review where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the Stage One response, allowing for further scrutiny and resolution.
- **Final Stage** – Once the Council's complaints process is exhausted, complainants are referred to the relevant Ombudsman service.

The Council's Complaints Policy and Procedure is publicly available on the Council's website.

Access and Awareness (Complaints):

Accessibility:

Customers can record a formal complaint about the Council's services through any of the following channels:

- **Online** at www.ipswich.gov.uk/contactus
- **Telephone** the Customer Services team on 01473 432000
- **In person** by talking to a member of staff at any of our Council venues
- **Email** complaints@ipswich.gov.uk
- **In writing** to Customer Services at:

Ipswich Borough Council,
Grafton House,
15-17 Russell Road,
Ipswich,
Suffolk,
IP1 2DE

Social media should not be used to submit formal complaints. If a customer raises a complaint in person or by telephone, they will be directed to complete the online complaints form or to submit their complaint in writing where possible. This approach ensures a clear and comprehensive audit trail, enabling the Council to follow its Complaints procedure, undertake a thorough investigation, and provide a full and accurate response.

Equality and Diversity:

The Council values diversity and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity to ensure all residents are treated fairly. The Council's equality and diversity policy, which is available on our website, sets out our approach to promoting and upholding the principles of equality, diversity, fairness, and inclusion.

The Council is committed to promoting equality by ensuring fair and accessible opportunities for all individuals to make a complaint and access the Complaints Policy. This includes making reasonable adjustments to meet individual needs as follows.

- By providing a range of accessible channels to make a complaint. Offering multiple channels ensures that individuals can choose the method that best suits their needs and circumstances, supporting inclusivity and enabling fair and equitable access to the complaints process.
- The Council's online complaints form allows representatives to complete a complaint on the individual's behalf, if they provide accurate permission to do so.
- Any individual representing or assisting a customer with a complaint can accompany them at any meeting with the Council if a meeting is required to consider the complaint. Customer Service Advisors or Quality Assurance Complaints Officer can assist them in logging their complaint.

- Where reasonable adjustments are required, the Council offers to provide a paper copy of the Complaints Procedure and Policy on request. This ensures that individuals who may have difficulty accessing digital information are able to receive the information in a format that meets their needs, supporting inclusive access to the complaints process.
- The Council recognises that some residents may not have English as their first language. To ensure fair access, translation and interpretation support can be provided where reasonably required or by allowing a trusted representative to communicate on the individual's behalf. These measures help ensure that language is not a barrier to understanding the complaints process or participating fully in it.
- Throughout the complaints process, officers are alerted where a complaint has been made verbally. This ensures that, where appropriate, responses can be communicated via telephone, including reading through the response with the complainant if required. This approach supports accessibility and ensures that individuals who may have difficulty engaging with written communication are fully supported throughout the process.
- If a customer needs help submitting a complaint because they cannot access online services and do not have anyone to assist them, they can contact the Council's Customer Services team on 01473 432000, where one of our trained advisors will be able to help them submit their complaint.

Oversight and support provided by the Complaints Service:

The Quality Assurance Complaints Officer has continued to support complaints to ensure consistency and best practise for complaints management.

This is achieved through the following:

- Complaint responses are subject to quality assurance processes to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's guidance.
- Ongoing complaints are monitored to ensure that officers adhere to required response timescales and service standards.
- Production of quarterly and annual performance reports.
- Liaison with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman.
- Complaint handling training for Complaint Champions and Managers.
- Acting as an impartial consult to challenge service practice, putting customers at the heart of service delivery.
- Support with managing unacceptable behaviour or complex complaints.

Quarterly analysis of complaint data enables the Complaints Team to support service areas in identifying root causes, driving learning, and implementing improvements to prevent recurrence. When escalated to senior management, these reports provide strategic oversight of performance trends, highlight systemic issues, and support informed decision-making, resource allocation, and accountability across the organisation.

Complaints, Compliments, Comments, Contact Us General Enquiries:

Customers can use the Council's 'Contact Us' forms to get in touch with services for a variety of reasons, including submitting complaints, compliments, comments and general enquiries. A brief description of each option is provided below.

- Complaints – Used by customers to submit formal complaints.
- Compliments – Used to provide positive feedback about a Council service or member of staff.
- Comments – Used to share feedback, suggestions, or ideas for improvement without needing to provide personal details.
- General enquiry – Used to ask questions about a Council service; customer contact details must be provided.

Table 1 illustrates the usage of each service during 2025/26, with the 'Contact Us' (General Enquiries) option being the most frequently used.

Table 1

Complaints, Compliments, Comments, Contact Us General Enquiries – 2025/26	
Category	2025/26
Complaints	557
Compliments	257
Comments	492
Contact Us (General Enquiries)	1980
Total	3286

Summary of Complaints:

A total of 557 complaints were classified and dealt with as a formal complaint. Of the 557 complaints, 481 were Stage 1 and 76 were Stage 2. This is an increase from 489 complaints classified as a formal complaint in 2024/25 with 425 being Stage 1 and 64 being stage 2. Table 2 below illustrates the total number of formal complaints received across all departments.

Table 2 – Complaints by Directorate 2025/26

Complaints by Directorate – 2025/26	
Directorate area	2025/26
Operations	142
Housing	305

Place	11
Governance	16
Finance	54
Communities	27
HR & ICT	2
Total	557

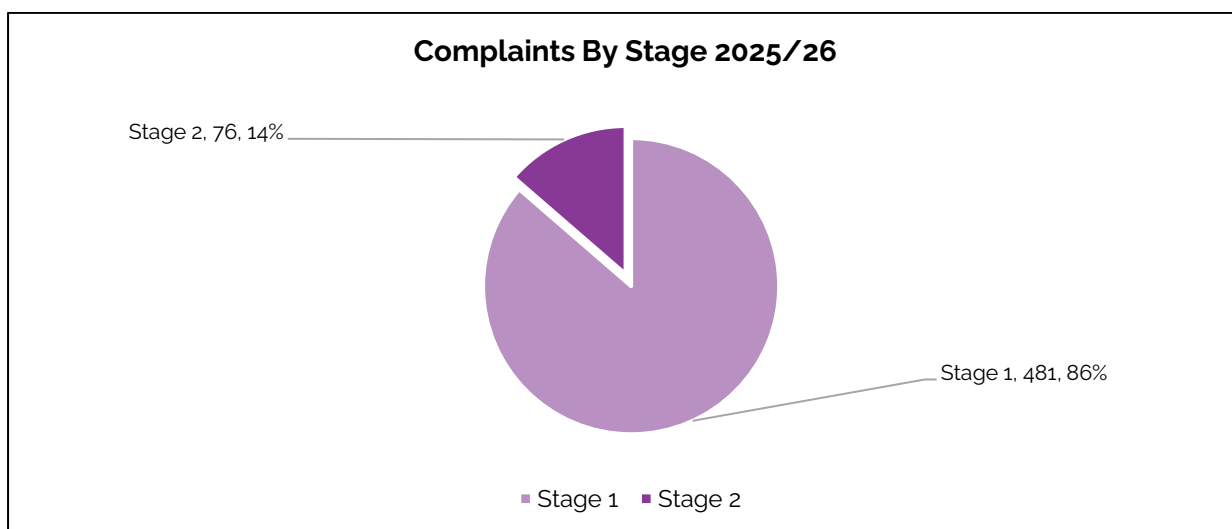
The following five service areas received the most complaints in the 2025/26 reporting period, as represented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Highest-receiving Service Areas 2025/26

Service Area	2025/26
Housing Repairs (Council Tenants)	145
Housing (Council Tenants)	96
Council Tax	46
Regent Theatre & Corn Exchange	44
Bins and Waste	30

Table 4 shows the total number of complaints received at each stage. Of these, 86% (481 complaints) were resolved at Stage 1, while 14% (76 complaints) were escalated to Stage 2.

Table 4 – Complaints by Stage 2025/2026



Service Requests:

In addition to the 557 complaints received in 2025/26, a further 625 cases were initially submitted as formal complaints but were subsequently closed by the Council once reviewed. Of these 523 were reclassified as service requests, 31 were withdrawn by the complainant, 32 were identified as duplicate complaints, and 39 were closed under "Other". This can be seen in Table 5 below.

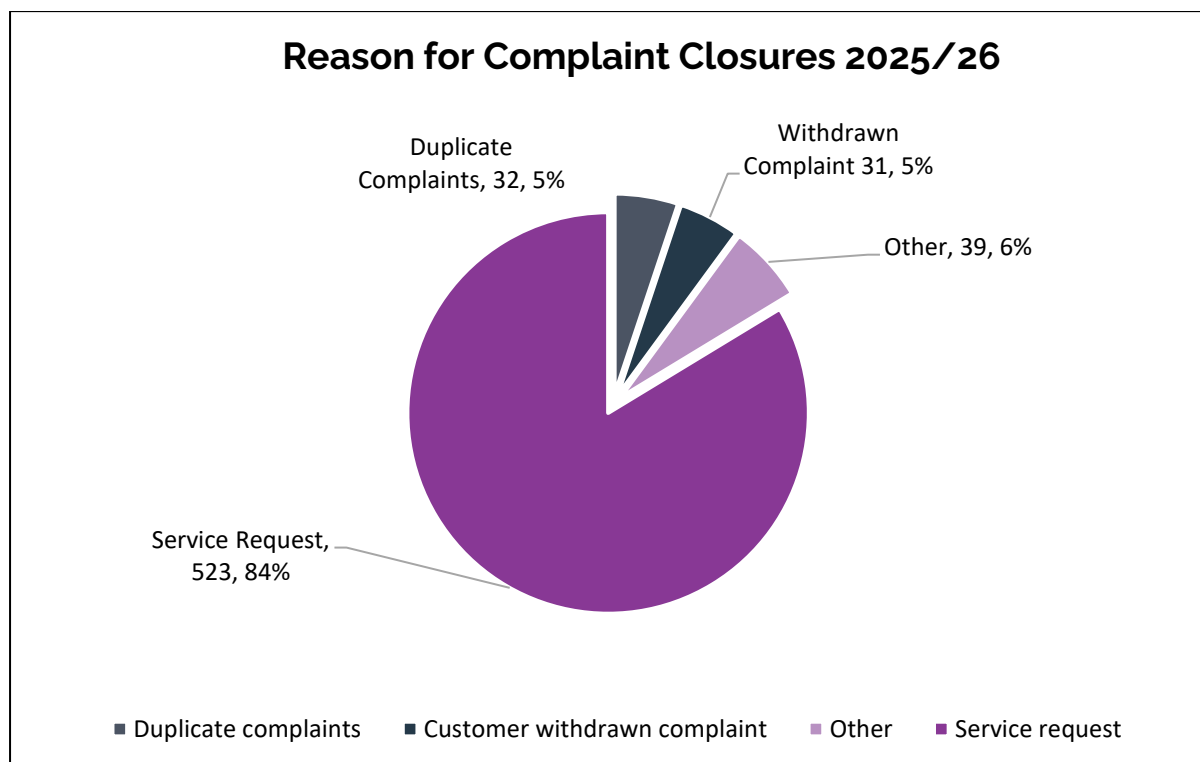
This compares to 489 complaints received in 2024/25, of which 244 were reclassified as service requests, 14 were withdrawn by complainants, 22 were identified as duplicates, and 59 were closed under "Other".

"Other" is used where a case is not considered a formal complaint and does not fall within any of the defined categories. An example of a case under 'other' may be when it relates to another council or third-party business. When this option is applied, the complainant is informed of the reason their case cannot be progressed as a formal complaint, with a specific explanation provided by the reviewing officer as to how it will be managed.

Overall, there has been a significant increase in cases logged as complaints which were not classed as 'formal complaints', rising from 339 in 2024/25 to 625 in 2025/26 (an increase of 286 cases, 84%).

The most notable difference is in service requests, which increased substantially from 244 in 2024/25 to 523 in 2025/26. This suggests an increasing trend of customers using the complaints process to raise issues that are not formal complaints, but rather requests for a service, change, or improvement. The online complaints form will be updated in June 2026 to request customers to tick a box to confirm it is a formal complaint and not a service enquiry prior to submitting.

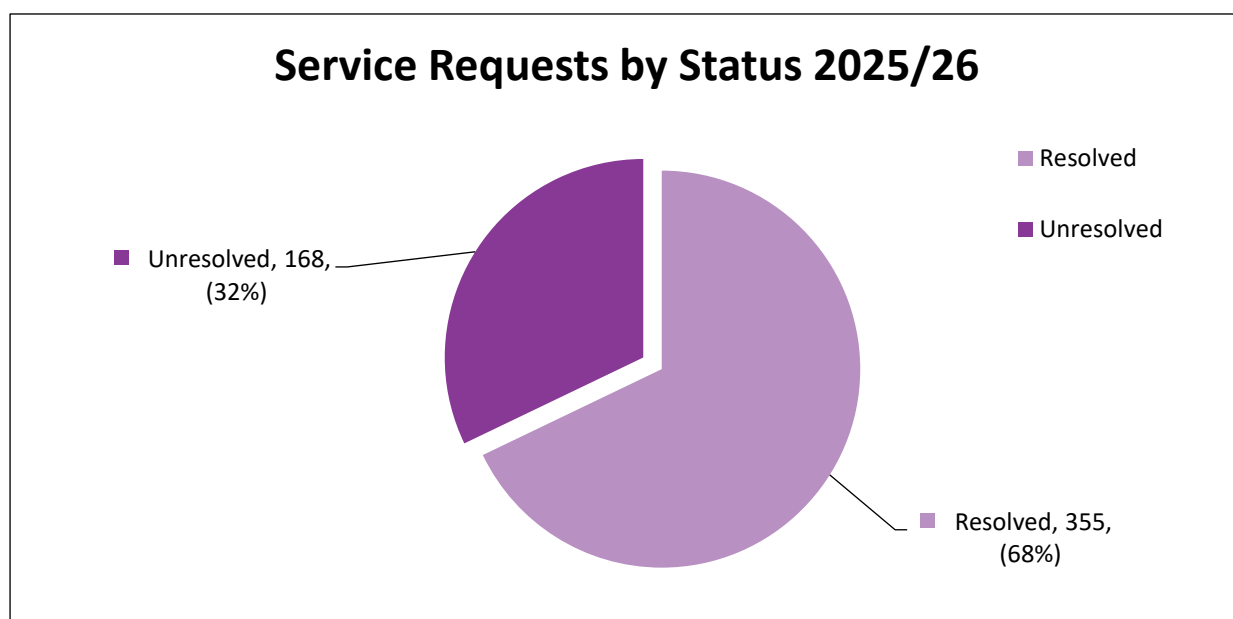
Table 5– Complaint Closures 2025/26



Service Requests (Resolved/Unresolved):

As shown in table 6 of the 523 complaints closed as a service request in 2025/26, 355 of these were resolved either prior to or upon receipt of the customer contact. 168 cases were unresolved and forwarded as serviced requests to the relevant service area inbox for action. Once each request has been addressed, the Complaints Officer is notified it has been resolved by the service area and what action has been taken.

Table 6 – Service Requests by Status 2025/26

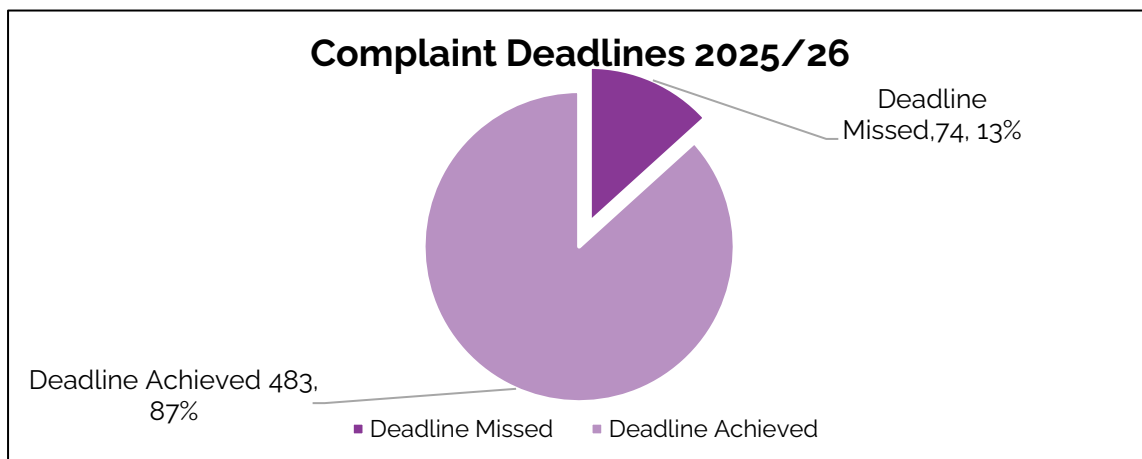


Complaint Deadlines:

Out of the 557 complaints recorded in 2025/26, 74 missed the deadline. This is 13% of all complaints, as shown in Table 7. Although the same number of complaints (74) missed the deadline in 2024/25, they represented a higher proportion at 15%, indicating a 2% improvement in the rate of missed deadlines in 2025/26.

Complaint Champions are reminded to utilise complaint extensions where necessary to allow sufficient time for investigation, and to ensure that complainants are kept appropriately informed and updated throughout the process.

Table 7 – Complaint Deadlines 2025/26:



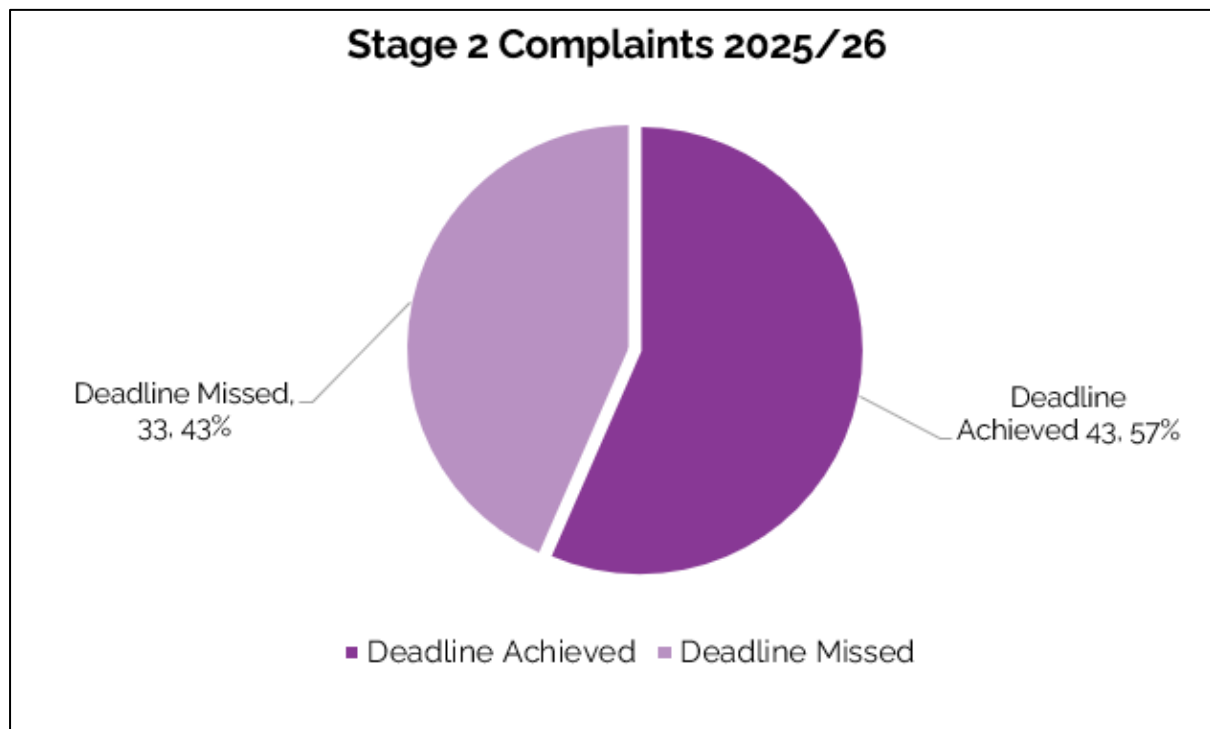
At Stage 1, 74 complaints missed the deadline, which represents 13% of Stage 1 complaints as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 – Stage 1 Complaint Deadlines 2025/26:



At Stage 2, 33 complaints missed the deadline, which represents 43% of stage 2 complaints as shown in Table 9.

Table 9 – Stage 2 Complaint Deadlines 2025/26:

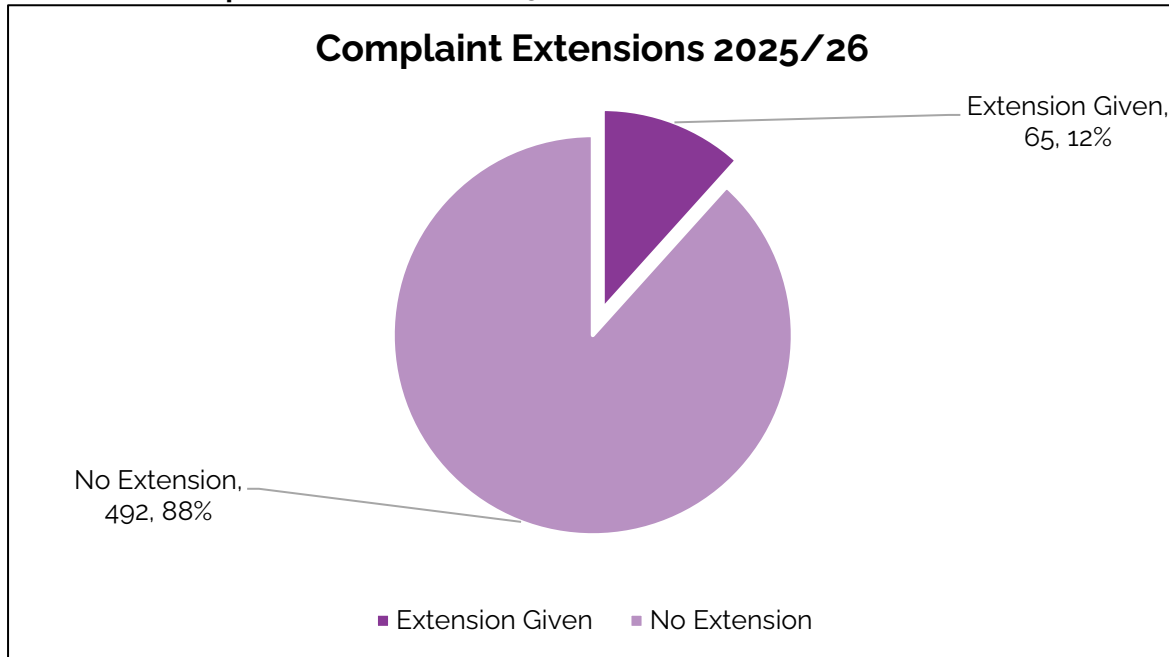


Complaint Extensions:

Complaint Champions can request an extension by selecting an appropriate reason, such as needing additional time to complete the investigation. When an extension is applied, the complainant will be informed using their preferred method of contact (email, letter, or, where reasonable adjustments are required, verbally). Extensions can be requested at both Stage 1 (additional 10 working days) and Stage 2 of the process (additional 20 working days).

Of the 557 complaints recorded in 2025/26, 65 (12%) required an extension, as shown in Table 10. This represents a slight increase compared to 2024/25, when 51 complaints (10%) were extended.

Table 10 – Complaint Extensions 2025/26:

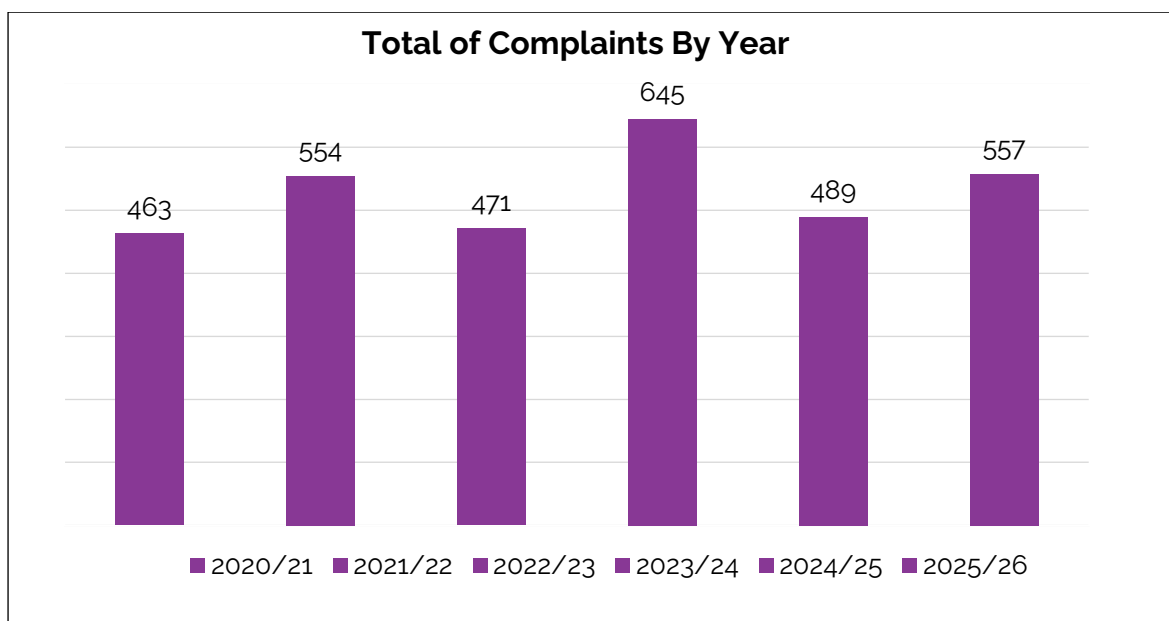


Historical Complaints by year:

In 2025/26 the total number of complaints was 557, an increase of 68 compared to 489 in 2024/25. This represents a rise of approximately 14%. A comparison across the last six years is shown in Table 11.

The bar chart shows the total number of complaints recorded between 2020/21 and 2025/26. Complaint volumes show an overall upward trend over time, rising from 463 in 2020/21 to 557 in 2025/26. While there have been fluctuations, including a peak in 2023/24 and a dip in 2024/25, the latest figures indicate a general increase in complaints compared to earlier years.

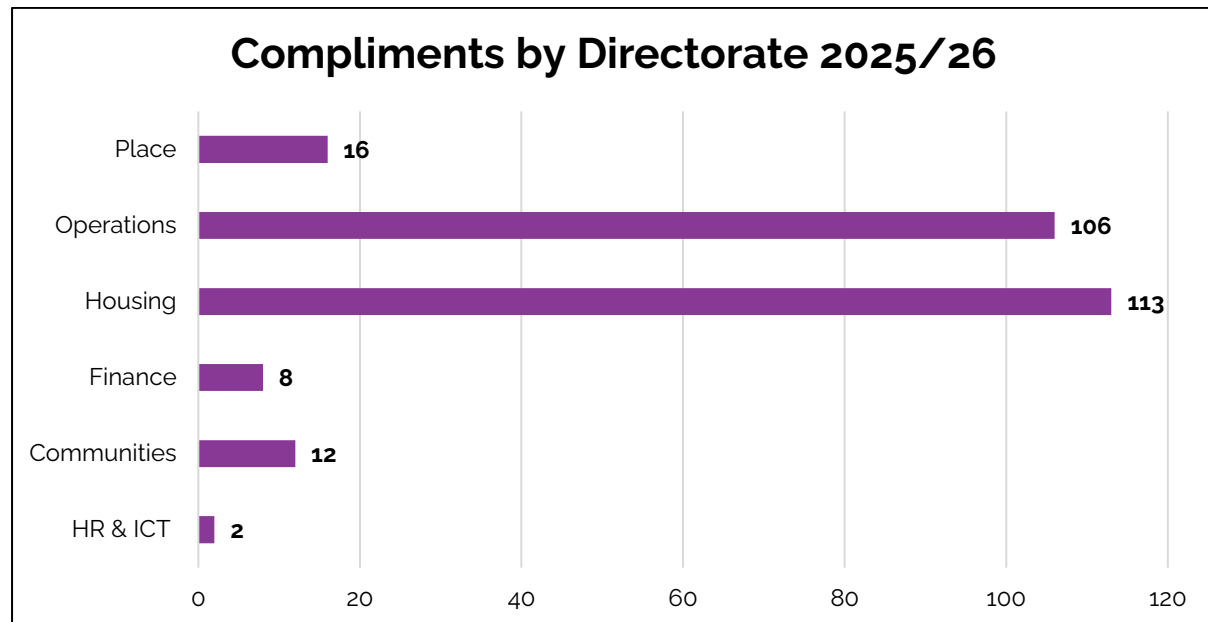
Table 11 – Historical Complaints by Year:



Summary of Compliments:

The Council received a total of 257 compliments in 2025/26. Housing received the highest number (113), largely driven by the Tenant Satisfaction Surveys conducted during the summer, followed by Operations with 106, as shown in Table 12.

Table 12 – Compliments by Directorate 2025/26:

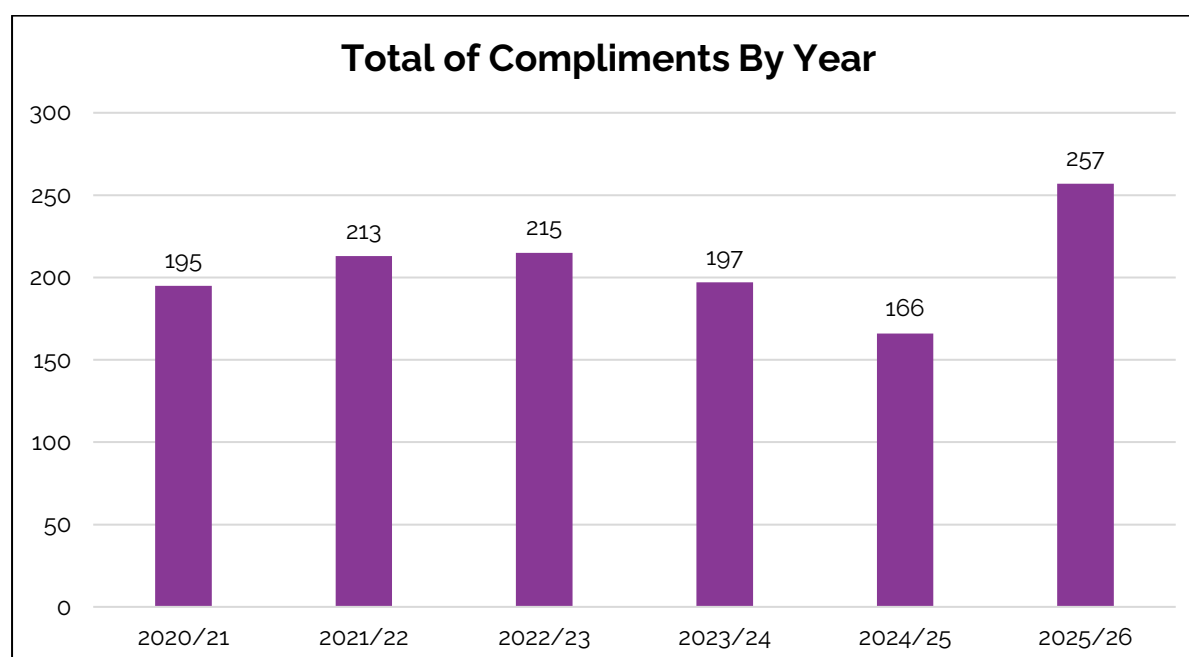


Historical Compliments:

Table 13 shows an upward trend in compliments received, with 2025/26 recording the highest number since 2020 which highlights a positive increase. There has been an increase of 91 compliments from last year.

In 2025/26, work was undertaken to encourage staff and councillors to record or notify the complaints team of any positive feedback received within their departments. Capturing this information is important, as it helps promote a positive culture across teams, boosts staff morale, and supports ongoing service improvement.

Table 13 – Historical Compliments by Year:



A sample of compliments received in 2025/26 are detailed below:

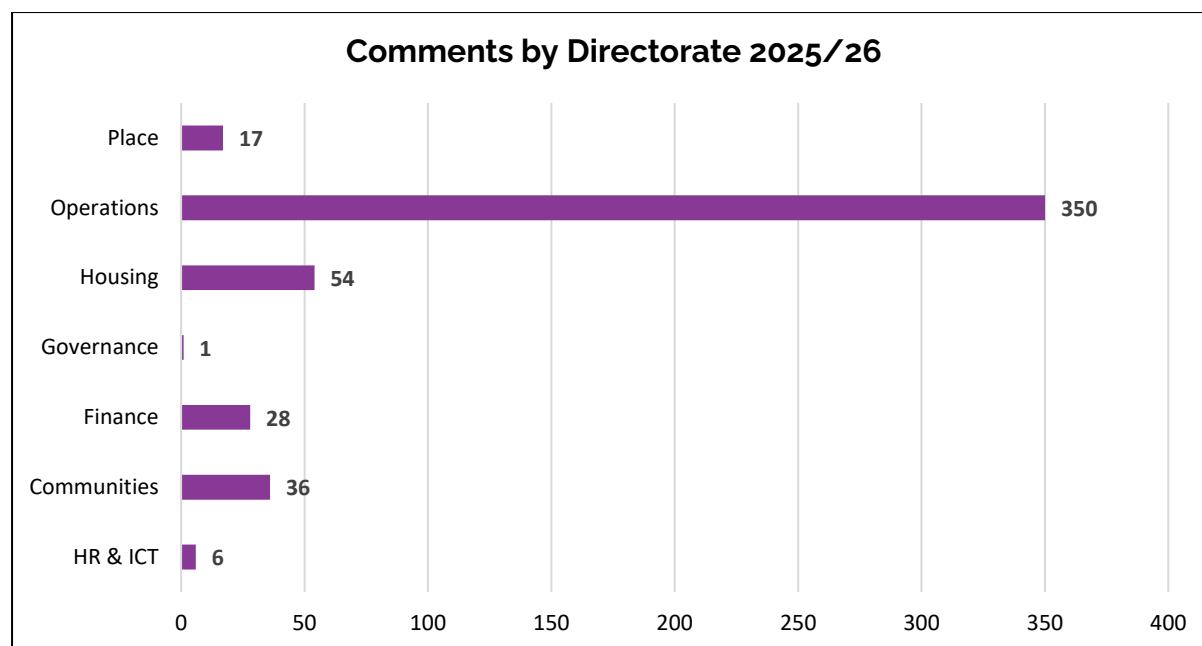
- Parks & Open Spaces (Chantry Park):** A resident praised the Chantry Park gardening team for their hard work during the hottest days of the year, highlighting improvements to planting beds, new fencing, and the overall appearance of the park. The feedback described the transformation as “a million times better” and commended the team for doing a “sterling job”.
- Council Tax:** A customer who was awarded a Severe Mental Impairment (SMI) exemption thanked the Council Tax team for their support, describing staff as kind, helpful, and compassionate. The customer said the financial saving had a significant positive impact and described the experience as having “made their year”.
- Bins and Waste:** A telephone contact was received from a customer renewing a brown bin subscription, during which positive feedback was provided regarding the service. The customer expressed satisfaction with the overall experience and complimented the waste collection crew for their helpful and courteous approach.
- Regent Theatre & Corn Exchange:** A customer praised staff at the Ipswich Regent during a performance, describing them as caring and attentive when their child became unwell. Staff were commended for their support, kindness, and flexibility, which ensured the family felt supported throughout the experience.
- Housing Options / Homelessness:** A resident expressed sincere gratitude to the Housing Options Team for their support during a period of homelessness. The team successfully secured emergency temporary accommodation on the day of eviction and, within fifteen days, provided a three-bedroom family home within the children's school area. The family described the officers involved as “absolute superstars” and said the support restored their faith in human nature.

- **Clean My Street:** *A resident praised the Clean My Street team for responding quickly to a road cleanliness and safety issue caused by debris from a large oak tree. The resident highlighted that the team went above and beyond, including washing the road to ensure it was safe for vehicles, pedestrians, and pets, and described the service as "always a great council".*
- **Events** *"Dear Christmas Fayre Organisers I am writing to say a big thank you from the staff and children at X School for inviting us to attend your wonderful Christmas Town Hall Fayre. The children were so excited to perform their sign language and singing on The Corn Exchange stage. It has created lifetime memories for many of them. Special mentions to X who was an excellent organiser and made the arrangements very clear and smooth running also to X who welcomed us all back stage and made the process of bringing sixteen very excited, eager to perform children nice and relaxed, thanks to X who played the music and was very accommodating and to X who was one of the ushers in the hall who was really helpful and cheerful. Here are some of the children's comments - 'I liked being on the big stage'. 'I liked that lots of people watched and I was nervous but when I got on stage I loved it. Thank you very much, I loved it.'*
- **Planning & Development** *"I just wanted to email to pass on my praise for X in your planning team. X has been absolutely super in assisting me with a query, going above and beyond to help. He's been professional and clear, along with efficient. Such a breath of fresh air as we deal with planning departments in many Councils and it's never normally this easy!"*
- **Housing Options/Homelessness** *"The Housing Options Team at Ipswich Borough Council were excellent and managed to put X and X his Wife and two young children into Emergency Temporary Accommodation on the afternoon of the Eviction. Fifteen days later the Council Officers found them a three Bed Terraced House with an affordable rent within the children's school area. All the Council Officers involved were absolute super stars and the X family will be eternally grateful, as their faith in human nature was restored!"*
- **Council Tax** *"I spoke with a customer X who had been awarded the SMI exemption, he was very grateful and wanted to say how lovely every member of staff had been that he had interactions with during the process of the application. He was very emotional and said we had made his year and Christmas come early for him and the difference to his life from the saving would have a huge impact."*
- **Emergency Contact Centre** *Mr X would like to pass on his thanks for the assistance he received on Wednesday night. He has since seen his doctor and is now feeling much better.*

Summary of Comments:

The Council defines a comment as “feedback to help us improve our Council services”. There were a total of 492 comments received in 2025/26 with the vast majority of these being received by Operations with 350 followed by Housing with 54. The comments per directorate are shown in Table 14.

Table 14 – Comments by Directorate 2025/26:



Historical Comments:

The trend for comments shows a steady increase in recent years. After a period of lower activity in earlier years, comments rose consistently from 2021/22, with a slight reduction in 2023/24 as shown in Table 15.

However, this decrease was short-term, and levels increased again in both 2024/25 and 2025/26. Comments have been the highest in 2025/26 of all time. The continued rise in comments suggests that customers are increasingly using this channel as a quick and accessible way to communicate with the Council.

Some examples of the comments received are highlighted below:

Bins and Waste:

'i cannot find how to renew my yearly subscription for the brown bin. neighbours have had a specific letter. i have not. have received the recycling information but there is no link for renewal of subscription online form. i understand i have to renew by mid march so getting urgent. please reply and advise as i can see no link. i go in circles between bins and waste and general enquiry.'

Regent Theatre and Corn Exchange:

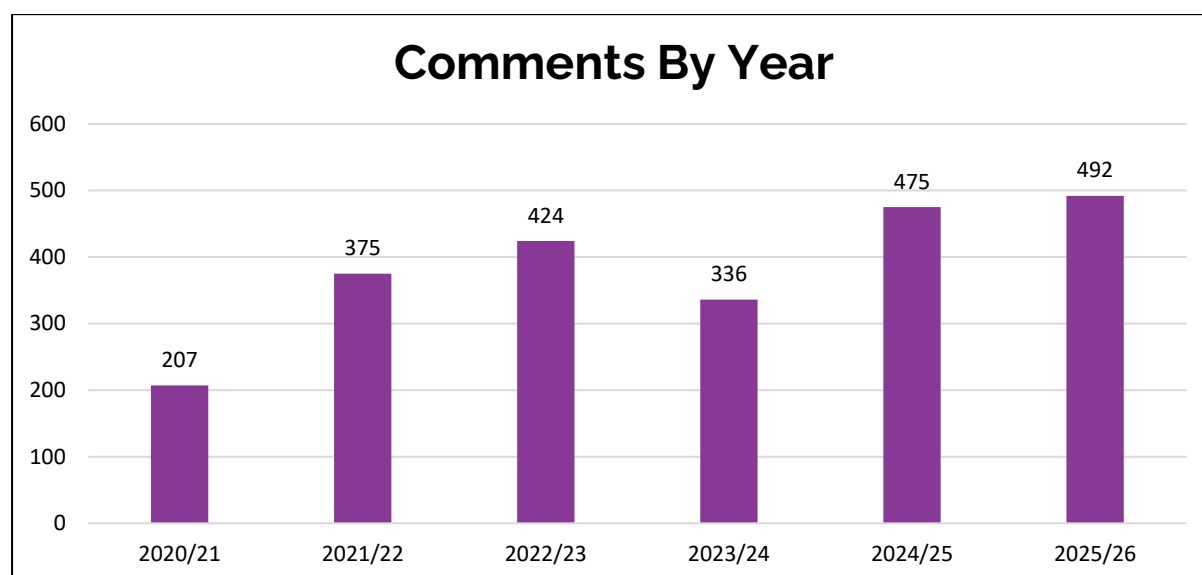
'I went to see Luke Combes tribute act with my friend last night and would never have purchased tickets if you had specified there was no standing or dancing, to sit in our seats not engaging or having fun was incredibly dull and frustrating and will not consider

attending an event like this again as no atmosphere or fun to be had, a concert is an experience not sit in your chair not moving that is what watching tv is about!!!!!!

Parks and Open Spaces:

'Landseer park playground - the roundabout is broken and two swings are missing. This is very disappointing. Please can this equipment be repaired?'

Table 15 – Historical Comments by Year:



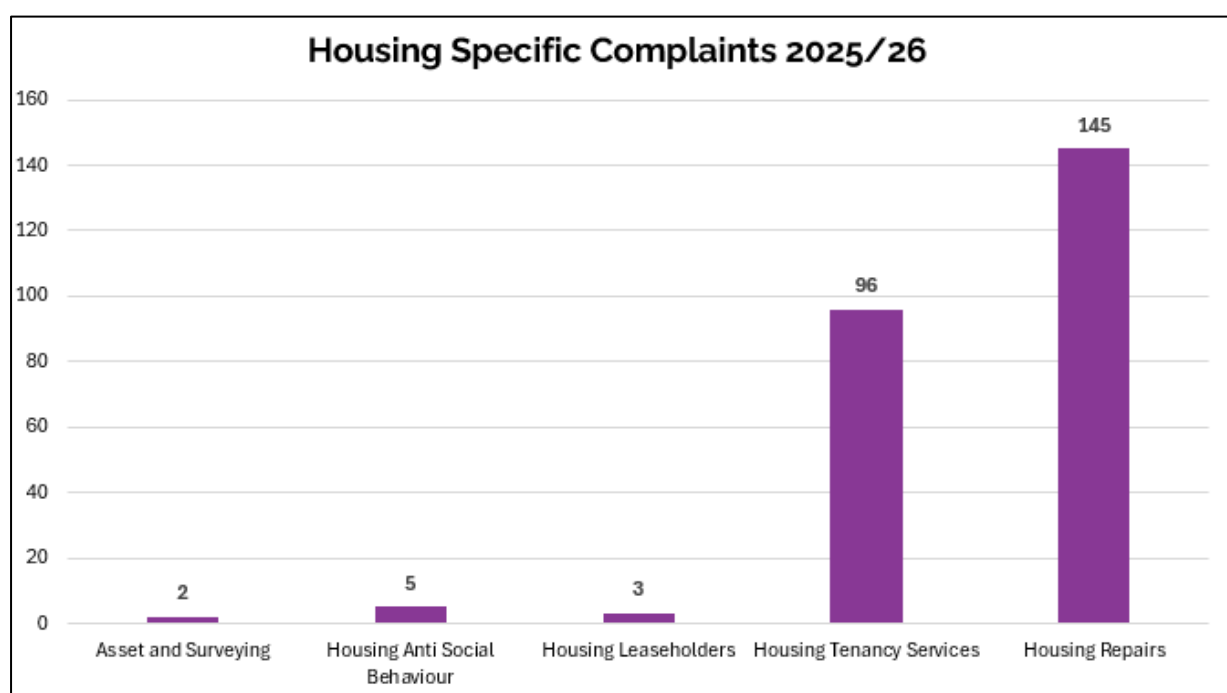
Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints:

The following service areas fall under the Housing Ombudsman Service:

- Asset and Surveying
- Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour)
- Housing (Council Tenants)
- Housing (Leaseholders)
- Housing Repairs (Council Tenants)

In total, the Council received 251 complaints that fall under the Housing Ombudsman Service, this is an increase from last year where 231 were recorded, this can be seen in Table 16 below:

Table 16 – Housing-specific Complaints 2025/26:



Housing Repairs (Council Tenants):

Housing Repairs for Council tenants accounted for 58% of all complaints received under the Housing Ombudsman Service in 2025/26, totalling 145 formal complaints.

The Council manages 7,927 properties within the Borough, and the Housing Repairs service provides tenants with a seamless way to book, cancel, and reschedule repairs online via the Housing Repairs portal. The Repairs portal is available via the Council's website and enables residents to create an account, helping to streamline the repairs process. To assist users, the site provides clear step-by-step guidance, including a video tutorial explaining how to register and book a repair.

Since 11th December 2024, the Council has actively assisted tenants in setting up online accounts, providing direct coaching and guidance. The Customer Services team has tested the portal, collaborating with the Housing team to implement key improvements, ensuring the system remains intuitive, user-friendly, and accessible. To raise awareness of the online portal and the improved accessibility and convenience for customers, Customer Services arranged a social media campaign to promote the benefits to tenants. In addition, callers contacting Customer Services are advised whilst they are waiting for their call to be answered that they can book repairs online. Customers who do not use online services remain supported by Customer Services who will book their repairs over the phone.

As of 31st March 2026, 3,993 residents had registered for an online account, enabling repair bookings 24/7 and significantly reducing reliance on phone-based customer service. This marks a substantial increase of nearly 90% from the 2,100 residents detailed as being registered in 2023/24.

The five most common Housing Repairs complaint categories are shown in Table 17. The highest category was 'Service standard' with 57 complaints, followed by 'Service delay' with 37. This was followed by 'Decision made' with 17 complaints, 'Staff conduct' with 13, and finally 'Housing specific' with 9 complaints.

Table 17– Top Five Housing Repairs Complaints by Category 2025/26:

Top Five Housing Repairs Complaints by Category – 2025/26	
Complaint category	2025/26
Service standard	57
Service delay	37
Decision made	17
Staff conduct	13
Housing specific	9

The highest number of complaints for Housing Repairs were regarding repair work, followed by Surveyors and then Planned Maintenance. A full breakdown can be seen in Table 18.

Table 18 – Housing Repairs Complaints by Type 2025/26:

Housing Repairs Complaints by Type – 2025/26	
Complaint type	2025/26
Repairs	73
Surveyors	25
Planned Maintenance	18
Repairs – Damp & Mould	11
Mechanical Gas and Electrical	10
Disabled Adaptions	3
Repairs - Windows	2
Voids	2
Caretaking Service	1
Total	145

Housing (Council Tenants):

The Council has a total of 9,435 tenants within the Borough. Complaints relating to Housing (Council Tenants) accounted for 38% of the overall volume received by the Housing Ombudsman Service, with 72 complaints recorded in 2024/25. This represents a decrease compared to the previous year, during which 96 complaints were received.

The five most common Housing (Council Tenants) complaint categories are shown in Table 19. The largest category was 'Housing specific' with 31 complaints, followed by 'Service standard' with 21. This was followed by 'Decision made' with 12 complaints, 'Staff conduct' with 9, and finally 'Service delay' with 9 complaints.

Table 19 – Housing (Council Tenants) Complaints by Category 2025/26

Top Five Council Tenants Complaints by Category – 2025/26	
Complaint category	2025/26
Housing specific	31
Service standard	21
Decision made	12
Staff conduct	9
Service delay	8

A full breakdown of complaint types for Housing (Council Tenants) is provided in Table 20.

Table 20 – Housing (Council Tenants) Complaints by Type 2025/26

Housing Repairs Complaints by Type – 2025/26	
Complaint type	2025/26
Tenancy Management	65
Rental Income	11
Sheltered Housing	8
Housing ASB	7
Accommodations	1
Customer Services (Phone)	1
Housing Options	1
Rental Income Related	1
Repairs – Damp & Mould	1

Total	96
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Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour):

Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour) represented 2% of the overall volume of complaints under the Housing Ombudsman Service, where 5 complaints were recorded for 2025/26.

All 5 of the complaints received to Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour) were categorised as shown in Table 21. Please note that the 'Other' category was removed from this reporting list in December 2025.

Table 21 – Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour) Complaints by Category 2025/26

Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour) Complaints by Category – 2025/26	
Complaint category	2025/26
Decision made	1
Other - Managing customer expectations	1
Other - Report	1
Other - Providing an explanation	1
Other - This complaint pertains to the Anti-social Behaviour policy and procedural framework.	1
Total	5

All 5 complaints were summarised as:

- Request for the Council to act in regard to a complex ASB case
- Reported issues not resolved
- Complainant feels this visit was a waste of council resources that could be better utilised elsewhere
- Required explanation that appropriate interventions were undertaken.
- ASB Related incident, which is linked to Mental Health condition.

Housing (Leaseholders):

As of May 2026, the Council has 453 leaseholder properties. Housing (Leaseholders) represented 1% of the overall volume of complaints under the Housing Ombudsman Service, where 3 complaints were recorded for 2025/26.

All 3 of the complaints received to Housing (Leaseholders) were categorised as shown in Table 22.

Table 22 – Housing (Leaseholders) Complaints by Category 2025/26

Housing (Leaseholders) Complaints by Category – 2025/26	
Complaint category	2025/26
Service delay	2
Housing specific	1

All 3 complaints were summarised as:

- Leaseholder complaint relating to leak that caused damage to the property.
- Dissatisfaction with the time taken to resolve matters relating to unapproved alterations and to obtain landlord consent required for the sale.
- Water ingress at the property and difficulties experienced when trying to arrange a repair for the leaseholder.

Asset & Surveying:

The Council received 2 complaints relating to Asset & Surveying. As shown in Table 23 please see the categories of these complaints received.

Table 23 – Asset & Surveying Complaints by Category 2025/26

Asset & Surveying Complaints by Category – 2025/26	
Complaint category	2025/26
Service delay	1
Service standard	1

These 2 complaints are summarised as:

- Outstanding bathroom repairs and D&M survey
- Energy Performance Certificate no access letter sent in error.

Housing Complaint Decisions:

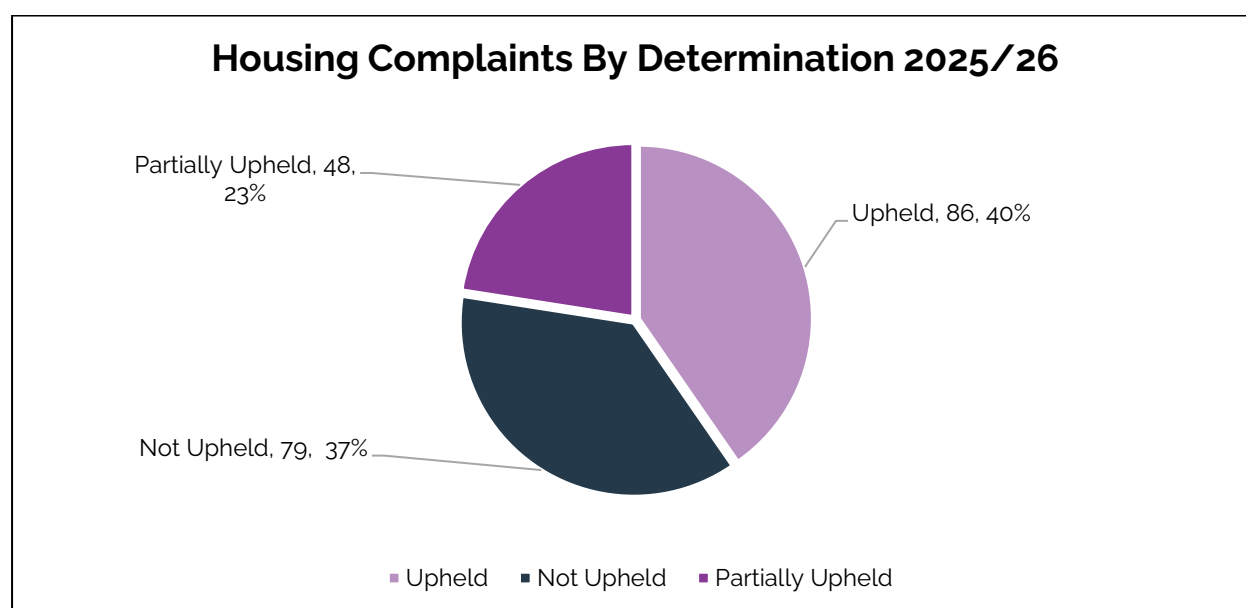
At each stage of the complaints process, the officer is required to determine the outcome of the complaint.

There was a total of 251 Housing complaints, which come under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman Service. As shown in Table 24, at Stage 1 there were a total of 213

complaints. Of these, 86 were upheld (40%), 48 were partially upheld (23%), and 79 were not upheld (37%).

Compared to 2024/25, 2025/26 saw a decrease in both upheld and partially upheld complaints, alongside an increase in complaints that were not upheld, indicating a shift towards more complaints not being substantiated. Upheld complaints decreased slightly from 44% in 2024/25 to 40% in 2025/26, while not upheld complaints increased from 30% to 37%.

Table 24 – Housing Complaints by Determination 2025/26:



Of the 251 Housing complaints received, 38 were escalated to Stage 2, representing just over 15% of cases. This summarised below in Table 25.

Table 25 – Housing Complaints by Stage 2025/26

Service area	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Housing Repairs	130	15	145
Housing (Council Tenants)	75	21	96
Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour)	4	1	5
Housing (Leaseholders)	2	1	3
Asset & Surveying	2	0	2
Total	213	38	251

Putting things right is a core priority within the Council's complaints process. Of the 251 housing complaints that fall under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman, the Council issued apologies in 218 cases, equating to 87%. The Housing Ombudsman Code emphasises the importance of an apology as a key component of effective resolution, an approach reflected consistently in the Council's responses.

Housing Ombudsman Service Cases:

The Housing Ombudsman has published decisions from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. They have stated:

"Housing Ombudsman decisions, full case details and investigation findings are published on the Ombudsman's website to demonstrate the Councils commitment to being open and transparent. The decisions are anonymised, so residents' names are not used, but landlords are named. The decisions date from December 2020 and are published three months after the final decision date. In some cases, we may decide not to publish a decision if it is not in the resident's or landlord's interest, or the resident's anonymity may be compromised. You can read more in our guidance on decisions."

The Council had two published decisions for this period which were in May of 2025 and December of 2025.

Ipswich Borough Council (202325687):

"The complaint is about: The landlords handling of reports of damp and mould in the resident's property. The landlords handling of the resident's complaint."

Determination:

- There was maladministration in relation to the landlord's response to damp and mould at the decant property.
- There was service failure in relation to the landlord's complaint handling.

Ipswich Borough Council (202326517):

"The complaint is about: The residents report of a rat infestation. The landlords handling of the complaint."

Determination:

- In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Scheme, there was maladministration in the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of pest infestations.
- In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Scheme, there was no maladministration in the landlord's handling of the resident's complaint

Housing Ombudsman Landlord Reports

The Council has recently received the 2025-26 Housing Ombudsman's Landlord Report and is demonstrating how current service improvements align with the areas highlighted. The report reflects a reduction in maladministration rates from 80% in 2024-25 to 66% in 2025-26. The Council is also achieving 100% compliance with Ombudsman orders. Key areas of ongoing focus include complaint handling and repairs, where actions are being taken to strengthen processes, enhance oversight, and improve communication with residents. These improvements place the Council in a strong position to respond to and support the report's findings. This continued commitment to learning and service improvement is reflected in rising tenant satisfaction, which has increased from 73% to 78%.

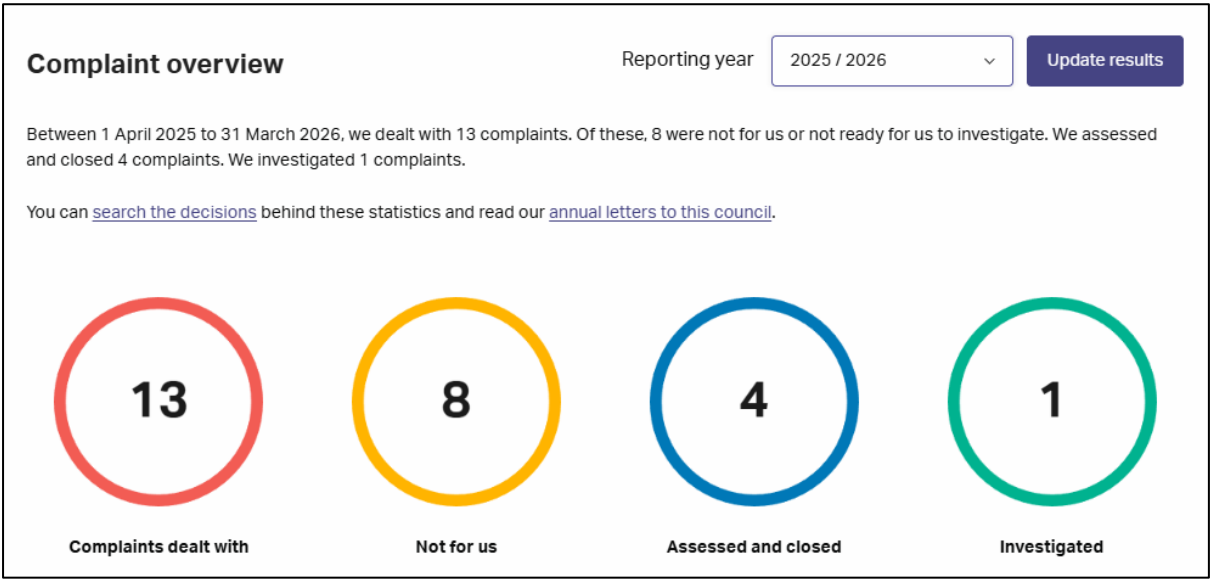
Local Government and Social Care Cases:

Should a complainant remain dissatisfied following the Council's internal process, they may refer their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for an independent investigation.

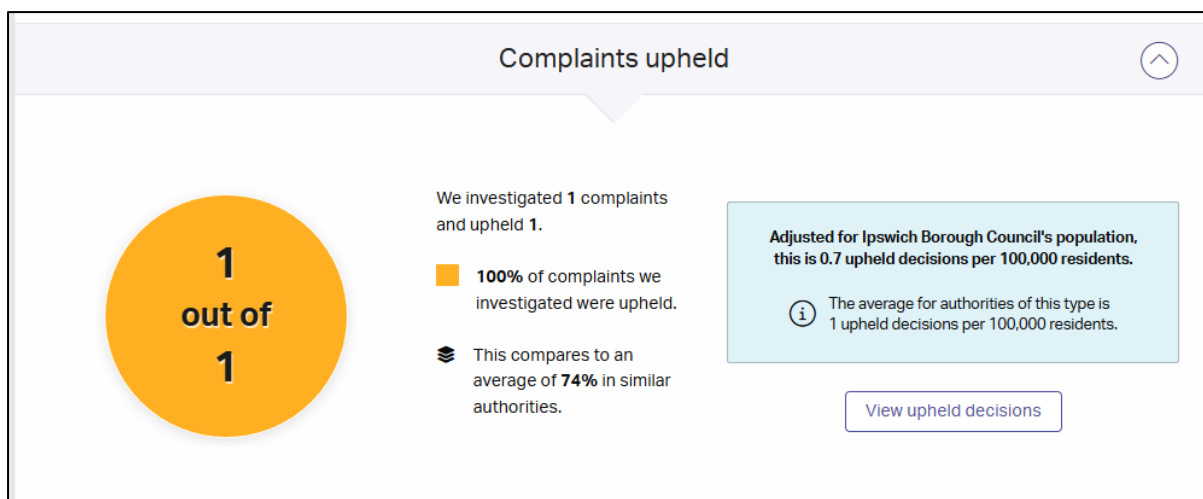
The Ombudsman will usually reach out to the Council to confirm that the complainant has exhausted our internal complaints process (Stage 1 and Stage 2). Where this has not been completed, the complaint will usually be referred back to the Council to allow us to address their concerns through the internal process first.

The local decisions, full case details and investigation findings are published as part of the Council's commitment to openness and transparency.

At the time of reporting, the Council had 13 cases referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. Of these, 8 were classified as 'not for us', typically where the complainant approached the Ombudsman before completing the Council's complaints process or contacted the incorrect Ombudsman. A further 4 cases were assessed and closed, where legislation prevents the Ombudsman from investigating. One complaint proceeded to a full investigation and a decision was issued.



This indicates that the single complaint investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2025/26 was upheld. This indicates that the complaint investigated was upheld, meaning fault was identified.



This identifies that 100% of the complaints investigated were upheld, this compares to an average of 74% in similar authorities.

When adjusted for population and % of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents, the average for authorities of this type is 1 upheld decision per 100,000 residents and the Ipswich figure is 0.7 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

A breakdown of 6 of the 13 published decisions from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is provided below:

Ipswich Borough Council (24018576):

Statement: Closed after initial enquiries (Homelessness 31-Mar-2025)

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's assessment of a homelessness application. It was reasonable for Mr X to use the review/appeal procedure to challenge the Council's decision.

Ipswich Borough Council (24020689):

Statement: Closed after initial enquiries (Building Control 30th June 2025)

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's handling of a dangerous structure. This is because the injustice Mr and Mrs X claim stems from the actions of their neighbour rather than any fault by the Council.

Ipswich Borough Council (25003272):

Statement; Closed after initial enquiries (Antisocial behaviour 4th August 2025)

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about not relocating a neighbour who has exhibited criminal behaviour. This is because we have no remit to consider the Council's action in connection with its management of its social housing.

Ipswich Borough Council (25003744):

Statement: Upheld (Allocations 19th January 2026)

Summary: Miss X complained the Council did not properly deal with the housing and homelessness applications for her adult child, Mr Y. The Council was at fault for not investigating Miss X and Mr Y's concerns about the suitability of his interim

accommodation and for not responding to Miss X's stage one complaint. This caused both Mr Y and Miss X uncertainty, frustration and time and trouble. It did not result in Mr Y missing out on a property. The Council was not at fault for the delays assessing Mr Y's housing application or for its decisions about Mr Y's housing priority. The Council has agreed to apologise and make payments to Miss X and Mr Y. The Council was at fault for not investigating the complainants concerns about suitability of their interim accommodation and for not responding to their initial Stage 1 complaint.

Ipswich Borough Council (25010742):

Statement: Closed after initial enquiries (Council house sales and leaseholders 7th January 2026)

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's handling of a "right to buy" application. It is reasonable to expect Mr X to take court action about the handling of his application. Other points are more properly for the police and the Information Commissioner.

Learning from Complaints:

Complaints continue to serve as an important source of insight for the Council as a Local Authority, helping to identify recurring issues, service pressures and opportunities for improvement across all service areas. While statistical data provides an overview of complaint volumes and outcomes, it does not fully reflect the lived experience of residents or the impact that complaint handling can have on public confidence and trust in Council services.

During the reporting period from April 2025 to March 2026, the Council's focus remained on understanding the wider themes arising from complaints, improving service responsiveness, and strengthening transparency and accountability within complaint handling processes. This approach supports organisational learning, informs service improvement activity and helps ensure that lessons identified from complaints lead to meaningful change for residents.

Within our internal complaints process the service area(s) capture any lessons learnt from each complaint. Some learning points identified from complaints received during 2025/26 are outlined below by service area.

Council Tax:

Complaint: A summons was issued for a period after the resident had sold the property.

Learning: The issue arose due to a processing error, where a change in ownership was not identified within correspondence and subsequently not updated on the system. As a result, incorrect liability was recorded. The case has been reviewed with the team to reinforce the importance of accurately checking and updating ownership details. Additional emphasis has been placed on ensuring all responsible parties are verified to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Environmental Health:

Complaint: A defect in the drainage system was not identified, resulting in ongoing issues for the complainant's property.

Learning: Although no service failure was identified, this case highlighted the importance of maintaining clear and consistent communication with residents regarding enforcement processes, inspection findings, and the extent of the Council's responsibilities. The service will continue to prioritise clear, transparent communication to support resident understanding and manage expectations.

Housing (Council Tenants):

Complaint: Outstanding repairs relating to damp and mould

Learning: While initial reports were acted upon, this case highlighted the importance of proactively arranging follow-up visits at the point of contact when tenants raise ongoing concerns. Ensuring timely re-inspection could help to minimise delays and reduce dissatisfaction with waiting times.

Customer Services:

Complaint: The complainant was dissatisfied after their request for a free bulky waste collection was declined.

Learning: This case identified a lack of clarity in the wording of email communications, which contributed to the complainant's misunderstanding. Following this, a clearer explanation was provided, and the email template has been reviewed and updated to improve clarity for future requests.

Housing (Leaseholders):

Complaint: Water ingress at the property and difficulties experienced when trying to arrange repair for Leaseholder.

Learning: This case highlighted a breakdown in communication between Customer Services and the Leaseholder Team. Moving forward, processes have been reinforced to ensure that reports of urgent issues, such as water ingress, are escalated and directed appropriately, and that residents receive accurate advice at the first point of contact.

Parks & Cemeteries:

Complaint: Failure to provide regular courtesy updates during ongoing correspondence regarding overhanging trees.

Learning: This case highlighted the importance of maintaining regular communication throughout the lifecycle of a query. The service will ensure that courtesy holding responses are provided at the outset and during periods where investigations or expert advice are being sought, to keep residents informed and manage expectations effectively.

New Tenant-Led Scrutiny and Complaints Panel:

In January 2026, Housing Services introduced a new tenant-led Scrutiny and Complaints Panel. Since then, tenants on the panel have been working to make sure voices are heard and services improve. Their current focus is on the quality of responses provided to tenants in Housing ASB complaints. By reviewing real complaint responses, they are assessing how clearly, accurately and helpfully responses address tenants' concerns. This includes identifying where communication could be more empathetic, informative or timely, and suggesting practical improvements. This work helps ensure responses better meet tenants' expectations, that lessons are learned and acted on, and supports Housing Services in delivering a more responsive and customer-focused service for all tenants.

Local Government & Social Care – New Rights for People with Social Housing Complaints

As of 1st May 2026, residents have the right to raise concerns about how social housing landlords manage social housing in their area.

Previously, there was a gap in the system. If individuals who were not renting a social housing property, had a complaint about how social housing in their area was being managed, they had no independent body they could turn to. This left many people with no way to challenge decisions or raise concerns. That has now changed. Under the Renters' Rights Act, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) can now investigate social housing management complaints from anyone, not just tenants. For tenants of a council property who wish to complain about the council as the landlord, the Housing Ombudsman continues to handle those cases as before.

What this means for the Council

As a result of this change, the Council will complete the following actions

1. Update the complaints policy and procedure
2. Ensure accurate signposting and communications to direct residents accordingly
3. Train staff for awareness and guidance

Service Performance and Improvements

Further to the Housing complaint decisions that were made, there were additional observations completed as depicted in Table 26 below.

Table 26 – Housing Remedies and Lessons 2025/26

	Additional training for staff	Revising procedures	Revising published materials	Financial compensation	Other – specific lessons(s) recorded
Asset and Surveying	0	0	0	0	1
Housing Repairs	30	9	0	4	8
Housing (Council Tenants)	16	15	0	0	9
Housing Leaseholders	0	2	0	0	1
Housing (Options/Homelessness)	12	4	0	0	3
Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour)	1	0	0	0	0
Housing (Choice Based/Gateway)	5	1	0	0	1

Overall Summary:

In 2025/26, complaint volumes increased by 14% to 557 cases, representing the second highest level recorded since 2023/24. Service standards remained the most common cause of complaint, followed by decisions made and service delays.

Despite increased demand, complaint handling performance improved, with a higher proportion of responses completed within target timescales and most complaints (86%) resolved at Stage 1, limiting the need for escalation.

Housing services continued to account for the largest proportion of complaints. While Housing Repairs complaints reduced slightly, complaints relating to Housing (Council Tenants) increased significantly, indicating continued pressure within this service area.

The Council maintained a strong focus on early resolution, closing 523 cases as service requests and resolving over two-thirds at first point of contact. This approach supported faster outcomes for customers and reduced reliance on the formal complaints process.

During the year, complaint handling arrangements were further strengthened through quality assurance, oversight processes, and updates to the Complaints Policy to align with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, improving consistency, transparency, and compliance across complaint management.

Following the Council's annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman in 2025, correspondence has continued regarding minor suggested amendments to the Complaints Policy to improve clarity within the process. In a letter dated 26 June 2026, the Housing Ombudsman outlined the findings of its third review and confirmed that all recommendations had been adopted in full.