



Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Information Governance and Complaints Team

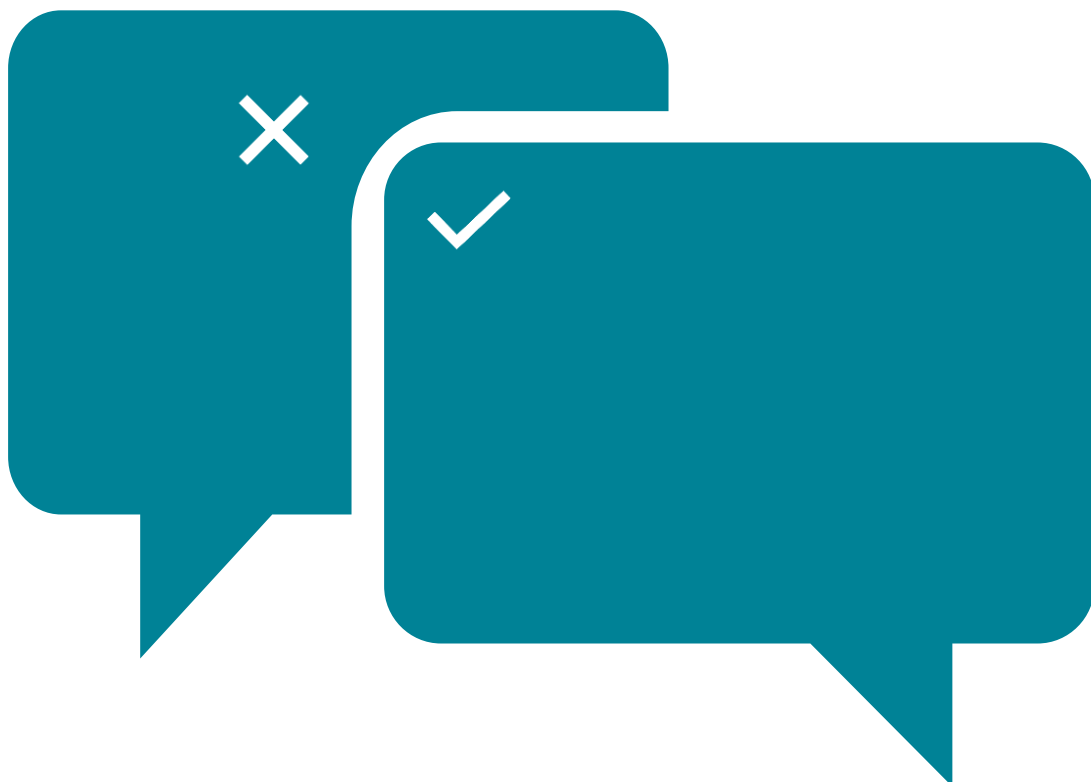


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1. Introduction

- 1.1 New Forest District Council ('the Council') is committed to providing residents, tenants and our communities with quality services. However, sometimes things do go wrong. We encourage people to tell us when this happens so we can put things right, explain what has happened, learn from our mistakes and improve our services.
- 1.2 We have a **Corporate Complaints Procedure** which we follow for complaints that are made to the Council. This process is managed by the Information Governance and Complaints Team.
- 1.3 Our approach to complaint handling is also in line with the Council's **Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 for people, place and prosperity** and our values: LEAF:
- **Learning**: we use complaints as an opportunity to learn from our mistakes.
 - **Empathy**: we show empathy to complainants.
 - **Ambition**: we have ambition to improve our services where it is identified that someone has not received the standard of service that they should have.
 - **Fairness**: we are fair to complainants and residents in our complaint handling.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to outline the complaints and compliments we have received during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, highlighting key themes, trends and volumes recognising that accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. The report also explains how we have performed against the required standards and includes case studies demonstrating learning from complaints received.

2. Complaint Handling Codes

Background

- 2.1 There are two Ombudsman services with jurisdiction over our complaint handling; The Housing Ombudsman for complaints from our tenants relating to the Council in its capacity as their landlord, and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman with jurisdiction over all other complaints.
- 2.2 The Housing Ombudsman has a statutory power, in accordance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, to issue a statutory code of practice and a statutory duty to monitor compliance with this code.
- 2.3 Accordingly, the Housing Ombudsman has issued a **statutory Complaint Handling Code**. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has also issued a **non-statutory Complaint Handling Code** which aligns closely with the Housing Ombudsman's code. Both codes took effect on 1 April 2024.

Self-Assessment

- 2.4 There is a requirement within both codes for us to carry out annual self-assessments to ensure our complaints procedure complies with the codes.
- 2.5 There is a further requirement in the Housing Ombudsman's code that this self-assessment is approved by our governing body (Cabinet), at least annually.
- 2.6 The self-assessments should also be published on the complaints section of our website. Our self-assessments against both codes are published here: **[Feedback, comments and complaints - New Forest District Council](#)**.

Annual complaints performance and service improvement report requirement

- 2.7 We must also produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge. This is the required report.
- 2.8 This year, the report has been approved by our newly appointed Members Responsible for Complaints ('MRCs'), acting on behalf of the Cabinet:
- Housing and Homelessness Portfolio Holder – Housing complaints
 - Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder – All other complaints
- 2.9 The MRC's formal response to this report, on behalf of Cabinet, will be published, alongside this report, here: **[Feedback, comments and complaints - New Forest District Council](#)**
- 2.10 In future years the complaints performance and service improvement report and Cabinet's response will be approved by full Cabinet.

Housing Ombudsman Submission

- 2.11 The Housing Ombudsman requires that we submit a copy of our self-assessment, annual complaints performance and service improvement report and Cabinet's response to the report to it by 30 June 2024.

3. Our procedure

3.1 We currently operate a 2 stage **Corporate Complaints Procedure** for all complaints.

3.2 The process followed since 1 April 2024 is set out below:

Stage	Responsible Officer	Steps and Timescales
1	<p>Service Manager (in consultation with Assistant Director/Strategic Director as applicable).</p> <p>The Assistant Director or Strategic Director may personally deal with a complaint at stage 1 at their discretion.</p>	<p>Complaint received.</p> <p>Complaint acknowledged within 5 working days by the Information Governance and Complaints Team. This acknowledgement will set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcome the complainant is seeking. Complainant informed of officer dealing with complaint and expected response date.</p> <p>Complainant requested to clarify complaint and desired outcome if this is not clear.</p> <p>Stage 1 response sent within 10 working days of the acknowledgement advising the complainant of the right to escalate the complaint by contacting the Information Governance and Complaints Team (complaints@nfdc.gov.uk). The response will also advise the complainant of their right to escalate their complaint to the relevant Ombudsman when they have exhausted this Procedure.</p>
2	<p>Monitoring Officer on behalf of the Chief Executive.</p>	<p>Request to escalate complaint received.</p> <p>Escalation request acknowledged within 5 working days by the Information Governance and Complaints Team. This acknowledgement will set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcome the complainant is seeking. Complainant informed of officer dealing with complaint and expected response date.</p> <p>Stage 2 response sent within 20 working days of the acknowledgement advising the complainant that they have completed this Procedure, and they are entitled to refer their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or, for Housing Complaints (by Council tenants/ leaseholders about the Council as their landlord), the Housing Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied.</p>

- 3.3 These stages and timescales meet the requirements of the codes.
- 3.4 Our procedure previously had 3 stages for non-housing tenant complaints from residents and customers to the Council as the local authority. This was updated in November 2023 to the above 2 stage process for all complaints.
- 3.5 Prior to 1 April 2024, the timescales that were applicable for complaints were as follows for all stages:
- complaint acknowledged within **5 working days**.
 - response sent **15 working days** after acknowledgement.
- 3.6 This report covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and, therefore, includes where both a 3 stage process and 2 stage process were in operation for non-tenant complaints and where all complaints were required to be responded to within 15 working days after acknowledgement.
- 3.7 As a result of the new complaint handling codes, with effect from 1 April 2024, we have already taken the following action:



- We have updated our corporate complaints procedure to meet the requirements of the new codes, including the timescales.
- We have updated our acknowledgment processes to clearly set out for complainants what our understanding of their complaint, and the outcome they are seeking, is.
- We have introduced template letters to assist responders to complaints with covering all required information in their responses.

4. Structure

4.1 We recognise the importance of this report providing a clear picture of all our complaint handling. We have chosen to produce one report that covers all our service areas, which will go through one approval process and be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman in full. We have structured the analysis sections of this report as follows:


- All complaints (section 5)
- Complaints from tenants to the Council as its landlord (section 6)
- Complaints not accepted (section 7)
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures review (section 8)
- Learning (section 9)
- Ombudsman decisions (section 10)
- Compliments (section 11)
- Next steps for 2024/25 (section 12)

5. All complaints


Summary - 2023/2024

109
Complaints received


109 complaints received (compared with 96 in 2022/23 which is an increase of 13.5%)




More complaints upheld (58/53% compared to 36/38% in 2022/23)



Most common theme for complaints is quality of service (37%)




Increase in Landlord: Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management complaints (121% increase compared to 2022/23)



Decrease in Enforcement & Amenities complaints (40% decrease compared to 2022/23)



All complaints responded to within procedure timescales (this remains consistent with 2022/23)

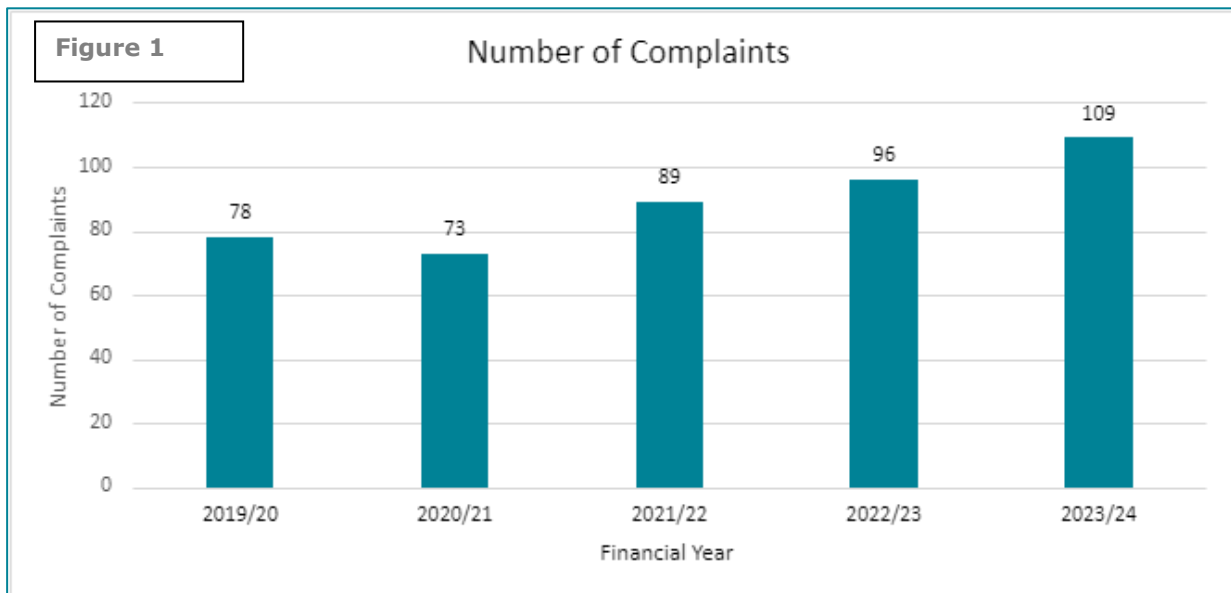


78% of complaints resolved at stage 1 (compared with 75% in 2022/23)

Analysis

Numbers

5.1 **Figure 1** below shows the total number of complaints received by year:



5.2 Between 2021/22 and 2022/23 there was an increase in complaints received of 7.9%, compared to an increase of 13.5% between 2022/23 and 2023/24.

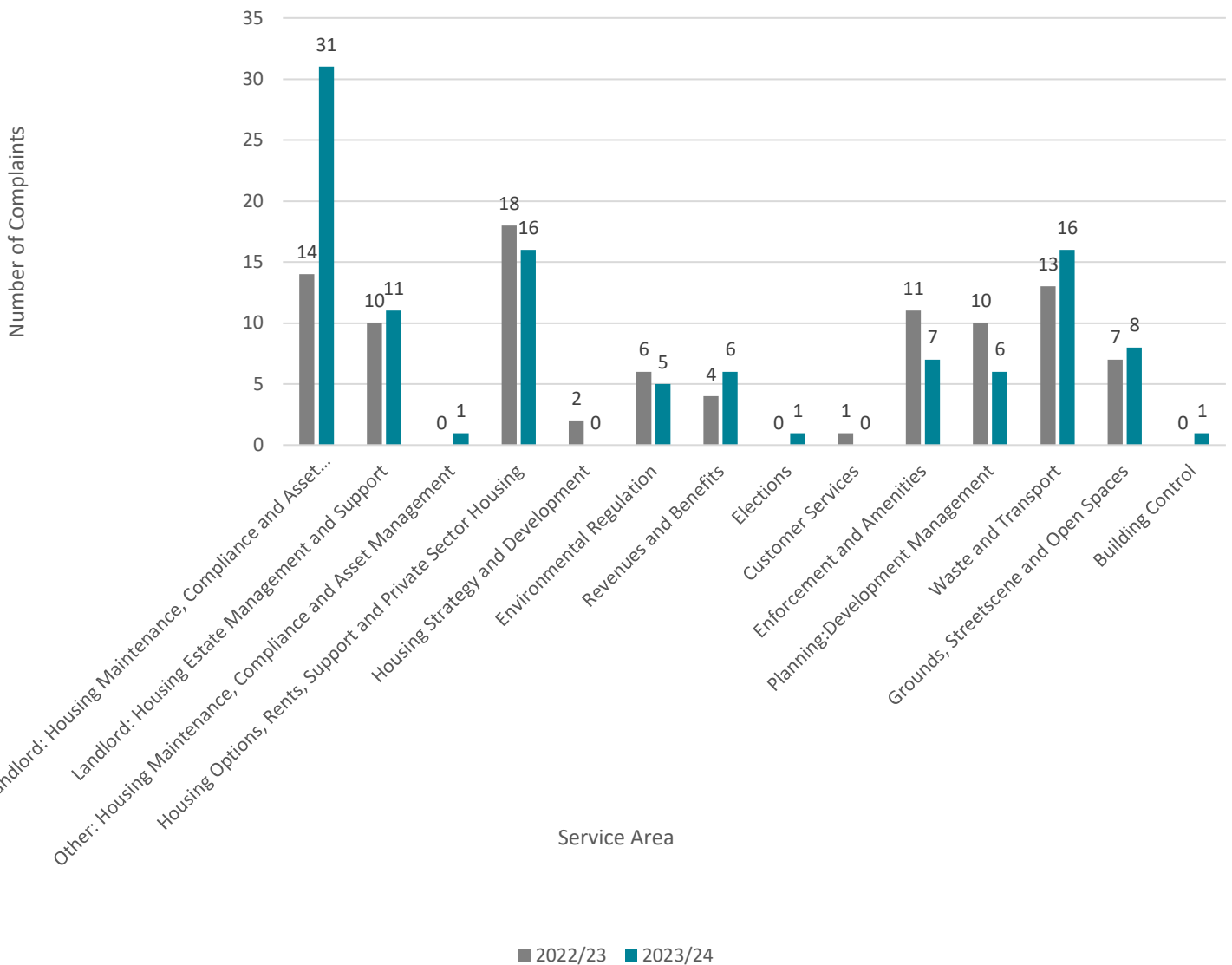
5.3 Whilst there was a small reduction in the number of complaints received in 2020/21, the general trend over the past 5 years has been an increase in number. The percentage increase in complaints between 2019/20 and 2023/24 is 40%.

5.4 As a district Council we provide a wide variety of services to approximately 175,800 residents. In this context, 109 complaints are only a fraction of the number of resident interactions occurring each year.

5.5 **Figure 2** overleaf shows the total number of complaints received for 2023/24 compared to 2022/23, broken down by service area:

Figure 2

Comparison of complaints received by service area for 2022/23 and 2023/24



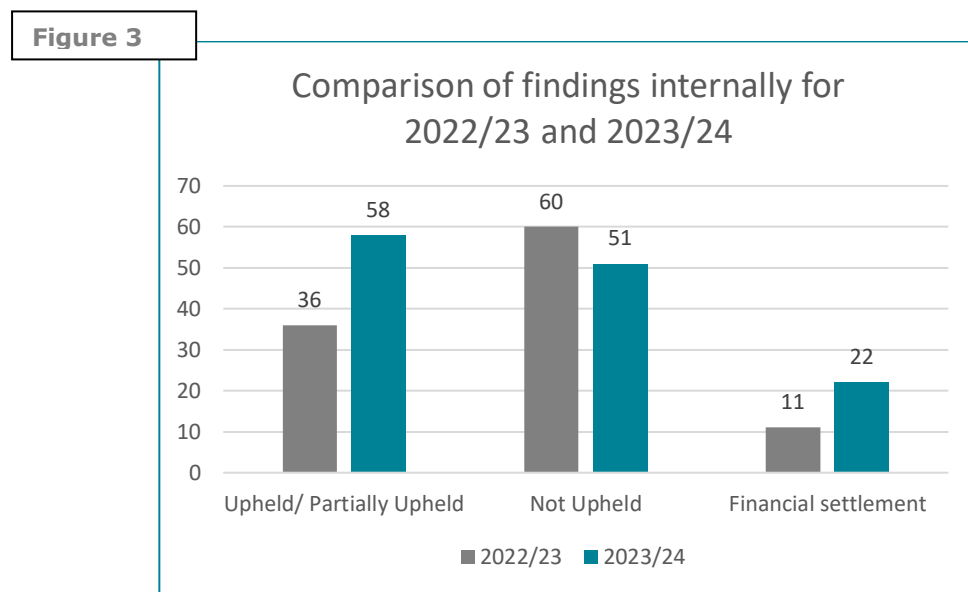
5.6 The service area with the largest increase in complaints is Landlord: Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management. There has been an increase in complaints for this service of 121%. The reason for this is explored in section 7 of this report. There was one complaint dealt with by Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management which was not from a tenant, so this has been included in **Figure 2** separately.

5.7 Most other service areas have seen similar numbers of complaints for 2023/24 compared to 2022/23.

5.8 The two service areas with the largest fall in complaints between 2022/23 and 2023/24 are Enforcement and Amenities (40% reduction) and Planning: Development Management (36% reduction).

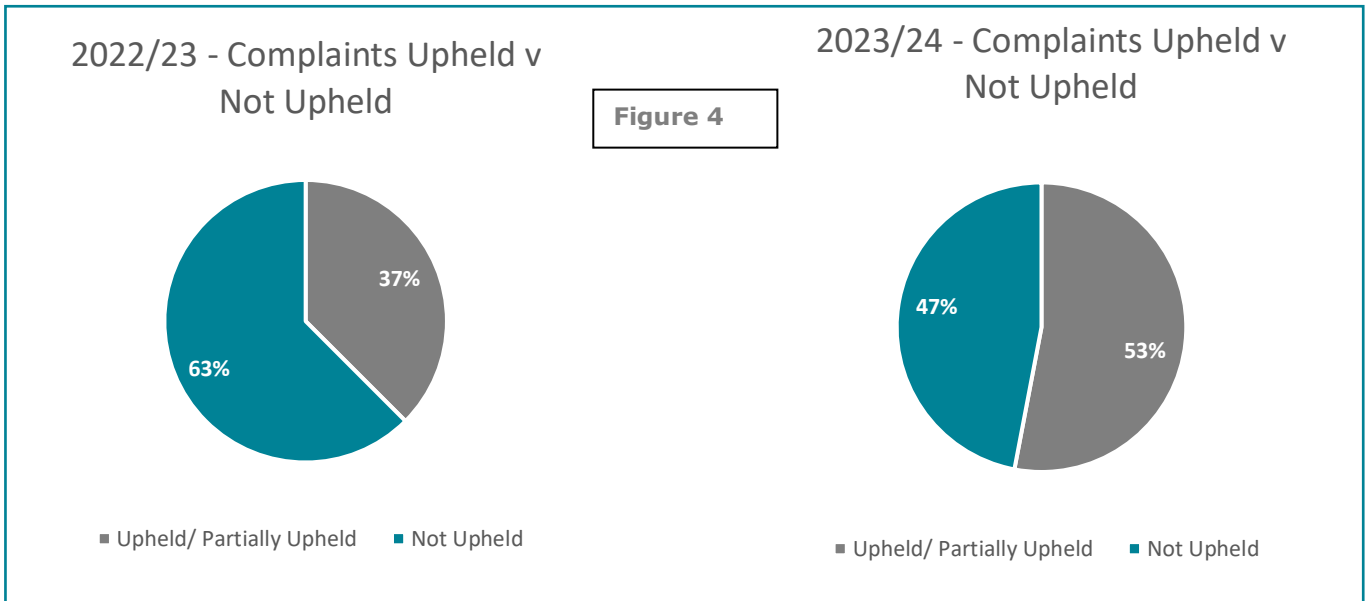
Complaint findings

5.9 **Figure 3** below shows the number of complaints that were upheld or not upheld for 2022/23 compared to 2023/24. It also shows the number of complaints that resulted in some form of financial settlement (including goodwill/time and trouble payments and compensation for losses).



5.10 There has been an increase in the number of complaints that were either upheld or partially upheld between 2022/23 and 2023/24.

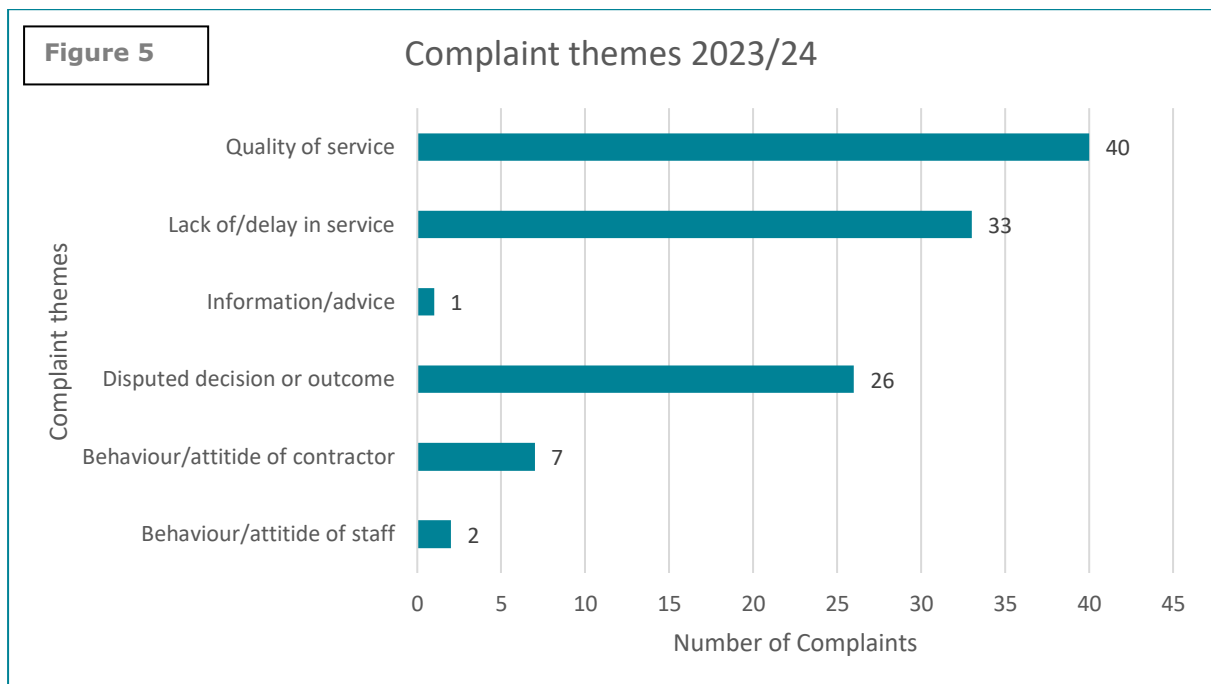
5.11 **Figure 4** overleaf shows the percentage of complaints that have been upheld/ partially upheld and not upheld in 2022/23 and 2023/24.



5.12 There has been an increase in the proportion of complaints that have been upheld/partially upheld in 2023/24 (53%) compared to 2022/23 (37%).

Themes

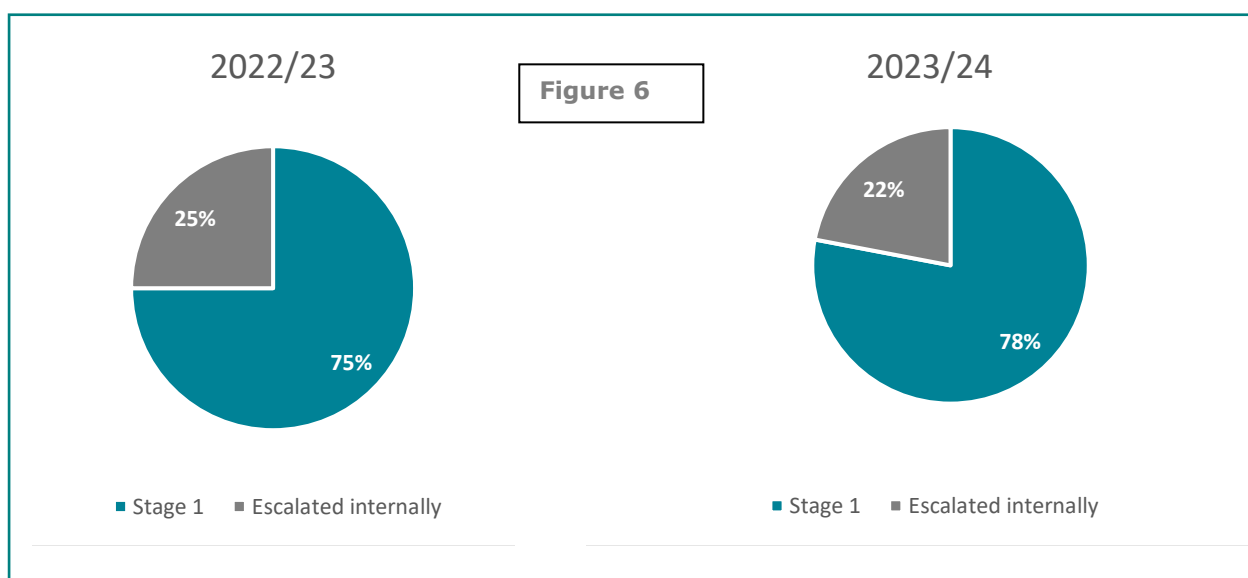
5.13 **Figure 5** below shows the complaints we have received in 2023/24 categorised by theme.



5.14 The most common type of complaint has related to the quality of service received (37%), followed by lack of/delay in service (30%) and disputed decision/outcome (24%). There are some instances where complaints relate to more than one issue, but these have been categorised based on the most prevalent theme.

Stages

5.15 **Figure 6** below shows the percentage of complaints that were either resolved at stage 1 or escalated to stage 2/stage 3* of the corporate complaints procedure (*as explained in paragraph 3.4 above, we had 3 stages for non-housing tenant complaints until November 2023).



5.16 The extent to which complaints escalate through the corporate complaints procedure is an important measure, as it is preferable to find resolutions for complainants at the earliest possible stage. As shown in **Figure 6**, the majority of complaints (78%) were resolved at stage 1 and therefore only 22% of all complaints were escalated internally, compared with 25% in 2022/23.

Timescales

5.17 100% of complaints were responded to within the timescales included in the corporate complaints procedure that was applicable in 2023/24 (15 working days after acknowledgement or with an agreed extension).

6. Complaints from tenants

Summary - 2023/2024

42
Complaints received


42 complaints received (compared with 24 in 2022/23 which is an increase of 75%)




All complaints responded to within procedure timescales (this remains consistent with 2022/23)



Increase in Landlord: Housing Maintenance, Compliance & Asset Management complaints (121% increase compared to 2022/23)



Most common theme for tenant complaints is quality of service (52%)



Relatively small increase in Landlord: Estate Management & Support complaints (10% increase compared to 2022/23)



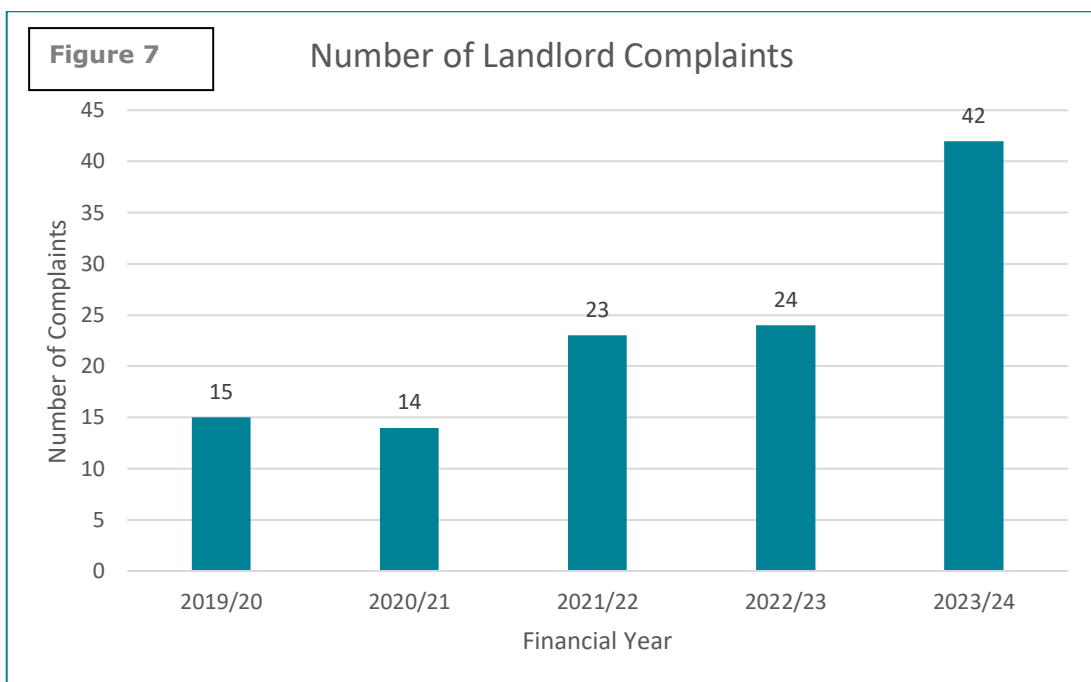
Common underlying causes of complaints are damp and mould and ASB

Analysis

Numbers

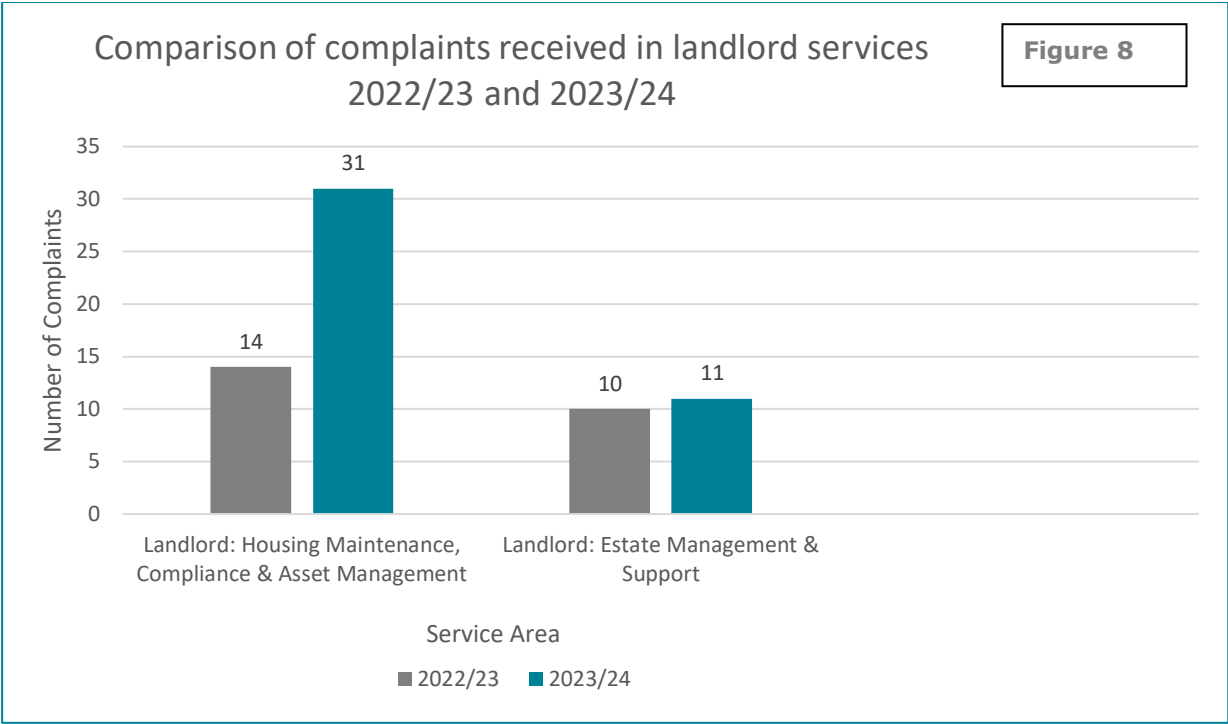
6.1 As of the end of 2023/24 we had 5,285 Council properties that we either owned or managed and let to tenants.

6.2 **Figure 7** below shows the total number of complaints received by year from tenants to us in our capacity as their landlord:



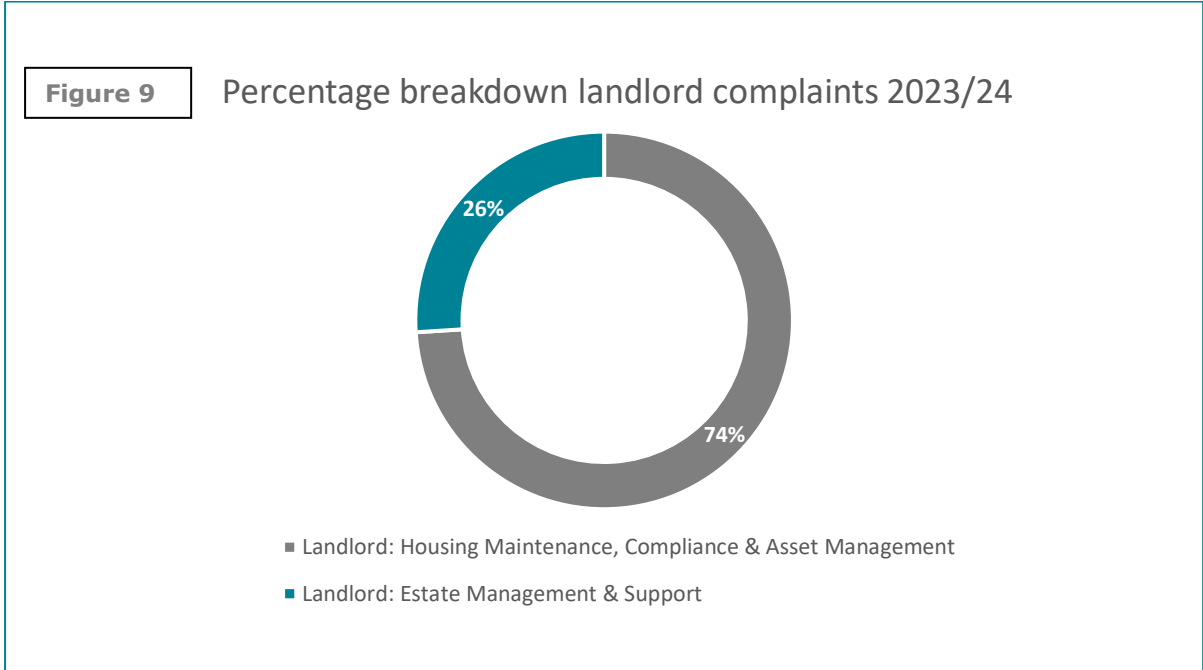
6.3 Between 2022/23 and 2023/24 there was an increase in complaints received from tenants of 75%. The Council has 5,285 properties. The total number of tenant complaints in 2023/24 amounts to 7.9 complaints per 1,000 homes.

6.4 **Figure 8** overleaf breaks down the landlord services complaints received by service area.



6.5 As outlined in section 5 above, the area where we have seen the largest increase in complaints relates to Landlord: Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management with a 121% increase between 2022/23 and 2023/24. In comparison, Landlord: Estate Management & Support complaints increased by 10% in the same time period.

6.6 The percentage breakdown of complaints relating to landlord services for 2023/24 is shown in **Figure 9** below:



6.7 To future proof the Housing service and provide the necessary resources an aspirational and customer focussed service deserves, a housing restructure is being incrementally implemented from May 2024, which builds on previous organisational improvements. This is summarised below:



- Creation of a Performance and Insight Team to capture key performance data (including complaint data) to inform service improvements.
- Created a new Tenant Engagement Manager position to lead change in how we work and communicate with, and listen, to tenants.
- The Council's Landlord: Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management service has been split into two sections: Housing Major Projects and Housing Maintenance Programmes and Services which each now have separate service managers. An aim of this change will be to improve service delivery to tenants and focus resources on disrepair, complaints, risk and compliance.
- Complaint learning and performance data is fed into a Housing service improvement plan.

6.8 Housing services have taken positive steps during 2023/24 to promote and encourage tenant complaints which may have contributed to the increase in complaints received. These actions are set out below:



- They have supported and promoted the government's 'Make Things Right' campaign. This was included in Housing services' tenant magazine Hometalk (winter 2023), included in posters in information offices and community hubs, added to the Council's all residents informational email, promoted through social media, added to Housing staff's email signatures and included in annual compliance letters to tenants for gas and electrical inspections.
- They have promoted the Housing Ombudsman Service and our complaints procedure in the summer and winter editions of Hometalk.
- They have increased their tenant engagement activities and actively encourage complaints to be raised when dissatisfaction has been expressed.

6.9 Sections 7 and 8 of this report consider how there may be further improvements to be made to make sure that all complaints are formally recorded.

Complaint findings

6.10 **Figure 10** below shows the number of tenant complaints that were upheld or not upheld for 2022/23 compared to 2023/24. It also shows the number of complaints that resulted in some form of financial settlement (including goodwill/time and trouble payments and compensation for losses). Figures **11** and **12** show how these total figures are broken down between Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management and Estate Management & Support.

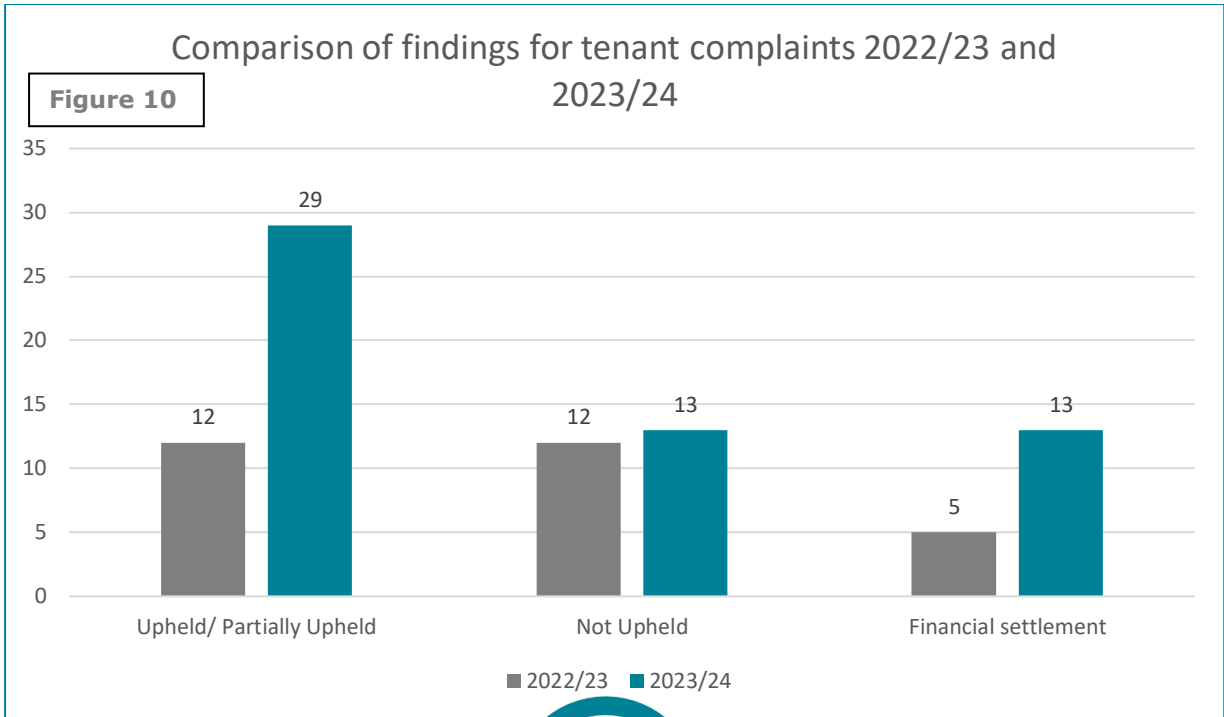


Figure 11

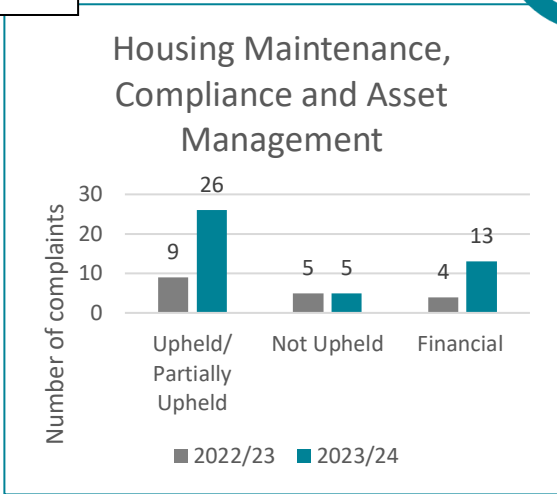
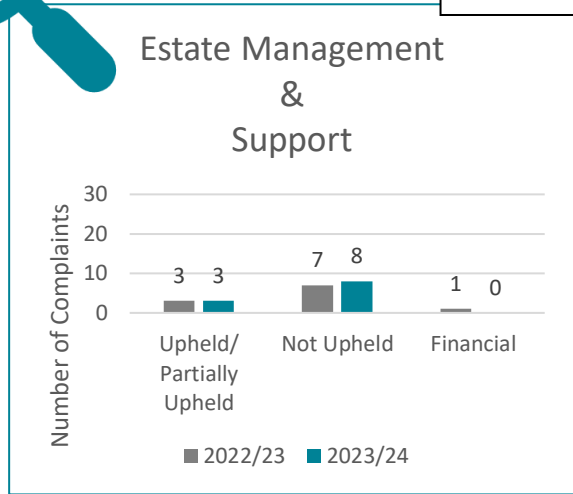
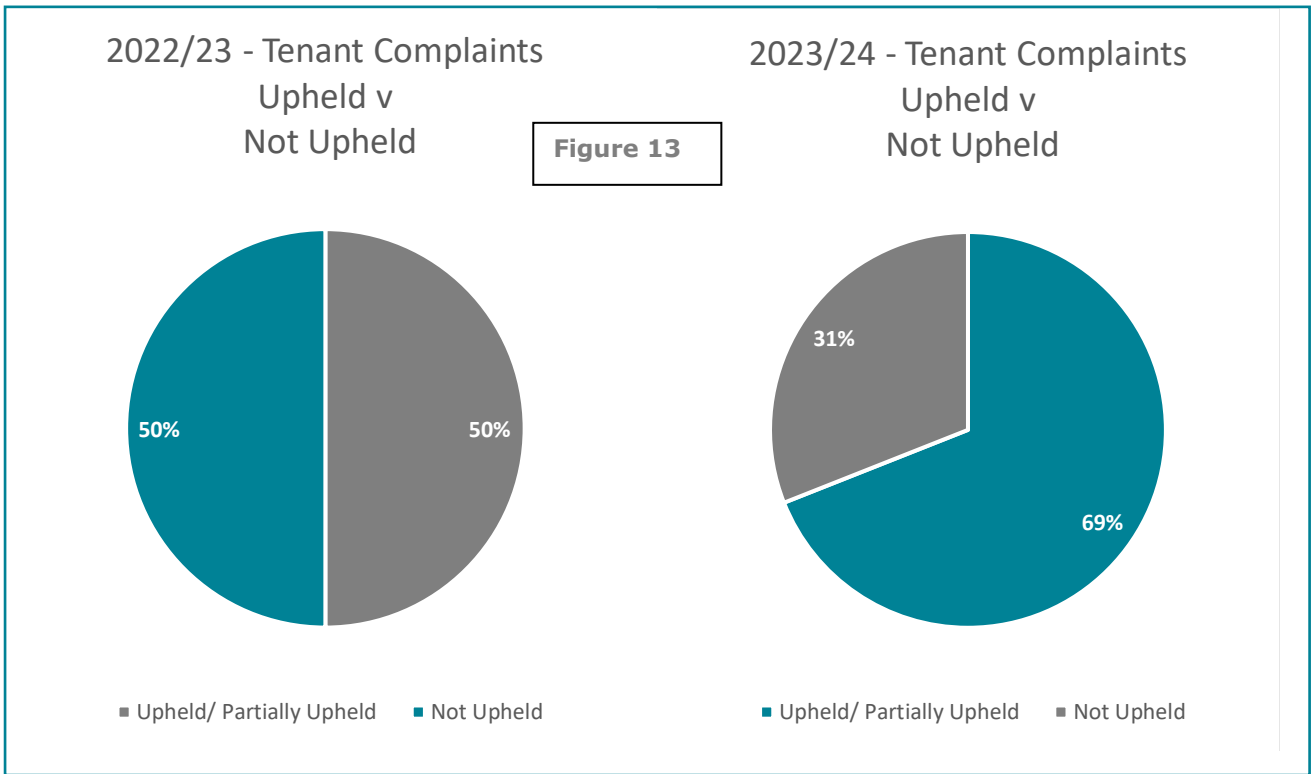


Figure 12



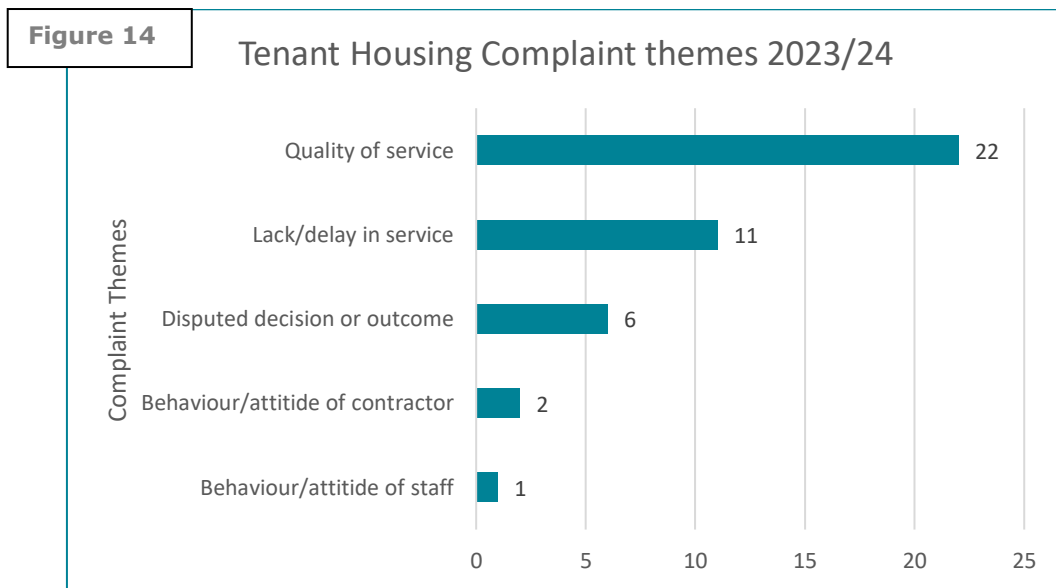
6.11 **Figure 13** below shows the percentage of tenant complaints that have been upheld/ partially upheld and not upheld in 2022/23 and 2023/24.



6.12 There has been an increase in the proportion of tenant complaints that have been upheld/partially upheld in 2023/24 (69%) compared to 2022/23 (50%).

Themes

6.13 **Figure 14** below shows the tenant complaints we have received in 2023/24 categorised by theme.

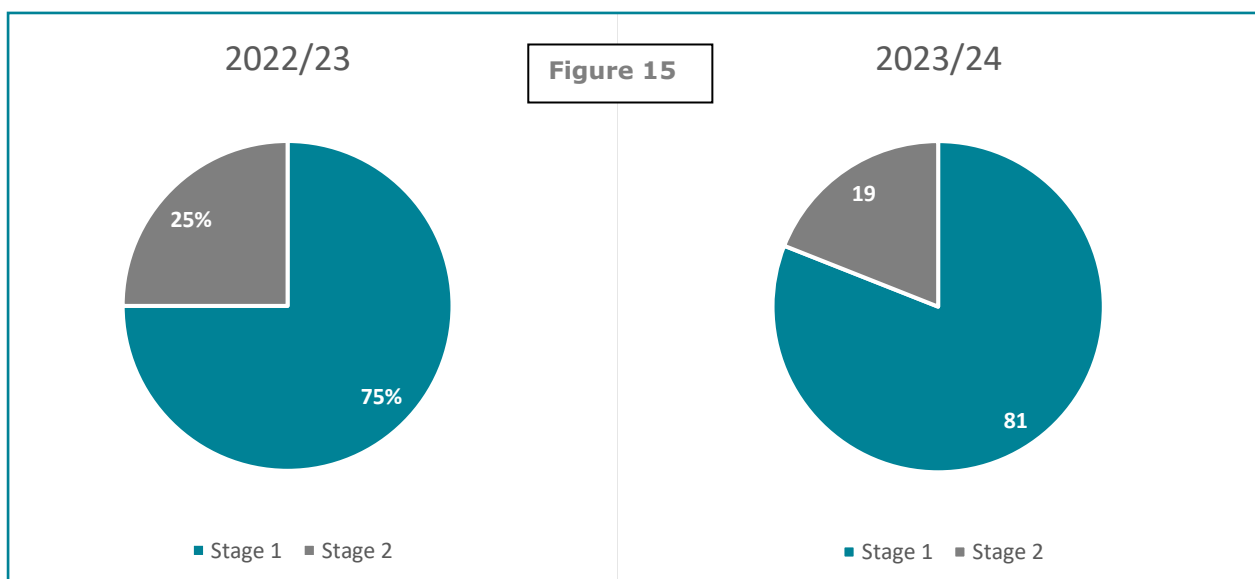


6.14 The most common type of tenant complaint has related to the quality of service received (52%), followed by lack of/delay in service (26%) and disputed decision/outcome (14%).

6.15 When reviewing the underlying cause of complaints made by tenants regarding Landlord: Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management matters it was identified that damp/mould was the underlying cause of 9 of these complaints (28%). Whilst Anti-Social Behaviour issues were the underlying cause of 6 complaints (55%) made by tenants regarding Landlord: Estate Management and Support matters.

Stages

6.16 **Figure 15** below shows the percentage of tenant complaints that were either resolved at stage 1 or escalated to stage 2 of the corporate complaints procedure.



6.17 The majority of tenant complaints in 2023/24 (81%) were resolved at stage 1 (only 19% of all complaints, were escalated to stage 2, compared with 25% in 2022/23).

Timescales

6.18 100% of complaints from tenants were responded to within the timescales included in the corporate complaints procedure that was applicable in 2023/24 (15 working days after acknowledgement or with an agreed extension).

7. Complaints not accepted

- 7.1 Our corporate complaints procedure sets out what will not be considered as a corporate complaint.
- 7.2 This includes, but is not limited to, complaints against councillors, anonymous complaints, cases where other legal rights of appeal/review exist, or cases where we or the complainant has started legal proceedings.
- 7.3 Where we decide that a complaint cannot be dealt with as a corporate complaint, we will let the complainant know and advise them of their right to take that decision to the relevant Ombudsman.
- 7.4 An example of a complaint that was not accepted in 2023/24 related to the issuing of a fixed penalty notice for fly tipping offences. The complainant was advised that as the complaint related to a live criminal enforcement case, we would be unable to take it through our complaints process.
- 7.5 We also have complaints that are not dealt with as corporate complaints because they are service requests. Our procedure includes the following regarding service requests:

'Service requests where an individual is requiring the Council to take action to put something right.

- Such service requests will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.*
- Where an individual expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, a complaint will be raised. Efforts to address the service request will continue.'*

7.6 Some service requests are received by the Information Governance and Complaints Team for allocation to the relevant service, but many service requests will be received directly by services.

7.7 We have identified some improvements required to how we deal with complaints that are not accepted and service requests:

**ACTION
2024/25**



- We will improve our record keeping for complaints that are not accepted.
- We will improve our record keeping for service requests.
- We will work with services to ensure that service requests are handled consistently, recorded, monitored and reviewed and that learning from service requests is incorporated into service delivery.
- We will consider introducing a service request standards of service document to clarify responsibilities, expectations and timescales for response.

8. Tenant Satisfaction Measures review

Background

- 8.1 As a registered provider of social housing, we are required to generate, report and publish tenant satisfaction measures ('TSMs') which are a core set of performance measures issued by the Regulator of Social Housing ('the Regulator'). The aim of the TSMs is to provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance and inform the Regulator about compliance.
- 8.2 The Council's response to the TSMs is either generated through management information or through tenant perception surveys which were conducted on our behalf by TFL Research Limited on a sample of 576 tenants.
- 8.3 The TSMs are separate to this complaint performance and service improvement report. However, there are three TSMs which relate specifically to complaint handling. These are:

Code	Issue	How
CH01	Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	Generated from management information
CH02	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	Generated from management information
TP09	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	Collected from tenant perception surveys

- 8.4 The Council's first TSM submission relates to the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024; the same period covered by this report and will be viewable online from 8 July 2024: [Tenant engagement and participation - New Forest District Council](#)

8.5 We recognise the importance of the TSMs that relate to complaint handling and have chosen to incorporate them into this report as part of our performance and service improvement considerations. We are committed to making improvements where the TSMs have highlighted areas of low satisfaction.

TSM results

8.6 TSM CH01 shows that the number of stage 1 complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year per 1,000 homes is 7.9 and the number of stage 2 complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year per 1,000 homes is 1.5.

8.7 TSM CH02 shows that the proportion of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales is 100%. This relates to our corporate complaints procedure timescales in operation during the relevant period as indicated at paragraph 3.5 above on the basis that the Complaint Handling Code that was applicable during this time permitted us to deviate from the standard timescales.

8.8 TSM TP09 provided an overall average satisfaction level of 29.1% to our complaint handling. The benchmark average satisfaction level provided by TFL Research Limited based on 84 Registered Providers only, is 36.6%.

8.9 The question for TP09 included the mandatory wording *'Have you made a complaint to [your landlord] in the last 12 months?'* with the option of *'yes'* or *'no'* answers.

8.10 If the answer was *'yes'*, the mandatory following question was *'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with [your landlord]'s approach to complaints handling?'* with the response options of:

- '- Very satisfied*
- Fairly satisfied*
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*
- Fairly dissatisfied*
- Very dissatisfied'*

8.11 Out of the sample of 576 tenants, 103 answered that they had made a complaint to the Council in the last 12 months. It was these 103 respondents that provided the satisfaction level of 29.1%.

Analysis

8.12 Tenants surveyed were able to choose whether to disclose their personal information. A small sample of those who did choose to disclose their personal information (and answered yes to the question of whether they had made a complaint in the last 12 months) was reviewed. Of that sample, none had been recorded by the Council as having made a corporate complaint that was dealt with through our complaints procedure. In addition, the total number of complaints recorded by us from all tenants for the year 2023/24 is 42.

8.13 This indicates that tenants are perceiving that they are making a 'complaint', of some description, which could be an expression of dissatisfaction, but that the Council is not always recording or treating this as a formal complaint. We have identified, in paragraph 7.7 above, actions to try and improve how service requests are dealt with which may assist with this going forward.

8.14 Therefore, there is a note of caution applied to this result. However, Council Officers still deem the feedback relevant and important, and there is a firm service commitment to address the feedback.

8.15 As a result of the TSMs, the Tenant Engagement Team facilitated the Tenancy Involvement Group carrying out a valuable scrutiny exercise of the handling of tenant complaints which identified some recommendations to improve this.

8.16 It is also recognised that if the tenants surveyed for the purposes of the TSMs are experiencing this issue, this could also be an issue for other complainants outside of our tenants.

8.17 In addition to the learning points relating to the recording and handling of service requests, included at paragraph 7.7 above, we will take the following action:

**ACTION
2024/25**



- We will introduce training for all staff on complaint handling, recognising complaints, the difference between service requests and complaints and the importance of learning from complaints.
- We will provide service specific training for services most likely to receive or deal with complaints, including Housing Services and Customer Services.
- We will implement a feedback form for complainants to complete following receiving a stage 1 or stage 2 corporate complaint response.
- We will also carefully consider further recommendations from the Tenancy Involvement Group on how to improve complaint handling.

9. Learning

9.1 We recognise the importance of learning from complaints. Below are some examples of service improvements that have been made as a result of complaints dealt with in 2023/24:

Case Study 1 – Housing Options, Rents, Support and Private Sector Housing

The complaint

A complaint was made regarding delays with the Council requesting medical evidence needed to assess a joint housing application that was made in the name of a grandparent and grandchild where the grandchild would be moving in with the grandparent as their carer.

What did we do?

We accepted that there was a 3 month delay in requesting the medical evidence needed to assess the application. We apologised for this and confirmed that this learning would be incorporated into future applications. This was raised by the relevant manager at a team meeting and regular team meetings now include agenda items to consider different sections of the Allocations Policy to increase learning and awareness of different requirements. Checklists for evidence required were also reviewed.

What is the ongoing service improvement?

Raising awareness of policy requirements, particularly relating to unique circumstances, will reduce the likelihood of delays in requesting required evidence to assess a housing application.

Case Study 2 – Grounds, Streetscene and Open Spaces

The complaint

A complaint that the Council partially removed a boundary tree in the joint ownership of the Council and the complainant, without the complainant's consent. The complaint also referred to the nature of the works being different to what was originally explained.

What did we do?

The proposed works were explained verbally to the complainant. However, we have updated our procedures to include the requirement for the nature of works affecting trees in joint ownership to be set out in writing and for written consent to be obtained.

What is the ongoing service improvement?

Setting out the scope of works in writing and obtaining written consent will avoid confusion or challenge in the future.

Case Study 3 – Landlord: Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management

The complaint

A complaint was received relating to unsatisfactory roof repair works leading to water ingress to the property.

What did we do?

The repair work was rectified, and an apology provided to the complainant. This highlighted an issue with the roof of properties of a similar construction which the Council has now incorporated into a planned programme of works to proactively resolve the issue.

What is the ongoing service improvement?

The Council will be proactively managing a known property defect, rather than waiting and responding to individual repair requests/issues raised.

Case Study 4 – Other: Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management

The complaint

A complaint was received from a private resident regarding lack of consultation and consideration of impact on neighbouring properties of planned maintenance work to a Council property.

What did we do?

We apologised for failings in the management of previous works. Steps have been taken to formally assess upcoming significant projects to include a neighbour engagement strategy and management procedures to minimise impact.

What is the ongoing service improvement?

Early engagement with neighbouring properties for a significant project and early consideration of potential impacts will manage the expectations of, and minimise disruption to, neighbours.

9.2 To improve how learning from complaints is captured and implemented into meaningful service improvements, we plan to take the following action going forward:

**ACTION
2024/25**



- We will ask complaint responders to clearly identify where a complaint has been upheld and what the learning from the complaint is.
- We will update how we record complaints to improve how we capture and follow up learning and to assist with reporting.
- We will hold quarterly meetings with senior managers to consider complaint trends, complaints decided, learning identified and service improvements.
- We will support services with the development of any proposed service improvement plans.

10.Ombudsman decisions

Summary - 2023/2024



Right to escalate

10.1 If complainants are not satisfied with our response to their complaint, when they have exhausted our internal corporate complaints procedure, they can escalate their complaint to either the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or, for tenants, the Housing Ombudsman.

10.2 Both Ombudsman services will generally not investigate complaints unless the complainant has completed our internal procedure. However, complainants can contact the relevant Ombudsman at any stage during their complaint.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Annual review letter

10.3 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman provides us with an annual review letter each year in July which includes a summary of complaint statistics for complaints which have escalated to them. This covers the preceding financial year.

10.4 We have not yet received the annual letter which covers the period this report relates to: 2023/24.

10.5 Our previous annual review letters are published on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s website: [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - New Forest District Council Annual Reviews](#).

10.6 Our performance is also viewable on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s website: [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - New Forest District Council Performance](#)

Investigations and findings

10.7 We are not always aware of every complaint or enquiry that is made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

10.8 Our records show that there have been 8 complaints decided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2023/24 related to the Council. Of these, 7 were closed after initial enquiries, and 1 was subject to an investigation. Some of these complaints will have been considered by us in the 2022/23 period.

10.9 A summary of the complaint that was investigated is set out below:

Service	Details	Ombudsman Decision	Ombudsman reference
Planning: Development Management	Mr B complains that the Council wrongly and unlawfully served a temporary stop notice regarding his short-term campsite. Mr B says the Council failed to enter into serious discussions with him before serving the notice. As such, the Council failed to act in accordance with government guidance and its own constitution, and failed to have regard to his human rights. Mr B has also complained the Council has not acted fairly because it is encouraging other ‘pop-up campsites’. Mr B says the Council’s failures has caused him financial hardship.	There was no fault when the Council decided to serve a temporary stop notice on Mr B to suspend the use of his land as a campsite.	23 000 620

Housing Ombudsman

Performance report

10.10 The Housing Ombudsman publishes individual landlord performance reports for landlords with 5 or more findings for a particular financial year. These reports are available on the Housing Ombudsman's website: [Housing Ombudsman - Landlords Archive](#)

10.11 The Housing Ombudsman has not yet published its reports for 2023/24, so the information available on its website relates to 2022/23. As we had no determinations made by the Housing Ombudsman in the period 2022/23 there is no report relating to the Council currently published on the Housing Ombudsman's website.

Investigations and findings

10.12 As with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, we are not always aware of every complaint or enquiry that is made to the Housing Ombudsman.

10.13 Our records show that there have been no determinations made by the Housing Ombudsman during 2023/24 related to the Council.

11.Compliments

11.1 It is important to recognise the good work that officers of the Council do, as well as identifying where improvements can be made.

11.2 Managers and officers are encouraged to pass on compliments and positive feedback that has been received. A compliments inbox (compliments@nfdc.gov.uk) has been set up to assist with this.

11.3 Below are anonymised examples of the positive feedback that has been received by some of our service areas in the period 2023/24.

Landlord: Housing Maintenance, Compliance and Asset Management

“I just wanted to say the lady who cleaned xx this morning was an absolute gem. She went above and beyond with cleaning the ovens and making sure every area of the building was clean. She also very kindly helped me out with some rubbish I left last week xx. This helped me out so much and I am very grateful. You can just tell she takes pride in her work!”

“xx advised that the engineer was lovely, she mentioned he had visited her before and he is always professional”

“xx To say thank you for the prompt service we received today from xx who called to fix our back kitchen door problem. We have met xx on a previous occasion and to say what a delightful gentleman he is to have in your home. With very best regards”

“Tenant called to thank xx for 2 OOH visits, one to her and one to a friend, in the last week. She said he arrived very promptly, resolved the problem quickly and was polite and professional throughout. Very happy with the service”

"Tenant called wanted to say what a great service and she has experienced from the hub to the gas man coming. Really happy and ... service for tenants is really high standard"

"Resident rang solely to say thank you to xx who helped to arrange appointment for first visit of the day for garage works... Whilst the garage needs another visit to complete the work, she wanted to pass thanks to xx for working to resolve the issues and it 'had worked brilliantly'"

Landlord: Estate Management and Support

"Thank you xx for your help, and yes we are both over the moon"

"That is good news thank you so much for your help"

"Thank you for all you have done to make living in xx a better place, the peace and quiet is lovely and being able to sleep at night is really lovely"

"Thanks for all your help and support. It has been really appreciated"

"Thank you for all your hard work and help. I do really appreciate everything you have done for my family and myself"

Housing Options, Rents, Support and Private Sector Housing

"... I really wanted to say a huge thank you...I can now move to the new apartment without any worries. NFDC has been wonderful but you have been marvellous. My thanks again"

"Just to say a 'thank you' to you, the Housing Options team, the Estates Management team, and all involved in helping move things forward for the xx family into their new home...They are so grateful. ...It's great to see agencies working together well like this."

"I just want to say a huge thank you from myself and my xx . You really helped , supported and listened all the way through this process. In what are such difficult times for so many out there right now. The pressure you both must be under couldn't bear thinking about . I just want to say thank you for your kindness all the way through . We have now finally got a home. And if it wasn't for your support I would never have got there. You really kept me and my xx going and gave us hope. You are both amazing . And I really appreciate everything you did. You both went above and beyond your job roles"

".... I genuinely am so appreciative of all the support you've given me since the moment you met me at the xx. No one has listened or been as understanding as you in my entire life, so to be heard and taken seriously is enough. Thanks for continuing to forward my concerns to the right people....Thanks as always"

".... I wanted to let you know how grateful I amI don't know if you realise how lovely you were to me on the phone that day and how I felt heard and genuinely listened to and how much of a difference this banding will have on our lives. I don't know if you get many "Thank you's" but I want you to know how thankful I am. Thank you so much for being the person that took on my appeal because I am forever grateful"

"... just took a call from xx. She wanted to call in and personally thank us for all the work towards her bathroom and how the team have assisted . She says she is over the moon and cannot stop looking at the bathroom. xx says the contractor was brilliant and the help we have provided her she is eternally grateful for, she has lived in the house for xx years all her life and doesn't want to leave so the bathroom is enabling that to happen"

Environmental and Regulation

"... xx phoned wanting to thank the team for putting his vehicle in for a test yesterday, He is extremely grateful..."

Revenues and Benefits

"...you have quite simply been an outstanding supporter of the xx over the past 5 years ... xx is further proof of your continued and consistent support. We xx know that you always go the extra yard for the citizens and clients of the xx and we so appreciate it. Your initial support for xx where your imagination and leadership has helped to start a wonderful initiative is a good example.

You are excellent at your job and I know that means you work longer hours and never stop "thinking about all the issues".
Many thanks."

Planning: Development Management

"...I would like to take this opportunity to thank you so much for all your help and support in this matter, the email chain shows how much effort you put in on our behalf, thank you..."

"... Thank you so much for taking the trouble and finding out all the information for me, much appreciated."

"...Thank you for all your assistance, which has been greatly appreciated."

"... Thank you very much for attending the opening ceremony of our new xx and your kind words about the event. Your roles in realising this new facility were crucial - and we are very grateful."

"... I wanted to drop a line to say what an exceptional job both xx and xx did at the xx Town meeting yesterday evening. There was a lot of engagement from the audience and the questions raised from very detailed to very basic, and thoughtful one offs to rapid-fire salvos. First xx and then xx dealt with them well, spending time on detail when valuable and shutting down points of confusion quickly, and managed to be open, straight and politic all at once. The presentation was well-structured and very thorough, and they represented a very professional side of NFDC. I thought you might be pleased to know. "

Grounds, Streetscene and Open Spaces

"... We would like to say a big thank you to you for your kind help in locating my xx grave at xx. You were so helpful and considerate and provided so much information."

"... Thank so much for your quick reply, it is much appreciated. Thank you also for explaining how the team works and what their objectives are...."

"... The wild flowers you planted on the corner of xx look absolutely fabulous - congratulations - 10/10".

"...I just wanted to say how delighted I was to see NFDC participate in no-mow- May. I'm proud to have a local council taking positive steps to address the decline in biodiversity. Keep It up."

“I just wanted to say how much I appreciate how the grass verges and other public realm areas in my neighbourhood have been left to grow. There are lots of daisies, buttercups, dandelions, meadow grass, clover and other species of flora in abundance and the invertebrates seem to be appreciating it too. It is so much better than in previous years when any sign of growth was mown down in its prime by commercial mowers. If we are to see a return to diverse ecology then it is small changes like this that will help us on our way”

Coastal

“... I wasn't aware that the toilet block was being replaced, but I would just like to say what an essential service it is down on the beach. It will be lovely to have a new block and thank you for the excellent state that the present one is kept in. I have always found that soap, loo roll and paper towels are in good supply and considering it's used by people who have been on the beach, it is pretty clean. I have never known it to smell. We all love to complain, but I thought you might like some positive feedback! Many thanks...”

“I just wanted to say that I think you and your team have handled a challenging and difficult situation very well”

11.4 We propose the following actions to improve how we capture compliments and positive feedback:

ACTION 2024/25



- We will raise awareness with staff about what to do if they receive a compliment.
- We will introduce an online form that will make it easier for members of the public to submit compliments and positive feedback.

12. Next steps for 2024/25

12.1 During 2023/24 the number of complaints received and upheld increased. It is vital that complaints are responded to adequately and in a timely manner and that our corporate complaints procedure works effectively for both complainants and staff.

12.2 Complaints serve as one of the Council's most important intelligence sources and learning from complaints, and developing meaningful service improvements, will drive our complaints handling going forward.

12.3 We recognise that there are changes we need to make, particularly relating to service request handling and increasing complainant satisfaction.

12.4 We have already made some required positive changes to our complaints handling processes and plan a number of actions for 2024/25 to improve our complaints handling. These are set out in this report.