



Cambridge City Council

Annual Customer Feedback Report 2023 - 24

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Cambridge City Council's Annual Customer Feedback Report - Introduction

Every year Cambridge City Council publishes an Annual Customer Feedback Report, which gives an overview of the complaints and compliments the Council has received and how we have dealt with them (though we do not publish names or other personal details of people who have complained).

Cambridge City Council welcomes customer feedback, to help us to identify and address problems for customers, and to improve our services. This report shows how we have increased customer feedback about services and how we are responding to complaints.

Why we produce this report

- To learn from our mistakes so that we can improve our services.
- To encourage people who have cause to complain to make comments and suggestions to help us make these improvements.
- To be transparent about the complaints we've received, how we've responded to them and what we've done to try to put things right.
- To publicise and explain our complaints process.

Our Complaints Procedure

What is a complaint?

A complaint can be wide-ranging, but can be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with the service provided, or lack of action by the Council, or its staff. This can include failure to achieve specific standards of service.

It should be highlighted that issues brought to the Council for the first time, are dealt with as a request for service and so are not processed as a formal complaint. However, service requests can then escalate into a stage 1 complaint if the customer remains unsatisfied. This may occur from delays in response or dissatisfaction with staff behaviour or policies.

Customers complain to the Council if they:

- Are unhappy about something we have or haven't done.
- Are not satisfied with the way a member of staff has treated them.
- Are not happy with the way a councillor has treated them.

Cambridge City Council has a two stage complaints process:

Stage One: An issue raised by a complainant which is escalated beyond a service request for the first time.

Stage Two: Internal review of a complaint where the complainant is unsatisfied with the response to their initial complaint or the way in which the complaint has been handled, and they wish for their complaint to be considered further.

The **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or Housing Ombudsman** is the final stage - the person affected must have gone through our internal complaints process before going to the LGO or Housing Ombudsman for an independent review.

Complaints to Cambridge City Council in 2023-24: summary

Total number of complaints received

In 2023-24, the total number of complaints received was 953, which is an increase of 67 cases (%) from the previous year's total of 886. This works out as roughly 6.4 complaints per 10,000 residents. When put into context with the amount of service requests and contacts made to the Council outlined later in this report, this accounts for less than 0.1% of contact received resulting in a formal complaint.

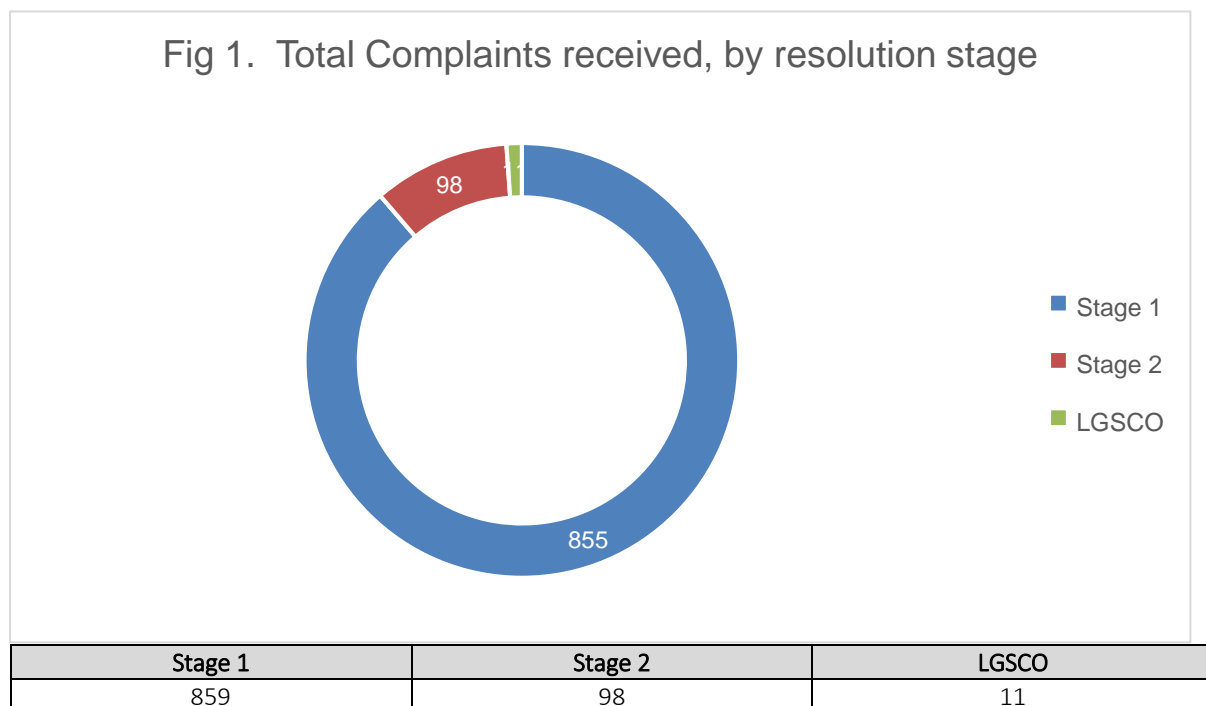
Proportion resolved at stage 1 and stage 2

Of those 953 complaints, 90% were resolved successfully at the first stage without need for escalation. This compares with 93% in 2021-22, and 91% in 2020-21.

98 complaints were escalated to stage two, which is 22 more than the 76 in the previous year. See Fig 1.

Proportion resolved within the target timescale

Across all complaints submitted, 72% were resolved within the target time of ten working days. This represents a decrease on recent years, where 77% were responded to within time in 2022-23, and 82% in 2021-22. Reasons for this are outlined in individual service comments later in this report.



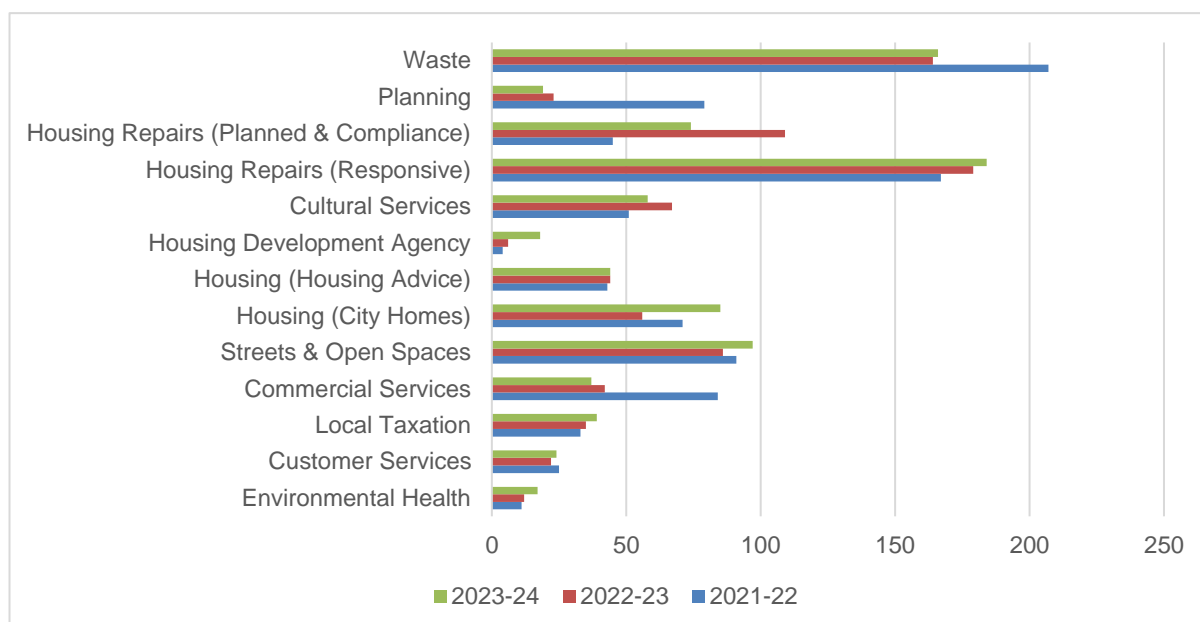
Overview of complaint trends

264 (28%) of all complaints received by the Council were for the Housing Assets and Maintenance service, with the majority relating to Responsive Repairs (184). This is a slight decrease from 288 complaints overall in the previous year, but an increase of five for Responsive Repairs areas. The main contributor to this was an increase in complaints relating to damp, condensation and mould.

In previous years, complaints for Waste Services have been the highest volume, however this year complaints for Waste Services only increased by two. This is notable as the service implemented a considerable change to the collection routes in the second half of the year.

Planned Works and Compliance complaints saw a reduction of 35 complaints. Commercial Services and Cultural Services also saw small reductions in complaints compared to the previous year. As complaints for Cultural Services were no longer being counted as part of Community Services, the number of services for Community Services dropped considerably. The only other service to see a significant increase in cases received was City Homes. More detail relating to this increase can be found on page 33.

A comparison of complaints by higher volume services can be seen below.



Service	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Environmental Health	11	12	17
Customer Services	25	22	24
Local Taxation	33	35	39
Commercial Services	84	42	37
Streets & Open Spaces	91	86	97
Housing (City Homes)	71	56	85
Housing (Housing Advice)	43	44	44
Housing Development Agency	4	6	18
Cultural Services	51	67	58
Housing Repairs (Responsive)	167	179	184
Housing Repairs (Planned & Compliance)	45	109	74

Planning	79	23	19
Waste	207	164	166

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman

11 complaints were made to the Local Government Ombudsman. Of these, one case was progressed to be investigated by the LGO, and was subsequently upheld. The other ten cases were closed following initial enquiries.

This information has been compiled from the LGSCO decisions database and added to this report prior to receipt of the annual letter from the Ombudsman. Once the annual letter has been received in mid-July, this section is subject to change. (See pages 41-44 of this report for more detail). At time of writing there are no decision summaries listed on the Housing Ombudsman website.

Reporting, monitoring and driving service improvement

The City Council's managers work hard to understand the reasons for the complaints, and where a consistent theme or issue has been established, have taken action to prevent the poor service that triggered those complaints from being repeated. We continue to work hard to deliver high quality services to all residents and customers and welcome all feedback on our services and suggestions for improvement.

The Lead Complaints Officer has continued to review data on a monthly and quarterly basis to establish themes and trends. This data is reported on a quarterly basis to Directors and Heads of Service to prompt reflection on what services need to do to improve, change or prevent a reoccurrence. Particular attention is focused on responding appropriately to complaints first time and reducing complaints being escalated to the higher stages. This reporting has led to some constructive discussions with Senior Management, and as a result we have been able to take feedback and apply it across many areas of the complaints process.

Persistent and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

Whilst Officers have been reminded of the Persistent and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants policy, it has not been necessary to impose restrictions on any customer and their contact with the Council in 2023-24. Some customers did have their contact with the Council restricted, but this was due to their behaviour when contacting us, rather than a persistent complaint.

Reporting on complaints about Council Policy

Where a complainant raises a complaint about a Council Policy, this will still be responded to under the complaints policy. If the complainant wishes to give general feedback or have a policy explained further, the Council would respond to this as an enquiry for service, and provide an explanation or rationale behind the policy.

Should the complainant be dissatisfied with how the Council reached the decision on the policy, or feel that an injustice has been caused by a policy, this would be investigated as a complaint. These complaints will then be considered when reviewing policies in future.

LGSCO Complaint Handling Code

Our complaints handling guidance is based upon the code laid out by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. In November 2022 the LGSCO announced that they would be publishing a joint handling code alongside the Housing Ombudsman. This code was published in November 2023, and the guidance within it became mandatory in casework from April 1 2024.

We self assess our process and policy annually against the latest guidance from both the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, so we already complied with the vast majority of the new joint code of practice. However some changes were required to our process. The changes implemented are detailed below.

- Our old process allowed for a time extension of unspecified length to be added to any case as long as it had been agreed with the complainant. We are now only able to add a single time extension of ten further working days to a case. This has prompted a change from our services where follow on works are booked as a resolution. Previously cases were kept open and extended until the works were complete. We now consider the point of resolution being when the works are booked, rather than when they are complete. Any complications to these works can then be considered grounds for escalation to stage 2, or reopening a case for further resolution at stage 1.
- The introduction of a feedback survey being sent with each complaint. Following the success of the customer feedback forms, the Business & Development Team in Customer Services are currently working on adapting one of the customer satisfaction forms to capture information about the complaints process. A link to this form will be included on each response sent from the complaints management system.
- A further minor change to the process was needing to report on whether a complaint was upheld, or not upheld when resolving it in the system. This feature was already being considered, and was added to the system prior to the guidance coming out.

Senior Management Restructure

Following the restructure of the Senior Management Team, a review of the Council's complaints policy and internal guidance related to complaint handling was undertaken. Under the revised policy stage 2 cases will now be handled by a member of the Corporate Management Team. This left some gaps at stage 1 and has required further training of new case owners at both stage 1 and stage 2 of the process.

How complaints were received

Year	Email	Web	Telephone	Face to Face	Letter
2023-24	7%	86%	5%	<1%	1%
2022-23	8%	84%	6%	<1%	1%
2021-22	10%	82%	6%	<1%	1-2%

The majority of complaints were received via a digital channel, predominantly via customers submitting their complaints themselves. 86% of complaints were logged by members of the public using the web form to report directly into the Council's Complaints Tracker, which is a further increase from 84% last year.

The face-to-face customer service staff have continued to assist customers to self-serve using digital options. Four complaints were submitted using this contact method, which is the same number as last year.

Compliments

In 2023-24 the Council received 85 compliments across all services via Complaints Tracker, which is a minor increase of three (4%) compared to 2022-23.

However some frontline services found that compliments were received directly to operatives or officers from residents. These have been mentioned in the service-by-service summaries where available.

Housing Maintenance & Assets, Streets & Open Spaces, Housing Services and Waste Services received the highest number of compliments, with the majority relating to helpful staff members.

Officers are encouraged during training to formally record compliments as well as complaints, as managers had mentioned more than once that the number of compliments formally recorded was lower than expected. This is evidenced by only four compliments being formally registered on the case monitoring system, however a larger amount are being received directly by Customer Services staff anecdotally following calls or appointments, and also via the newly implemented customer satisfaction system.

Customer Satisfaction Feedback System

Following the non-renewal of our third party customer satisfaction system, the Business & Development team within Customer Services completed a piece of work to design our own in-house feedback system across all channels. The system was implemented in Q3 2023-24 and offers a questionnaire to gather customer feedback regarding the customer service delivered by the advisor that assisted the customer with their enquiry, and also several questions relating to digital options within the Customer Service Centre..

Telephone	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total	Percentage
Very Satisfied	83	70	59	83	203	252	750	80%
Somewhat Satisfied	2	4	5	4	0	0	15	2%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	9	2	1	5	0	0	17	2%
Very dissatisfied	9	8	7	4	69	47	144	16%

Email	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total	Percentage
Very Satisfied	2	0	0	1	5	4	12	71%
Somewhat Satisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	6%
Very dissatisfied	3	0	1	0	0	0	4	24%

Face to Face	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total	Percentage
Very Satisfied	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	100%
Somewhat Satisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Very dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%

Clarissa Norman, Customer Services Operations Manager:

Between October – March we received 946 customer satisfaction surveys relating to the contact centre – 82% of customers were very satisfied with the service they had received from the advisor.

Managers in Customer Services look into the reports where customers are dissatisfied (16%) with the service they received. Our findings are that the majority of customers use this outcome to represent their feelings with the outcome of the call not how the advisor supported them. Our investigations have found this outcome is selected where we have not been able to give updates to their original service request. Customers also feedback on the service they received once calls are transferred to back office teams, where we do not know the content of the conversation.

The feedback we are receiving is allowing us to better identify knowledge gaps/training needs for the team and will allow us to provide evidence based analysis to services about the effectiveness of their digital options.

Nearly 50% of customers say that they are aware of the digital options available to them, but are still calling the Council to speak to an advisor. Nearly 20% of customers were unable to find our digital options and a third of customers are not aware of them.

For our face to face service, as the customer feedback we have gathered is not statistically significant we need to gather more data to understand who is using our services. To do this a proactive survey asked by advisors has been introduced to gather qualitative and quantitative data on who is using Mandela House reception, how often they visit and why. This data will allow us to review our service provision, link up better with other teams and ensure all customers who have complex needs are supported effectively as possible.

Service-by-Service Complaint Trends and Management Response

Each council department reviews the complaints and compliments it receives on a quarterly basis. This enables services to identify if there are any trends in the types of complaint being made or the services that complaints are being made about. As a result, changes can be made to services and how they are provided.

The next section of this report details comments from Services on actions they have taken to prevent, improve or change as a result of the feedback received in previous years. The total figure in the first column is the sum of Stage 1 and 2 complaints.

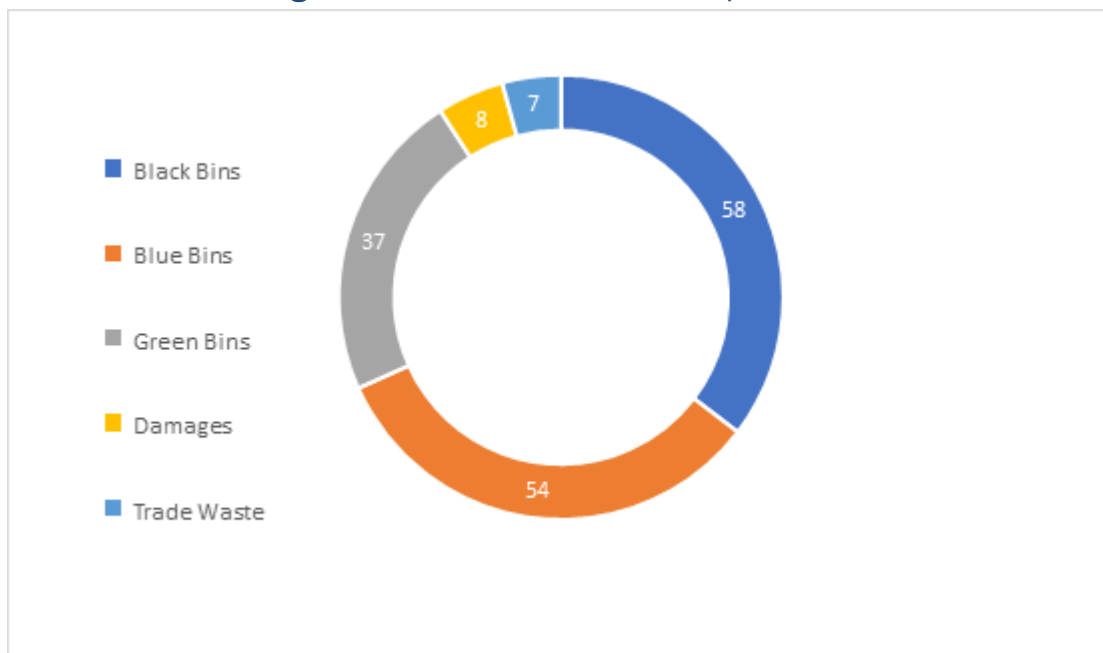
Complaints by sub-service are identified in the pie chart, this is how a service is broken down into the individual service request areas within. The bar graph displays resolution themes, or where these themes are too diffused and a trend cannot be identified, the bars will display root causes.

A resolution theme is the service specific content of the complaint (missed bin for example), whereas a root cause is a reason for the complaint which is generic across all services (service delivery failure).

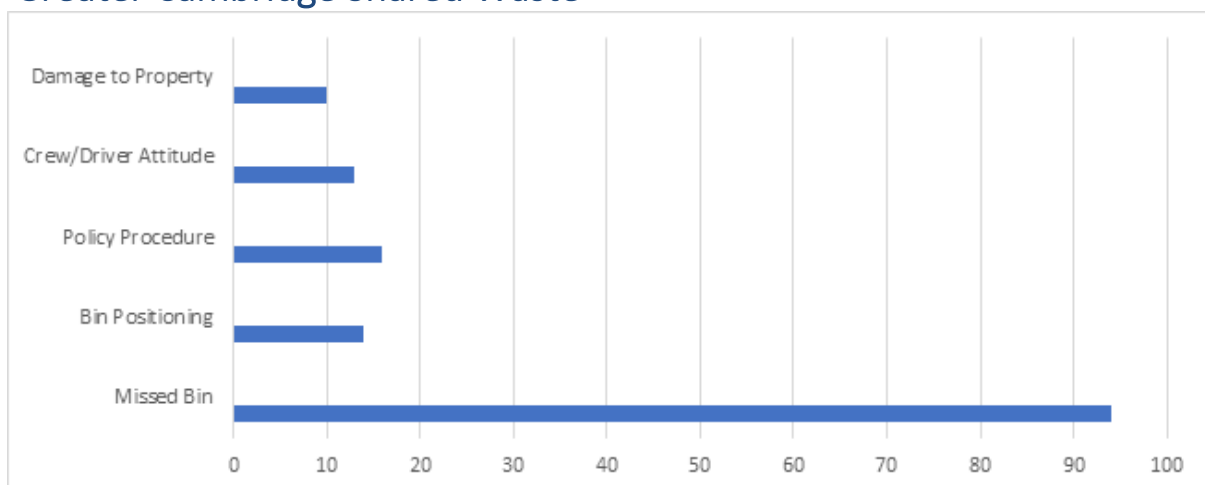
Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service

Waste	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2022-23	166	159	7	93%	5
2021-22	164	153	11	60%	4
2020-21	207	197	10	76%	16

Greater Cambridge Shared Waste: Cases by sub-service



Greater Cambridge Shared Waste: Resolution Themes



Greater Cambridge Shared Waste: Service Comments

Bode Esan, Head of Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service:

The Shared Waste Service undertakes in the region of 778,500 collections per month, collecting an average of 3 bins per household per fortnight, of which approximately 443,700 (57% of total) bin collections per month are within City. The service has maintained the number of successful collections at 99.75%

During 2023-2024, Shared Waste Services saw the addition of 2160 properties, each with an average of 3 bins per household, resulting in approximately 6500 extra bins compared to the previous year.

In 2023-24 the service recorded 11,147 in the city that were not collected on schedule for various reasons of which 6,182, 55% of these were outside the control of the service such as blocked roads, vehicle breakdowns or bad weather.

In September of last year, approximately 80% of households in both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire experienced a change in their collection day.

The total number of city complaints for the Shared Waste service stands at 139, similar to the 135 complaints received in 2022-23. Notably, 97% of these complaints received responses within the corporate target timeframe of 10 days for stage 1 and 20 days for stage 2 complaints.

The most common complaints reported, accounting for 58%, were for repeated missed bins. These incidents often involved collection point issues where bins were placed at a location known only to the crew and assisted collections which were based on a verbal agreement between the resident and the crew.

The number of complaints around repeated missed bins has significantly decreased. Figures from the fourth quarter of 2022-23 indicate a 50% decrease in reports compared to the fourth quarter of 2023-24. This improvement is attributed to enhanced reporting for repeat missed collections and thorough investigations into properties experiencing these issues before residents' lodge complaints.

The number of missed bins complaints this year was reduced at 16% and less than 50% of these were upheld. Most of these reports were due to disputes over crew notifications, where the resident disagreed with the notes regarding contamination or bins not being out for collection.

Several complaints regarding missed and repeated missed bins have surfaced following the round changes implemented last September and are due to discrepancies between our operational system and the actual number of bins or collection locations at some properties. Since the changes were implemented, adjustments to the operating system have enhanced

efficiency. For example, residents using sacks were reassigned to rounds that align with their neighbours who use containers, ensuring properties are integrated into appropriate rounds. Additionally, updating the system to accurately reflect the number of bins has enhanced overall accuracy and efficiency.

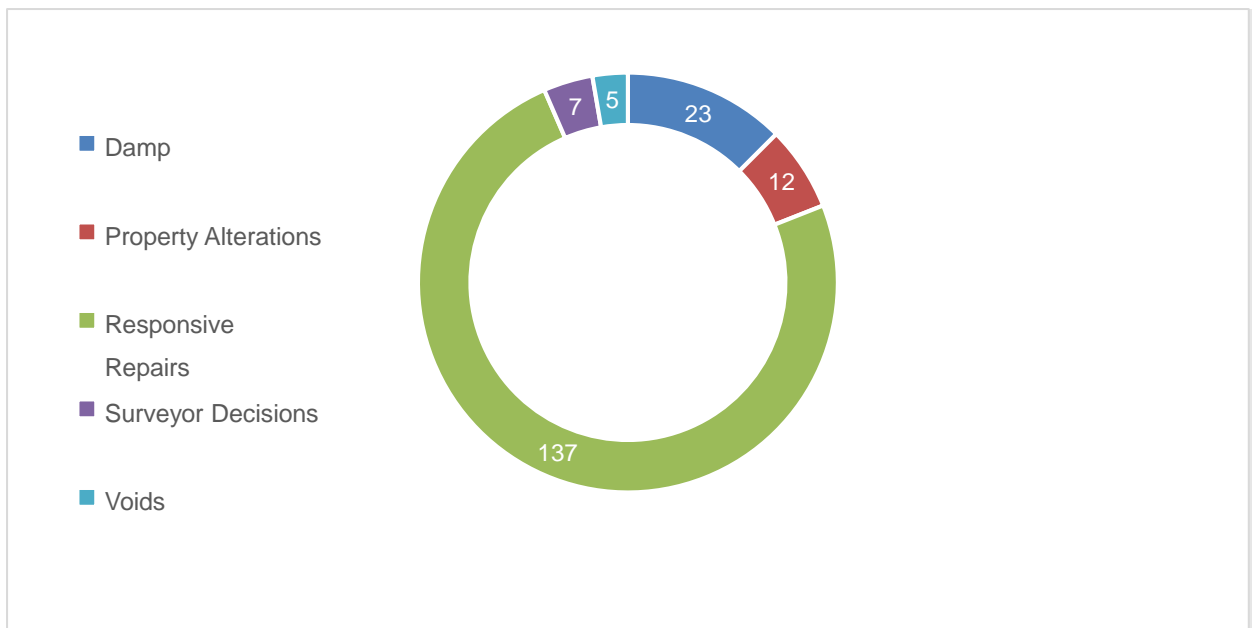
There were some complaints raised regarding the policy, including the collection start time and the frequency of collections being fortnightly instead of weekly.

The Shared Waste service consistently collects data on collections and conducts monthly reviews of missed collection reports. This approach helps identify trends and recurring instances, enabling us to address issues promptly and maintain high collection rates.

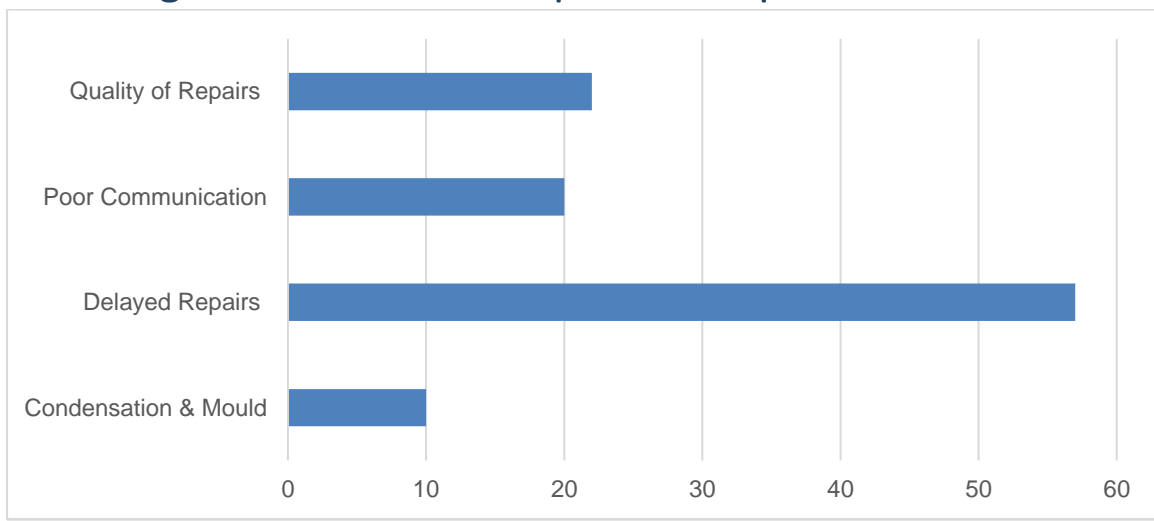
Housing Maintenance & Assets: Responsive Repairs

Waste	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	184	164	20	46%	
2022-23	179	155	24	78%	
2021-22	167	145	12	87%	

Housing Maintenance – Responsive Repairs: Cases by sub-service



Housing Maintenance – Responsive Repairs: Resolution Theme



Housing Assets & Maintenance - Service Comments

Laura Herrera-Martin, Service Improvement Project Officer:

In the realm of Housing Maintenance, the past year presented both challenges and opportunities. We observed an increase in total complaints, reaching 184, with 164 categorised as Stage 1 and 20 escalating to Stage 2. However, the percentage of complaints resolved within target timescales dropped to 46%, signalling a need for closer examination of our processes and resource allocation.

The core challenges faced by the Housing Maintenance team revolve around resource scarcity and the management of rising cases of damp, mould, and condensation, alongside addressing tenant concerns regarding disrepair cases. Balancing these priorities required a delicate juggling act to allocate resources effectively while maintaining a high standard of service delivery to our residents.

The surge in these issues posed additional hurdles, necessitating a focused effort to identify root causes and implement targeted solutions to safeguard resident well-being and property maintenance.

To tackle these challenges, we've introduced several initiatives. We've backfilled the Housing Maintenance Improvement Officer role which oversees the management of disrepair cases, streamlining processes for timely resolution of tenant issues. Furthermore, the complexity of cases and heightened tenant expectations for updates have underscored the need for improved communication channels. Meetings dedicated to addressing complaints have played a vital role in fostering transparency and accountability within the team. However, the multifaceted nature of cases emphasises the importance of adapting strategies to meet evolving tenant needs.

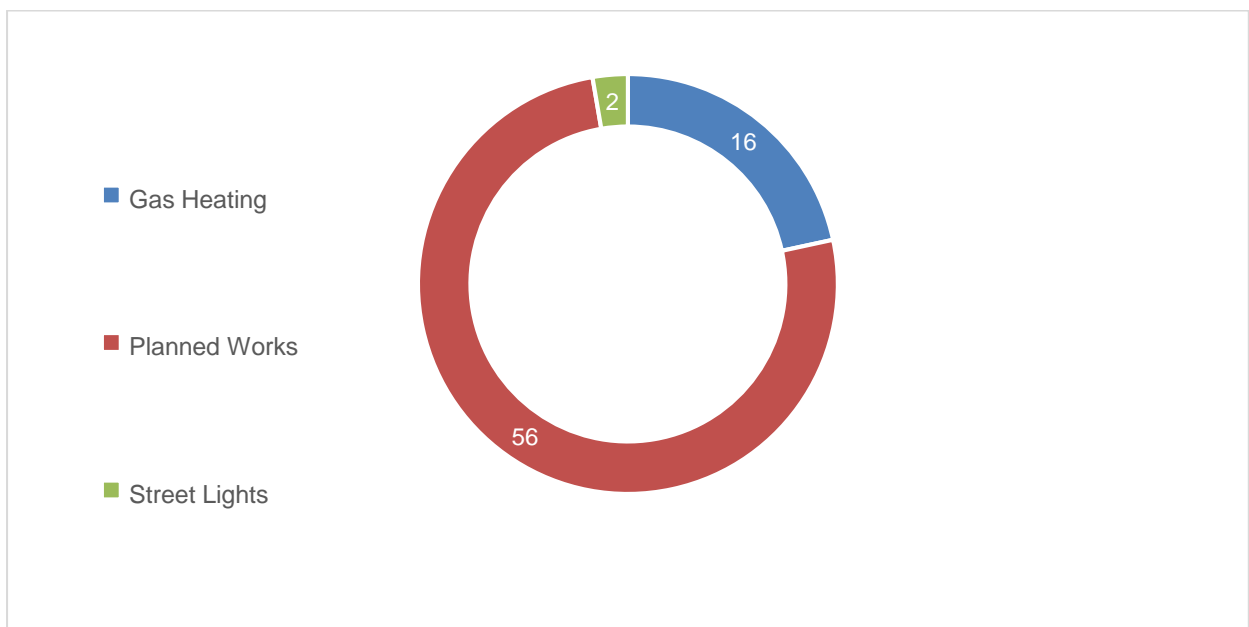
Additionally, a recent change in the handling of Stage 1 complaints involves direct passage of cases to service providers, aiming to expedite resolution and enhance efficiency in addressing tenant concerns.

Looking ahead, it's crucial to prioritise resource allocation and streamline processes to enhance efficiency and tenant satisfaction. By fostering proactive maintenance and transparent communication, we aim to navigate the challenges posed by housing maintenance while delivering quality service to our residents.

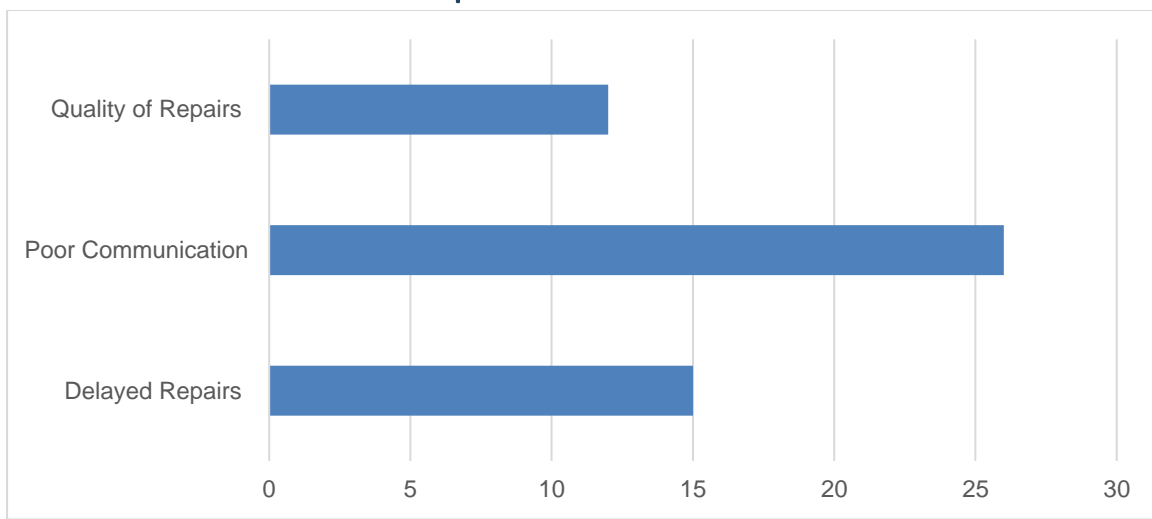
Housing Maintenance & Assets: Planned Works & Compliance

Waste	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	74	66	8	64%	2
2022-23	109	99	10	82%	2
2021-22	45	43	2	89%	3

Planned Works & Compliance: Cases by sub-service



Planned Works & Compliance: Resolution Themes



Planned Works & Compliance - Service Comments

Will Barfield, Asset Manager:

The Asset Management Team in City Services Group are responsible for planned building maintenance and investment in the Council's housing stock, operational, and commercial buildings.

We carry out an annual programme of planned work across the Council's 7,500 homes, 1,200 leases, operational buildings, car parks and commercial properties. During the year 2023/2024 we completed over 3000 planned maintenance jobs, 1700 planned maintenance service inspections and a over 1000 surveys and inspections to help us plan works and record the condition of property.

In 2023/2024 the total number of complaints we received fell to 74, and this represents just 1.5 % of jobs completed.

Complaints about street light failures have fallen because of a street light replacement programme – old assets have been replaced with new light columns with new LED lanterns – which should ensure streetlights on housing estates are far more reliable in future.

Around 10% of the complaints relate to fencing work where customers are unhappy about the time taken to replace garden fencing. We have a fencing policy and a fencing programme of works but there is a high demand for fencing which can result in complaints being made.

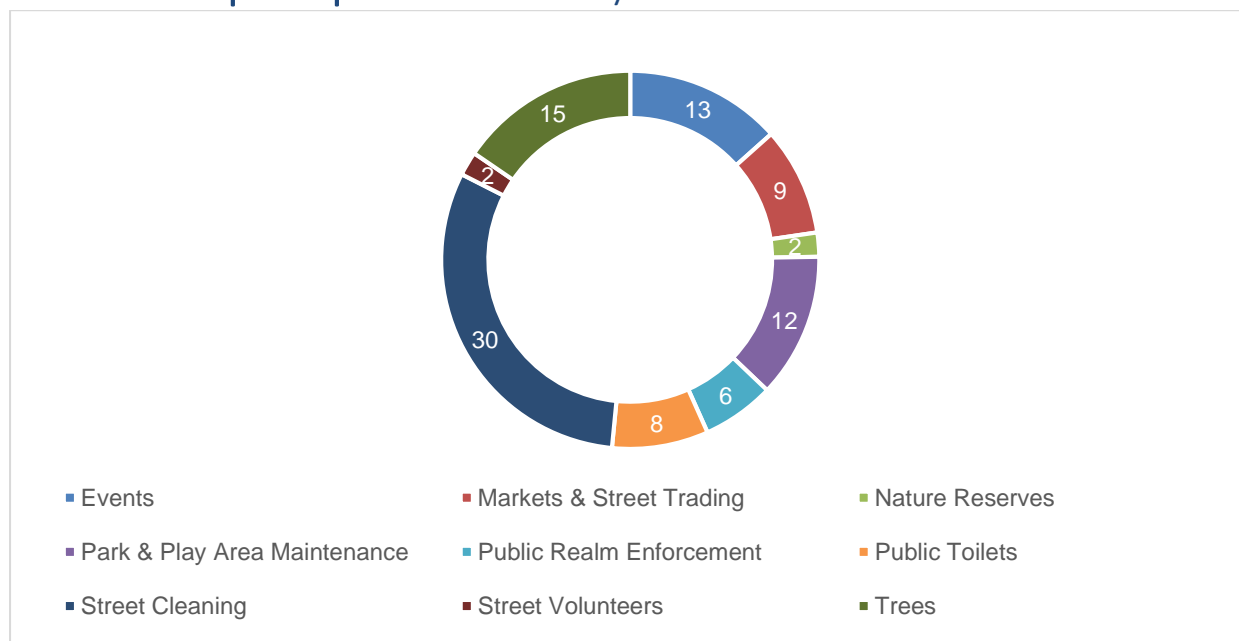
Many of our complaints are about things done by external contractors who are carrying our work for the Council – for example failing to keep people informed, or carrying out poor quality work, or not finishing it. We collect customer satisfaction feedback from tenants who have received planned maintenance work, and this shows a consistent high level of customer satisfaction with planned maintenance.

Where there are complaints about planned works carried out by contractors, we follow this up at contract meetings and expect the contract to help resolve the situation, to ensure we minimise repeat complaints in future.

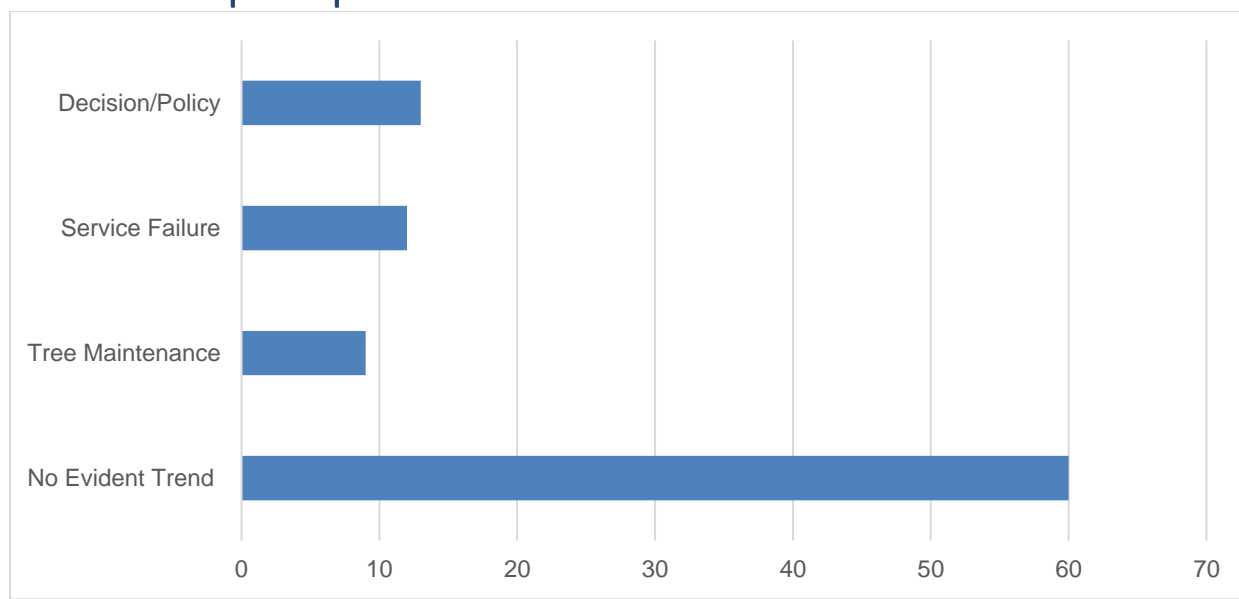
Environmental Services – Streets & Open Spaces

Streets & Open Spaces	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	97	88	9	78%	21
2022-23	86	80	6	85%	16
2021-22	91	85	6	85%	16

Streets & Open Spaces: Cases by sub-service



Streets & Open Spaces: Resolution Themes



Streets & Open Spaces - Service Comments

Alistair Wilson, Strategic Delivery Manager:

Our Streets and Open Spaces (S&OS) service employs c130 staff and is responsible for managing the city's streets and parks and open spaces (c300 hectares), including public tree stock (c33,000), play areas (c107); public toilets (13), allotment sites (26) and 7 day per week market and street trading pitches; and providing daily cleansing, grounds maintenance and street enforcement services.

Over the past year, we have continued to see a significant increase in community use and enjoyment of our fantastic parks and green spaces for informal leisure and recreation. On the negative side, our Street Cleansing service has had to deal with high volumes of seasonal littering, especially from summer evening and night-time use of the main city parks, such as Jesus Green; and also year-round high volumes of predominantly domestic fly tipping across the city. Both of these issues are not exclusive to Cambridge and continue to impact towns and cities across the United Kingdom.

Despite the scale of operation and associated customer contact, as outlined above, the S&OS service received a total of 95 complaints in 2023-24, which is a very slight increase to the previous year's figure of 86. Of the 95 cases received, the service areas with the joint highest number of cases were: Street Cleansing: 10 (2022/23 – 26), where there is no notable pattern to these other than most (8) were received during the summer period when people are most active outside.

The other highest area being Events on Parks: 10 (2022/23 – 16) where four complaints related to Midsummer Common and noise. For 2024, the licence conditions relating to the hire of the Common now included a required to consider and supply a Noise Management Plan.

Six cases were received for Street Litter relating to overflowing or bins not emptied. We are investigating a new method of working in 24/25 to address litter bin scheduling and emptying.

Nine cases relating to Public Toilets which relate predominately to cleaning and maintenance. Where a complaint has been received the cleaning is inspected and monitored.

Eight cases were received relating to Driving of Staff. All reports are investigated, and management responses are conducted where further action is warranted and justified. Tree Maintenance also received eight complaints, with three related to tree planting positions, which were reviewed, the remainder relate to storm damage or tree pruning.

Public Realm Enforcement received seven and relate to complaints on items where the Council has taken enforcement action. They do not relate to the process or actions rather the intent.

Of the six complaints for the Market three of the complaints relate to one complainant. There is no other notable pattern.

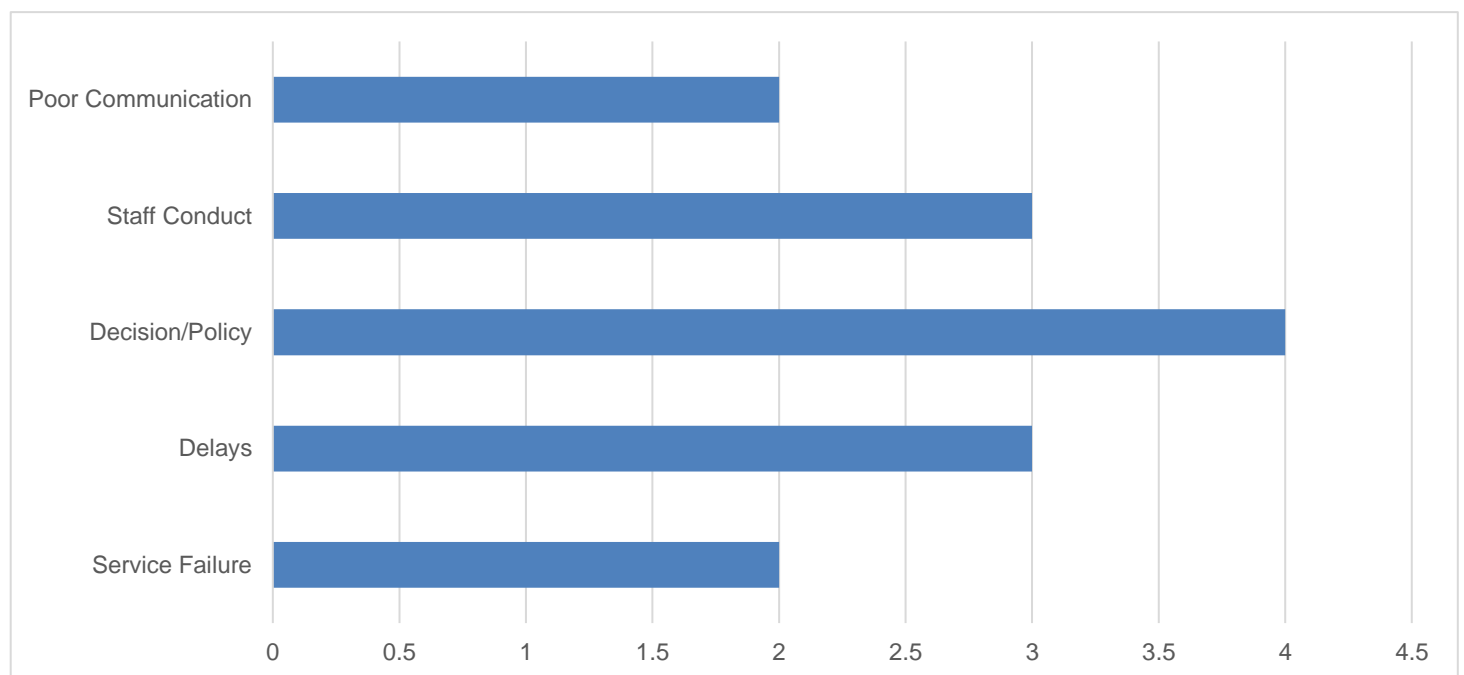
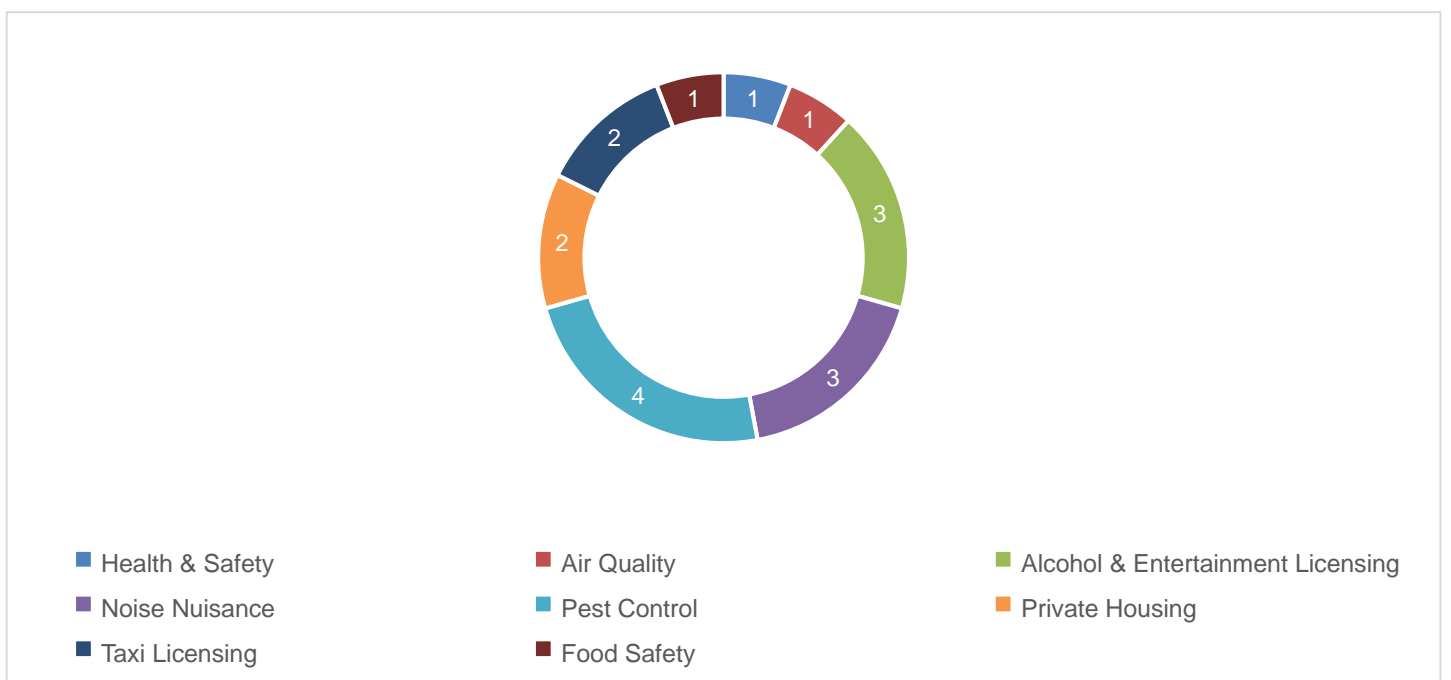
Five complaints were received relating to Grass Cutting. All of which related to May and whilst cutting during No Mow May. There is no plan to adapt our cutting regime as the cuts related to health and safety or function use of spaces.

The 26 remaining complaints are a mix of accident reports, grazing of animals, protected tree applications, unauthorised encampments and maintenance requests.

Environmental Services – Environmental Health

Environmental Health	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	17	16	1	82%	
2022-23	12	12	0	92%	5
2021-22	11	10	1	73%	2

Environmental Health: Cases by sub-service & Root Causes



Environmental Health - Service Comments

Yvonne O'Donnell, Environmental Health Manager:

Environmental Health (EH) service employs c44 staff and is responsible for taxi and premises licensing, food safety, health and safety and infectious disease control. The service also provides technical input to Planning on all aspects of EH, including air quality, noise and contamination. It also provides services to improve the private rented sector through education, enforcement, licensing of houses in multiple occupation and bringing empty homes back into use and energy efficiency. It also provides a pest control service.

Over the course of 2023/24, the EH has delivered the following services:

575 Private Sector Housing Inspections

21 Empty Homes brought back into use

876 Food Safety Inspections

54 Licensing Inspections

819 Pest Control cases

1119 Planning consultations

1979 Licensing Applications processed

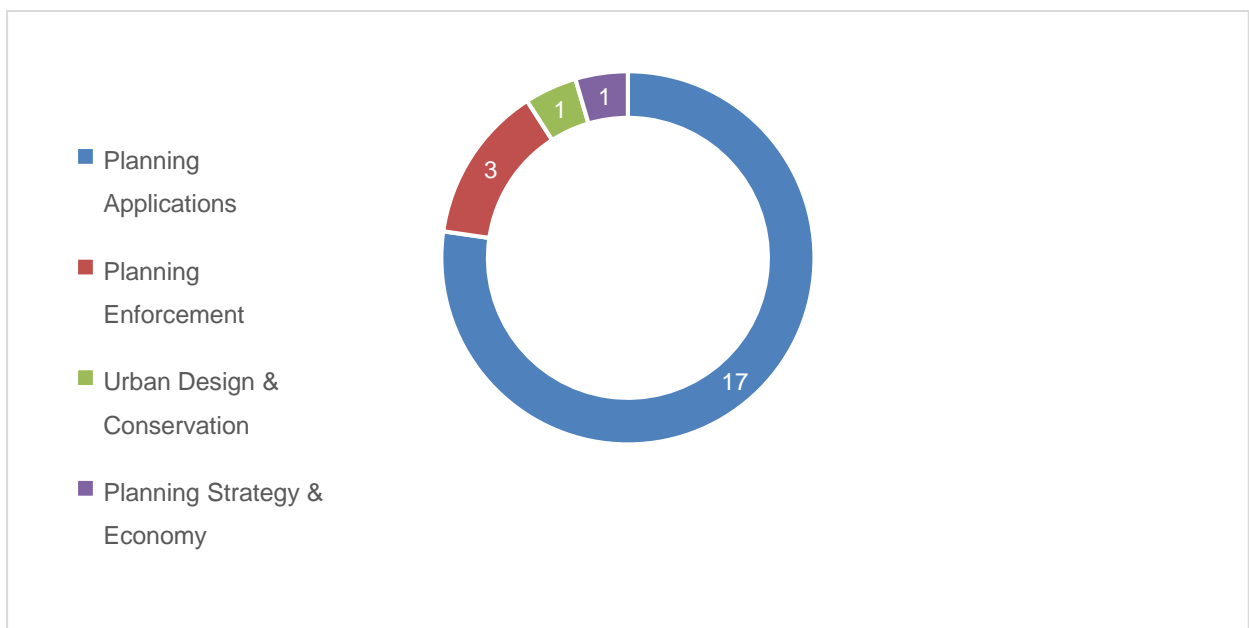
2031 Service Requests, including housing, food safety, health and safety, licensing, taxis, noise nuisance

Despite the scale of operation and associated customer contact, as outlined above, the EH service received a total of just 17 complaints in 2023/24, which is a slight increase from the previous year's figure of 12. Of the 17 cases received, the service areas with the three highest numbers of cases were respectively: Pest Control (4); Licensing (3) and Noise (3). These figures are not considered significant and an analysis of each of the associated cases shows there was no particular complaint type or underlying causal theme.

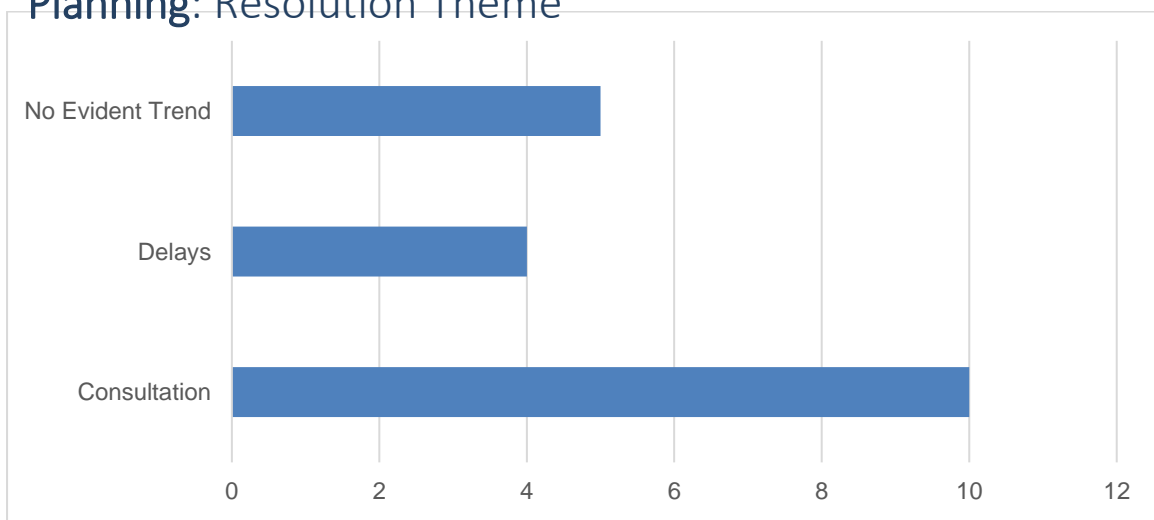
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service

Waste	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	22	17	5	68%	1
2022-23	23	21	2	76%	-
2021-22	79	65	14	56%	2

Planning: Cases by sub-service



Planning: Resolution Theme



Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service - Service Comments

Heather Jones, Deputy Director of GCSP and Building Control:

The team continue to improve the handling of complaints, and there is a real time reduction again from **21** total stage 1 complaints in 2022/2023 to **17** total stage 1 complaints in 2023/2024 albeit a slight increase in the number of stage 1 complaints that have escalated to stage 2 (from 2 to 5). Complaints responded to in target timescales has fallen slightly from 76% to 68% however this is an area the team will **target** to improve through the setting of an internal response performance indicator of **90%**.

Improved complaints performance form part of the Quality Management System the team adopted in July 2023 for DM and Compliance, the first ever shared planning service to achieve the ISO9001:2015 standard, which is externally accredited.

In 2023/2024 the team continued to focus on reducing response times in validation and decisions, resulting in a sustained improvement in performance. The aim is for the team to reach second quartile in the overall performance rating for the Country.

Again, the majority of the complaint cases have remained consistent with previous years, with most related to planning applications and planning enforcement. There is however a change in the resolution themes, where previously the majority related to a delayed or no response, over the last year the majority are related to “consultations.” This is an external factor outside of the control of the planning service. Otherwise, the next highest theme is “no evidence of any trend” and although “delays” still appear as a theme, these are in the minority. This again illustrates an improvement across the service in responsiveness.

The team is again focusing on continuous improvements across the service, with a dedicated group prioritising how this can be achieved, along with the aspiration of including all functions within GCSP in the ISO9001:2015 Quality Management System by the end of 2024. Performance is now managed via a live dashboard which is accessible by every team member. This ensures accountability is at the right level and promotes collaboration across the service in improvements. The next area of focus is digital and AI.

Customer Services

Customer Services	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	24	22	2	100%	2
2022-23	22	22	-	100%	11
2021-22	25	25	-	100%	10

Customer Services - Service comments

Clarissa Norman, Customer Services Operations Manager:

In 2023-2024 Customer services handled in excess of 230,000 contacts via telephone, email and face to face and received 24 complaints, an increase of 2 from 2022-2023. Complaints continue to be very low in relation to the amount of contacts received, 0.01%.

During 2023-2024 the Customer Service team supported The Greater Waste Partnership with their route optimisation changes in September and contributed to the achievement of the highest collection rates for the council for Council Tax through Advisors supporting customers with account and finance queries.

In October 2023 the team launched a customer satisfaction survey to replace govmetric. The survey is attached to email footers, is available on a tablet in reception and is also texted to all customers who speak to an advisor. The response has been positive, an average of 100 responses have been received each month and 82% of customers have fed back that they are satisfied with the service they received.

Many compliments for the team were received via the customer satisfaction survey but not recorded in the figures above. In the coming year we will be working on a process which allows these to easily be recorded and reportable.

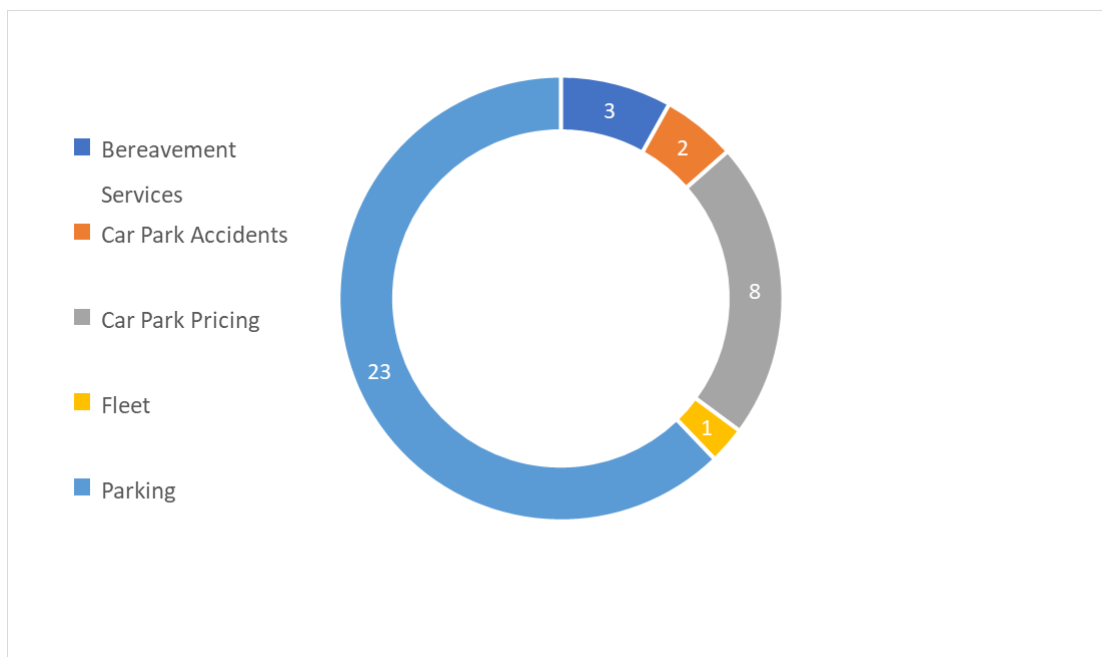
For the third year running 100% of complaints received in Customer Services were responded to within target. 30% (7) of complaints received in 2023 – 2024 were attributed to advice given/staff conduct, a small reduction from 2022 – 2023 (32%). Staff training was a theme identified within these complaints. The team have a rolling plan to ensure staff knowledge is up to date, however the learning from these complaints has been incorporated into our plans.

The next highest area customers were dissatisfied about was long wait times 13% (3 complaints). These complaints were received at times of peak demand, annual billing and council tax enforcement runs, when demand will unfortunately, always outweigh staffing levels. There are no evident trends over the remaining complaints received.

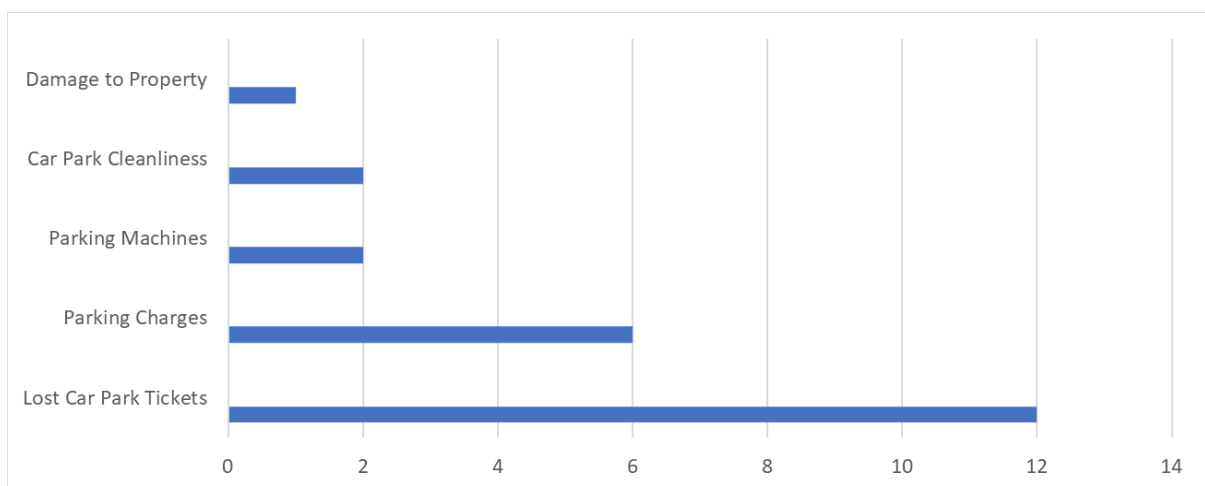
Commercial Services

Commercial Services	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	37	26	11	78%	5
2022-23	42	37	5	95%	3
2021-22	84	75	9	94%	6

Commercial Services: Cases by sub-service



Commercial Services: Resolution Theme



Commercial Services - Service Comments

Sean Cleary, Strategic Delivery Manager:

Overall, the service experienced a lower number of Stage 1 complaints this year (26 against 37), a 30% reduction compared to last year and very low in relation to the number of visitors. I.e. Parking had circa 1.9 million visitors last year.

The Bereavement Service received three complaints this year, an anomaly compared to previous years. A detailed review revealed no single root cause. On going actions include ensuring all customer interactions are fully recorded and reminding funeral directors of the service payment policies.

The increase in Stage 2 complaints is primarily related to parking issues, especially lost tickets. The rise in parking fees and the penalty for lost tickets are significant factors. Actions taken to address this include improved visibility of lost ticket information on exits lanes, price boards and entry machines.

Complaints related to parking equipment have decreased due to enhanced cleaning and maintenance regimes and robust processes reducing machine downtime. Continued focus on equipment maintenance is necessary to maintain this improvement.

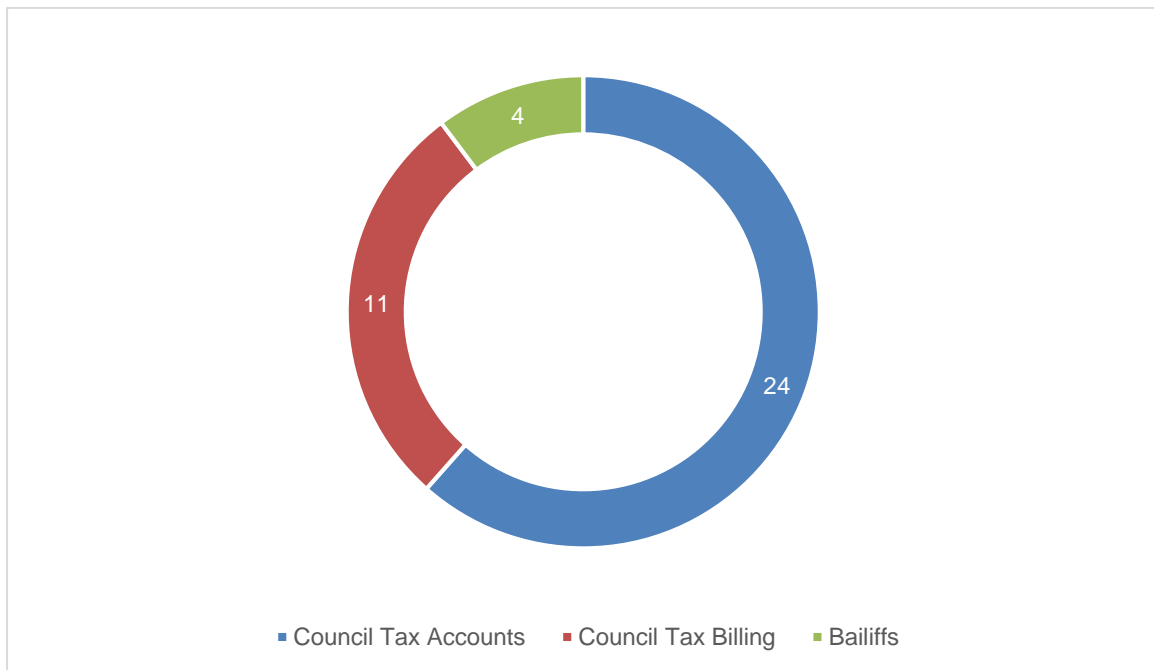
The decline in complaints resolved within target time, from 95% to 78%, suggests issues in the services resolution processes and complexity of cases which have taken time to resolve. Reviewing the current processes and identifying any bottlenecks is key to improvement.

The Commercial Services complaints data for 2023-24 highlights a significant reduction in overall complaints but an increase in Stage 2 complaints, particularly related to parking issues. While there have been improvements in equipment maintenance and some aspects of customer service, the decline in the percentage of complaints resolved within target time needs focus and action where required.

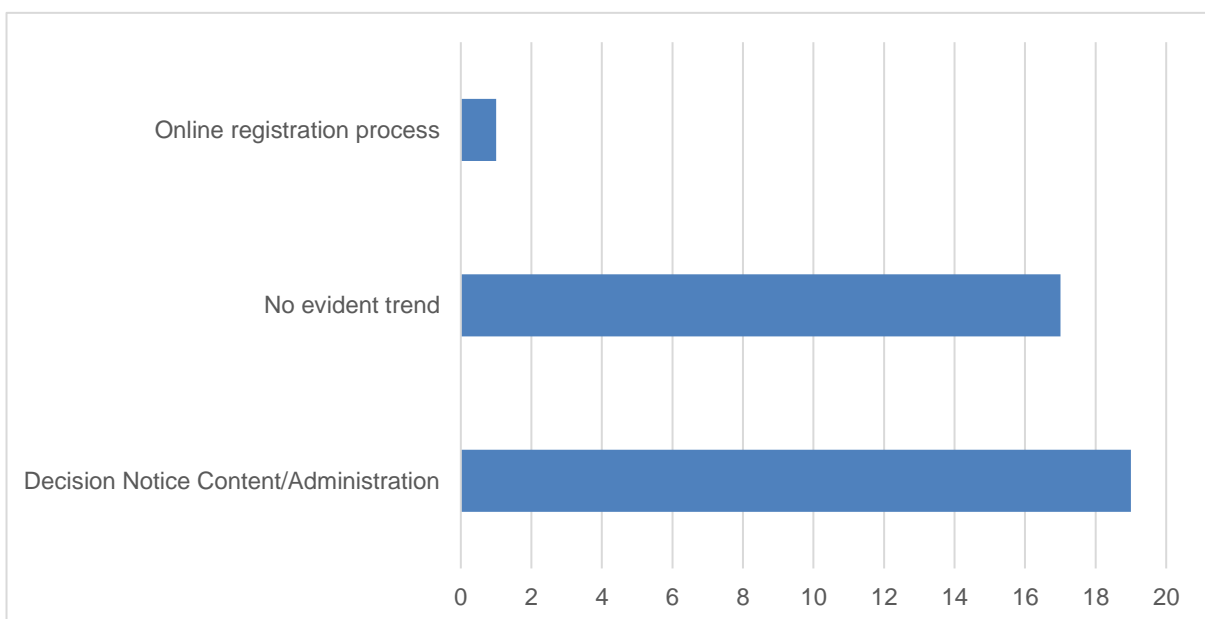
Local Taxation

Council Tax	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	39	39	-	100%	2
2022-23	35	34	1	100%	4
2021-22	33	32	1	100%	17

Local Taxation: Cases by Sub-Service



Local Taxation: Resolution Themes



Local Taxation – Service Comments

Kevin Jay, Local Taxation Manager:

During 2023/24, the Revenues and Benefits teams sent over 220,000 documents, including approximately 180,000 documents including council tax and business rates bills, reminders, final notices and summons and correspondence relating to customers moving in and out of properties and the administration of various discounts and exemptions.

Overall, the numbers of complaints received remains extremely low, numbers received during 2023/24 have increased marginally.

Although focussed on providing excellent customer service the sheer volume of interactions and multiple transactions with over 60,000 customers will inevitably result in customer complaints. However, the number of complaints remains consistently low which is testament to the quality and accuracy of the work being carried out by the team. In most cases, issues raised are dealt with quickly before a customer needs to resort to raising a formal complaint, those that are raised through the formal complaint channel rarely escalate to stage 2.

The recovery and enforcement of unpaid Council Tax and Business Rates can generate complaints; however, numbers are very low and are handled sensitively to secure amicable outcomes whilst understanding the requirement to collect charges that are due.

Complaint trends are not immediately apparent, some are linked to enforcement procedures where activities are primarily driven by a statutory process or relate to decisions connected to Council policy or Council Tax regulations. Previously there had been a few complaints relating to processing delays, these have been virtually eliminated following the introduction of processes which suppress recovery on cases where work is outstanding.

Some complaints are received from customers who were unhappy about receiving reminders and summonses for non-payment of council tax. Previously complaints have included issues around the wording of some enforcement documents, where possible we have reworded some documents and have worked with those customers to find amicable solutions. To help reduce the impact further we have introduced text messaging to provide soft payment prompts prior to the issue of formal reminder notices.

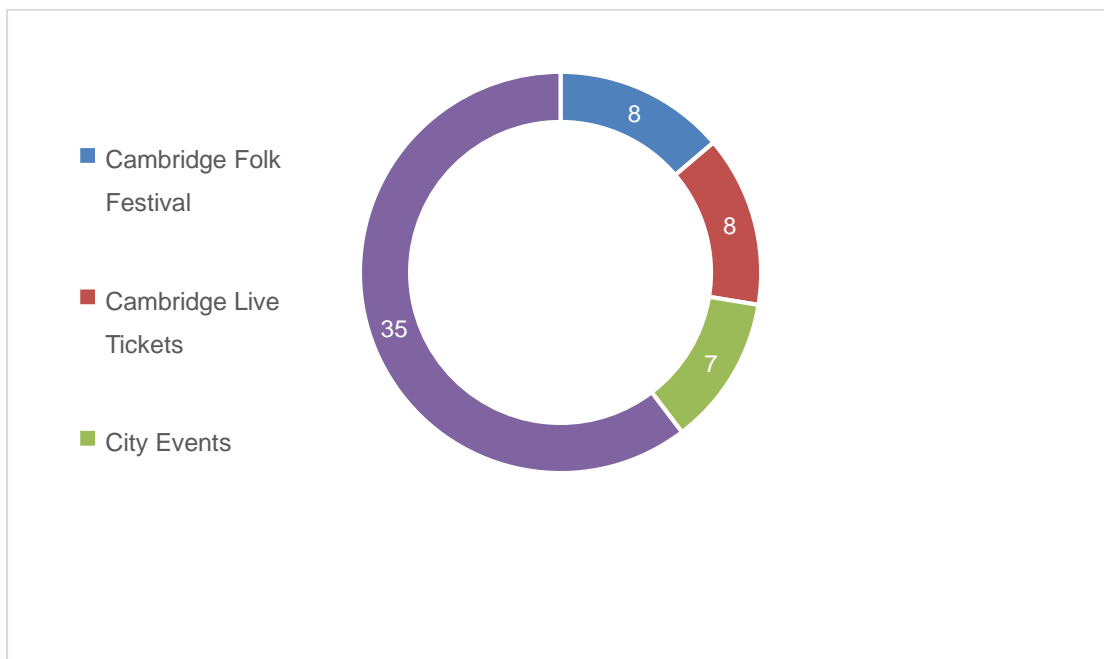
Supporting citizens during the current financial crisis remains a priority for the team, balancing the need to ensure that bills are paid promptly whilst understanding the needs of the most vulnerable and providing support, help and advice.

The team remain responsive to complaints with 100% responded to within target again this year.

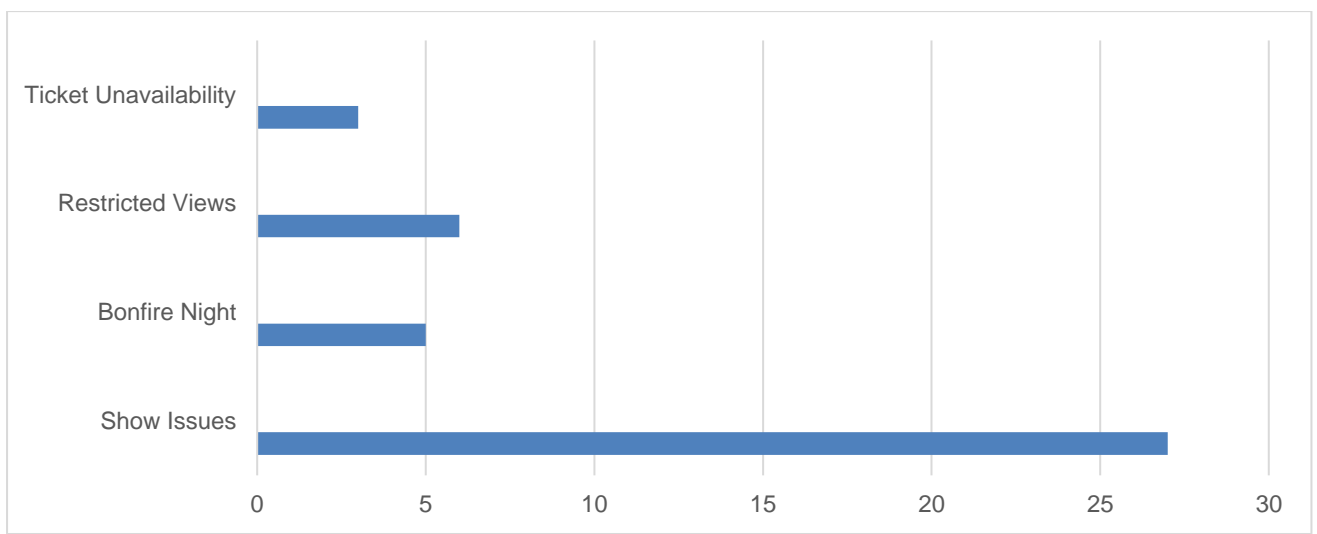
Cultural Services

Waste	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	58	51	7	36%	
2022-23	67	62	5	49%	
2021-22	51	50	1	88%	

Cultural Services: Cases by sub-service



Cultural Services: Resolution Theme



Cultural Services - Service comments

Trend information by Tony Stead, Customer Services Business Development Manager.

Service information by Thomas Thurbon, Venues Manager:

As with last year, the majority of complaints within Cultural Services related to issues during shows at the Corn Exchange. Some customers continue to ask for a ticket refund if they are unhappy with the show content or an issue encountered at a show. The content of shows is usually the artist's decision on the night and advance programme information comes from the promoter who hired the hall, however we will look to include this point within our hire contracts.

Issues during shows are usually resolved on the night by the staff running the event when they are brought to our attention, however where they are reported afterwards we have in some instances offered tickets to a future show as an apology.

From previous years we found that some customers found the seating old and uncomfortable and have expressed this within their complaints. Following a procurement exercise this year we have awarded the installation of new seats to a supplier, and they are due to be installed in January 2025.

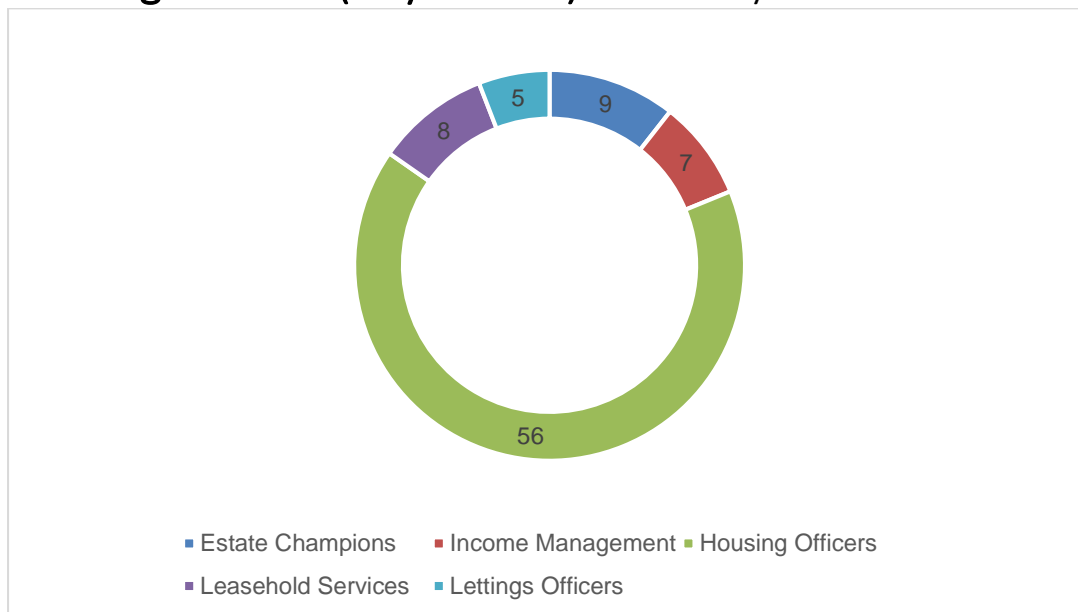
This year we also installed a new accessible lift which now takes a bigger load allowing larger wheelchairs/mobility scooter access to the boxes.

Following a review including feedback from complaints in 2022-23 we reduced our overall capacity from 1195 to 1083 in our standing area which should make audiences more comfortable when attending events.

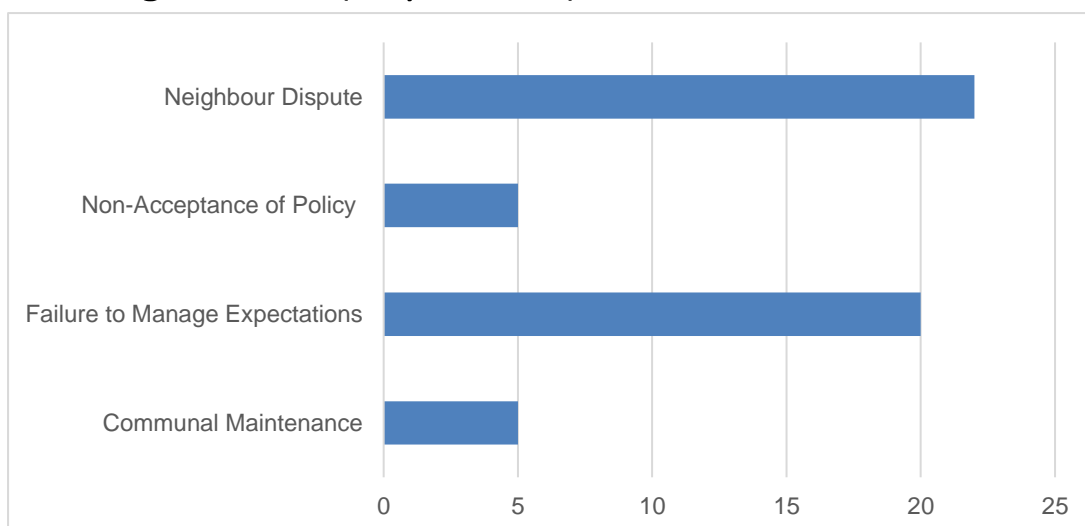
Housing Services (City Homes)

Housing Services	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	85	74	11	89%	3
2022-23	56	49	7	93%	13
2021-22	71	65	6	87%	28

Housing Services (City Homes): Cases by Sub-Service



Housing Services (City Homes): Resolution Themes



Housing Services (City Homes) – Service Comments

Anna Hill, Housing Services Manager:

The top two complaint themes for City Homes during 2023 and 2024 were as follows:

Neighbour Dispute

Failure to Manage Expectations

Performance issues were identified within the team in relation to a failure to manage expectations throughout this time period and were addressed with those individuals. These individuals are no longer working within the team and a robust training plan is in place to ensure that new starters communicate clearly, transparently and do not make promises to our customers that cannot be delivered.

Whilst the performance issues identified account for some of the complaints, it is accepted that there is further work to be done to share information with customers proactively. An action to improve this is outlined in the recommendations below.

The number of complaints has increased, but this is in part due to work that has been done with the team to ensure that they are logging complaints that are received outside of CaseTracker. The increase is also linked to the performance issues that were identified within the team. There is also a growing awareness by the public about how to raise a formal complaint.

The slight reduction in complaints being responded to within target timescales is due to new members of staff getting used to the CaseTracker system. Further training was provided, and clear expectations given around response times and this has been rectified. In addition, the Housing Services Manager (City Homes) and Tenancy Operations Manager have overview of all City Homes complaints to ensure response times are met.

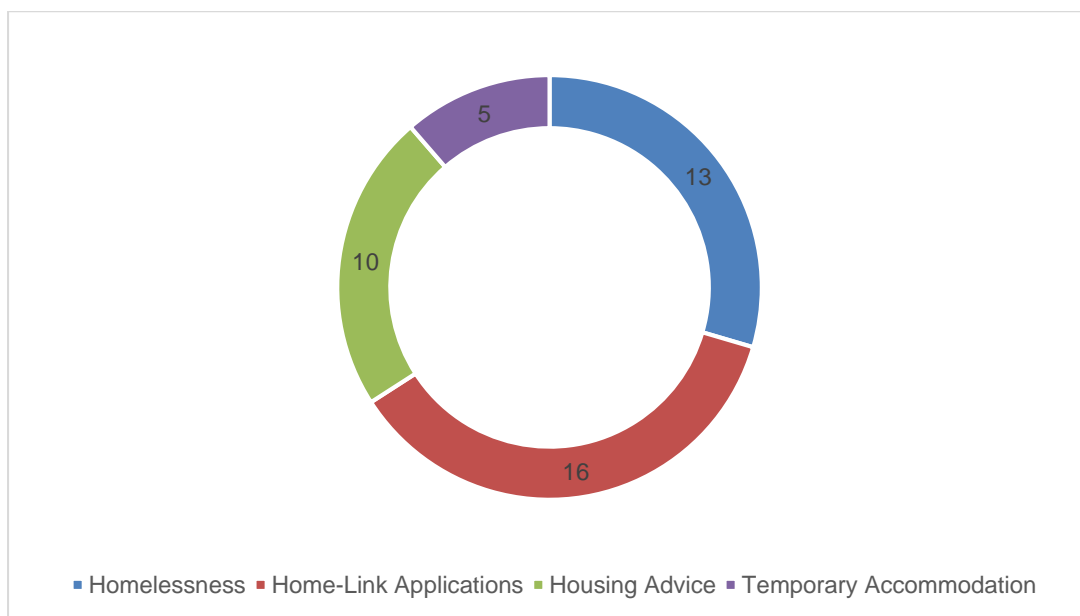
Some of the key recommendations for improvement are:

- for City Homes and the Resident Involvement team to continue to work together to deliver the message around how to report neighbour disputes
- for City Homes and the Policy & Performance Unit to collaborate to publicise policies and procedures
- an article will be added to the summer addition of Open Door outlining what work City Homes carries out, the things the team can help with and details of other services
- to continue to outline the importance of following up with tenants to our staff

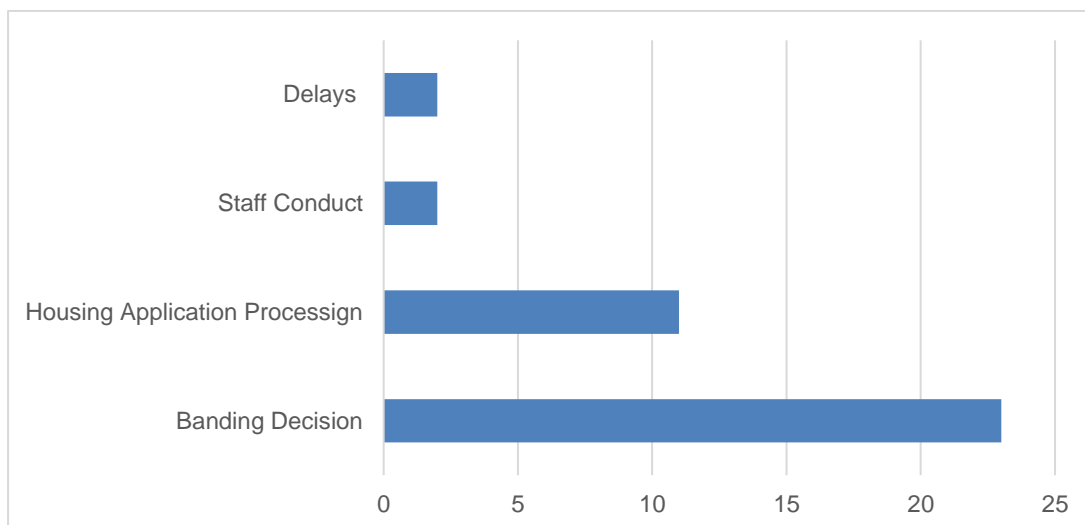
Housing Needs & Options Services

Housing Services	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	44	40	4	87%	8
2022-23	44	40	4	84%	1
2021-22	43	34	9	86%	9

Housing Needs & Options Services: Cases by Sub-Service



Housing Needs & Options Services: Resolution Themes



Housing Needs & Options Services – Service Comments

Simon Hunt, Housing Services Manager:

Key themes to note were:

The number of complaints received for the year was identical to last year – 44 in total – despite an increase in the overall number of contacts with the service. Furthermore, the number of recorded compliments received about the service increased from just 1 last year to 9 this year.

87% of complaints during the year were responded to within target. This was an improvement from 84% last year.

Complaints for the year were split fairly evenly between Home-Link (16 cases), homelessness applications (13 cases) and housing advice (10 cases), with a further 5 cases relating to temporary accommodation.

In terms of specific service areas, complaints about Home-Link were almost identical to last year – 16 compared to 17. These complaints can be largely broken down into processing issues and banding queries, with a small proportion relating to staff conduct. Complaint investigations revealed that in almost all cases Home-Link applications had been banded in line with the lettings policy and perhaps some of these cases could have been managed under the banding review process, rather than through the complaints channel. It is difficult to identify any particular themes with processing related complaints, but errors, where identified, have been raised with relevant staff. Whilst application processing times have increased slightly on last year, this does not appear to have been reflected in an increase in complaints for this reason.

Five complaints relate to the provision of temporary housing. It has not been possible to identify a pattern across these 5 complaints as they were all made for different reasons. However, although the number of complaints has increased slightly in this area, the highest number of compliments received also relate to temporary housing.

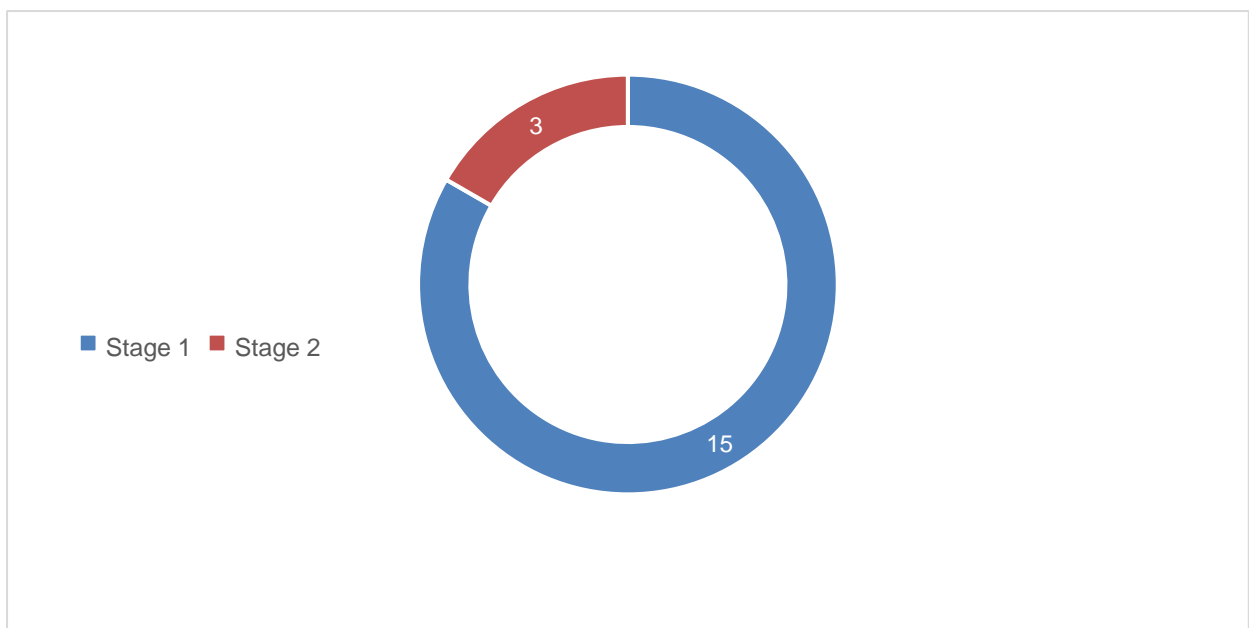
The number of complaints about housing advice and homelessness was, again, very similar to the number for last year - 23 compared to 24.

Again, it is difficult to identify themes in relation to complaints about this area of work.

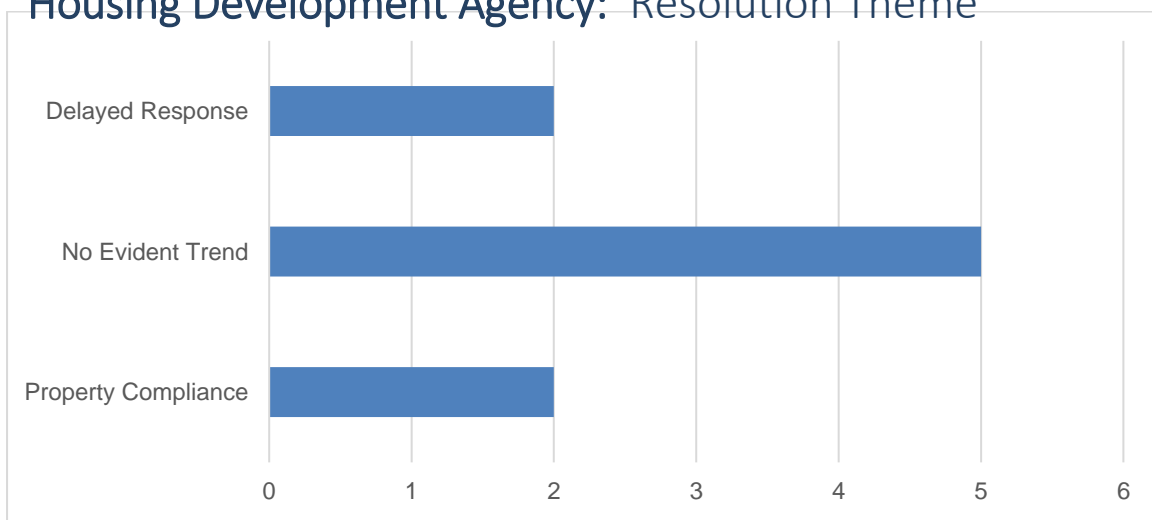
Housing Development Agency

HDA	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target	Compliments
2023-24	18	15	3	50%	-
2022-23	6	5	1	56%	-
2021-22	4	3	1	100%	-

Housing Development Agency: Cases by stage



Housing Development Agency: Resolution Theme



Housing Development Agency - Service Comments

Benedict Binns, Assistant Director of Development:

Last year was a significant year in terms of handovers of flats and houses with approximately 300 homes handed over.

This year there will also be around a further 250 homes handed over.

With the volume of handovers to tenants, it means that queries around defects increase. The majority of defect queries are handled within our defects process and resolved. Some may take longer or fall between council teams and may result in complaints. The increase is explained through increase in the number of handovers.

Lessons have been learnt and the complaints response process within the development has been tightened to ensure complaints are responded in a timely manner. The service will continue to monitor progress.

The following services have not been reported on in detail due to the low number of complaints raised within them. However, a brief summary of performance is provided.

Commercial Property Services

Property Services received two stage one complaints. One of which was resolved within target, and the other was not. This is an increase of one case compared to last year.

3C ICT

No complaints were received relating to Information Governance this year. This is a decrease from two complaints last year.

Elections

No complaints were received relating to Elections this year. This is a decrease from three complaints last year.

Finance

Finance received two stage one complaints. One of which was resolved within target, and the other was not. This is an increase from last year where Finance received no complaints.

Human Resources

Human Resources received one complaint at stage one this year which was resolved within the target time. This is an increase compared to no complaints last year.

Building Control

Building Control received three complaints at stage one this year, compared to no complaints at last year. None of the three complaints were resolved within the target time.

Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit services received one complaint at stage one this year compared to three complaints in 2022-23. It was resolved within the target time.

Community Safety

Community Safety received three complaints at stage one and three complaints at stage two compared to seven at stage one and none at stage two in 2022-23. All six cases from this year were resolved within the target time.

Community Centres

Three complaints relating to Community Centres were received this year compared to five at stage one, and one at stage two in 2022-23. All three cases from this year were resolved within the target time.

Multi-Service Complaints

Multi-Service Complaints	Total Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints in Target
2023-24	41	36	5	83%
2022-23	42	32	10	83%
2021-22	29	24	5	84%

Multi-Service complaints tend to be more complex and involve more officer time to investigate, which in previous years has contributed to a low number of complaints responded to within target. This year the number of cases resolved within target has remained consistent with the previous two years which shows Officers are still handling these cases efficiently.

There was one more multi-service complaint in 2023-24 than there was in 2022-23.

This year the area with the highest number of multi-service complaints was City Homes with 11. As with previous years, other high-volume areas involved in multi-service complaints are Housing Maintenance & Assets (8), and Streets & Open Spaces (9). This is not unexpected as Housing Maintenance & Assets complaints, and other community issues can often involve officers from the Housing service if the complaints concern decisions made by that service. The majority of the multi-service complaints involved a Housing Service as complaints had often been raised to a Housing Officer initially, but they have had to involve other services to find a resolution for the complainant.

There remains a correlation between multi-service complaints and Customer Services, as the Customer Service Centre is often the first point of contact for the majority of services offered by the Council. We are still careful to differentiate where the complainant actually complains about the service they received from the CSC, or if they are just mentioning the fact they were in contact with them as part of the background to their complaint. There were only two Multi-Service complaints which were also unhappy with the service they had received from the CSC this year.

When a multi-service complaint is allocated, potential case owners from all services involved are contacted to establish a lead officer who will then co-ordinate an investigation and response, including input from all relevant services.

Non-Cambridge City Council

In addition to cases received relating to City Council services, 14 cases were raised relating to issues for authorities or services not provided by the City Council. We have continued to keep guidance in place and up to date on the complaints web page to signpost customers to other authorities where appropriate which has continued to keep the number of these cases submitted to a minimum.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

If customers are not satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled they can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's office. The LGSCO investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and other bodies.

The information below will not be complete until the Annual Letter is published by the Ombudsman in mid-July 2024. Below is a summary of what is currently published on the online decisions database.

In 2023-24 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman received 11 complaints relating to Cambridge City Council. Of these, one was treated as a complaint where a decision was applicable. As a result of the LGO's detailed investigations this complaint was upheld and the remaining cases were closed following initial enquiries.

The LGSCO were satisfied that 100% of their recommendations from 2023-24 were implemented by the Council.

Department	No of Complaints Received	Decision
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	2	2 Closed after initial enquiries
Housing	2	1 Closed after initial enquiries 1 Upheld
Planning & Development	2	2 Closed after initial enquiries
Leisure & Culture	1	1 Closed after initial enquiries
Parking and other Penalties	2	2 Closed after initial enquiries
Corporate & Other Services	2	2 Closed after initial enquiries
Total	11	1 Upheld 10 Closed after initial enquiries

LGSCO Upheld Case summaries

The LGSCO provides information on all cases submitted and investigated on their website. Summaries have been provided below, full information on each case can be found on the LGSCO website by searching for the reference number.

Housing Allocations

Complaint: 22 011 412 – 14 June 2023

This complainant complained that the Council offered them a property which was incorrectly advertised to benefit from off-street parking. They said the Officer was rude and failed to explain whether or not they could decline the property as this was their third offer. As a result the complainant said they experienced distress as they accepted the property and had concerns about damage to their car. They also said they would have costs to access electric charging points in public and a potential loss of earnings.

The Ombudsman found fault with the Council as the property was advertised to benefit from off-street parking. The Council were also found at fault for failing to advise the complainant during their viewing regarding their right to withdraw from the offer without impacting their priority band or bidding. The Ombudsman was unable to make a decision on the behaviour of the Officer as there was no available recording of the call to be considered.

The Ombudsman recommended that within one month of its decision that the Council should write to the complainant with its proposed remedy to make a 50% financial contribution to the installation of a dropped kerb up to a maximum of £1,000 and prioritise a tenant alteration request from the complainant, or offer a direct let of a like-for-like property with off-street parking and make a £500 contribution toward any costs incurred.

The complainant chose the first option of the 50% financial contribution toward the installation of a dropped kerb, and payment was made to the complainant on 5th October 2023. The Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council had complied with their recommended action.

Number of LGSCO cases, yearly comparisons 2021 – 24

The below table shows the number of complaints referred to the LGSCO, against how many cases were investigated, and how many of those investigated were upheld.

Year	Total Enquiries Received	Cases Investigated	Cases Upheld
2023-24	11	1	1
2022-23	25	6	5
2021-22	12	4	3

Reasons to not investigate a complaint include the complaint not being made within 12 months of the issue occurring, complainants not providing sufficient information to allow the LGSCO to investigate, and in some cases, the complaint not being passed through the Council's complaints procedure first before escalation. In these instances, the LGSCO gives advice, and signpost complainants to sources of further information.

Complaints under the Councillors' Code of Conduct

Councillors must adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct whenever they are conducting Council business, representing the Council or conducting the business of the office to which they were elected. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure high standards of ethics and conduct are maintained and that councillors treat everybody in an equal capacity and with respect, ensuring at all times that the integrity of the Council is not compromised in any way.

Complaints about councillors are considered initially by the Council's Monitoring Officer (who is also the Head of Legal Practice). When the Monitoring Officer receives a complaint about breach of the Code of Conduct, they consult one of two "Independent Persons" appointed by the Council. The role of the "Independent Persons" is to introduce external scrutiny of the complaints process. The Monitoring Officer can respond to a complaint, can commission a formal investigation or can refer it for consideration by the Council's Standards Sub-Committee. The Council's Standards Sub-Committee is made up of three Councillors.

Councillor Conduct Complaints, 2023-24

During 2023 -24 six complaints were received about Councillors.

One of these complaints was upheld with an apology provided and further training being undertaken by the Councillor. One complaint was settled by means of mediation. Three complaints were dismissed and the final complaint was concluded with no further action but a commitment to be cautious in future actions.

During 2022-23 the Council received four complaints about Councillors.

There were four complaints in 2021-22 and nine complaints in 2020-2021. To find out more about the Council's Code of Conduct visit our website or contact the Council's Monitoring Officer Tom Lewis: tom.lewis@3csharedservices.org