Appendix 1

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Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Annual compliments and complaints report

Formal corporate compliments and complaints

2024-25

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1. Introduction

1.1. Every year the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) publishes an annual complaints and compliments report, which gives an overview of the compliments and complaints the council has received and how they were dealt with. RBWM welcomes customer feedback, as it helps to identify and address problems for customers, and can be used as insight to help improve services. This report, covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, details all compliments and complaints made by or on behalf of customers that are investigated under the:

- Adults Statutory Complaints process
- Children's Statutory Complaints process
- Children's Corporate Complaints process
- RBWM's Formal Corporate Complaints policy

1.2. Whilst local authorities are required under statute to report complaints submitted on adults and children's services, they are not required to produce an annual report on complaints relating to corporate activities. However, the compliments and complaints team produces an annual report detailing the volumes of all complaints and compliments, including insights into response rates and the reasons for complaints. This allows the council to assess how residents experience the council in its entirety and can inform service improvement. The annual compliments and complaints report is discussed and considered by the Executive Leadership Team and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.3. This report provides an overall summary of the contacts into RBWM but only provides detailed information relating to the formal corporate complaints and compliments. A separate report relating to children's and adults complaints has been produced and is available here Annual Report - 2023-24 Children's and Adults.

2. Summary of council-wide activity

2.1. In 2024/25 the council received 1,922 contacts from customers. This is an 14.8% increase in contacts to the compliments and complaints team from 2023/24 (1,674), which is attributed to an increase in both service requests and complaints which were later withdrawn, as compared to the previous year. There was a concerted effort during the year to log first time contact as service requests, to assist the services with tracking and monitoring. We therefore don't believe that these numbers represent an actual increase in service requests received, just an increase in those being formally logged.

2.2. The total volume of complaints progressed through Stage 1 of the complaints process was 258 in 2024/25, a decrease of 15.1% on 2023/24 (304). Stage 2 and 3 complaints are escalations of Stage 1 and are therefore not counted as new complaints.

2.3. Table 1 summarises the total volume of complaints at Stage 1 over the year, that were recorded by the complaints and compliments team; these have been broken down by outcome. The table contains a comparison to 2023/24 (in brackets):

Table 1: 2024/25 Summary of complaints at Stage 1 (2023/24 in brackets)

Process	No. of complaints	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	No Finding	In progress at the time of reporting	Responded to within timescales
Adults Statutory	33 ↓ (37)	13%↓ (23%)	22%↓ (31%)	63%↑ (46%)	3%↑ (0%)	1	84% ↑ (77%)
Children's Statutory	8 ⇔ (8)	13%⇔ (13%)	50%⇔ (50%)	38%⇔ (38%)	0%⇔ (0%)	0	88%↑ (63%)
Children's Corporate	69 ↓ (79)	16%↑ (12%)	36%↓ (40%)	48%↓ (49%)	0%⇔ (0%)	0	68%↓ (74%)
RBWM Formal Corporate	148 ↓ (180)	23%↑ (21%)	26%↓ (29%)	50%⇔ (50%)	1%↑ (0%)	7	72%↑ (56%)
Overall	258 ↓ (304)	19%↑ (18%)	29%↓ (33%)	51%↑ (49%)	1%↑ (0%)	8	73%↑ (64%)

Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) letter

2.4. The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) received 52 complaints and enquiries about the Council in 2024/25 (Appendix A), a decrease on 2023/24 (55). Table 2 details the breakdown as:

Table 2: LGSCO complaints received

Service	Complaints and enquiries
Adult Care Services	14
Corporate & Other Services	3
Education & Children's Services	13
Highways & Transport	8
Housing	8
Planning & Development	6
Total	**52**

2.5. Of these 52 complaints and enquiries received, the LGSCO went on to investigate 15. Appendix A shows the LGSCO's summary of these.

3. RBWM Formal Corporate complaints received

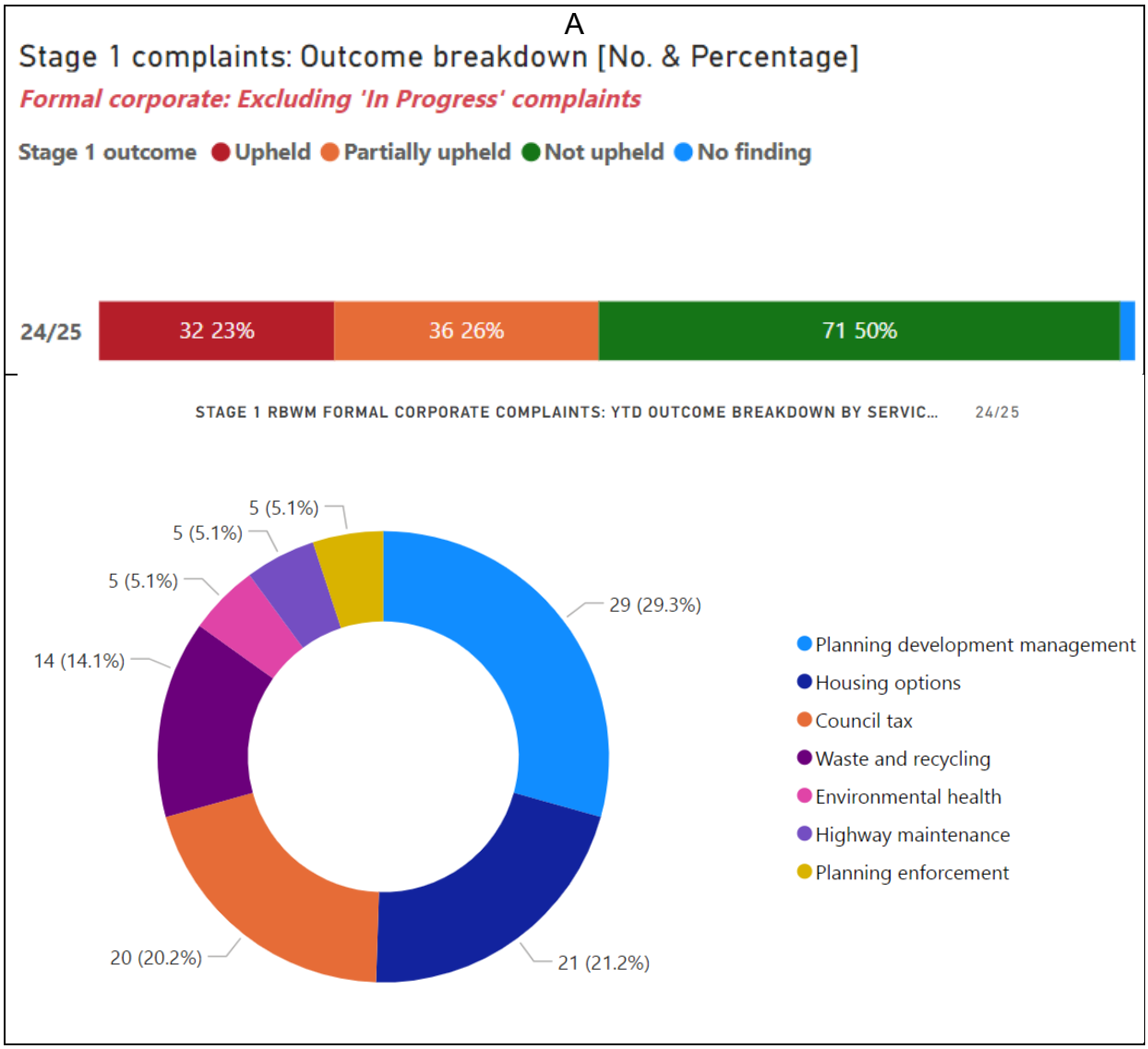
Stage 1 complaints received

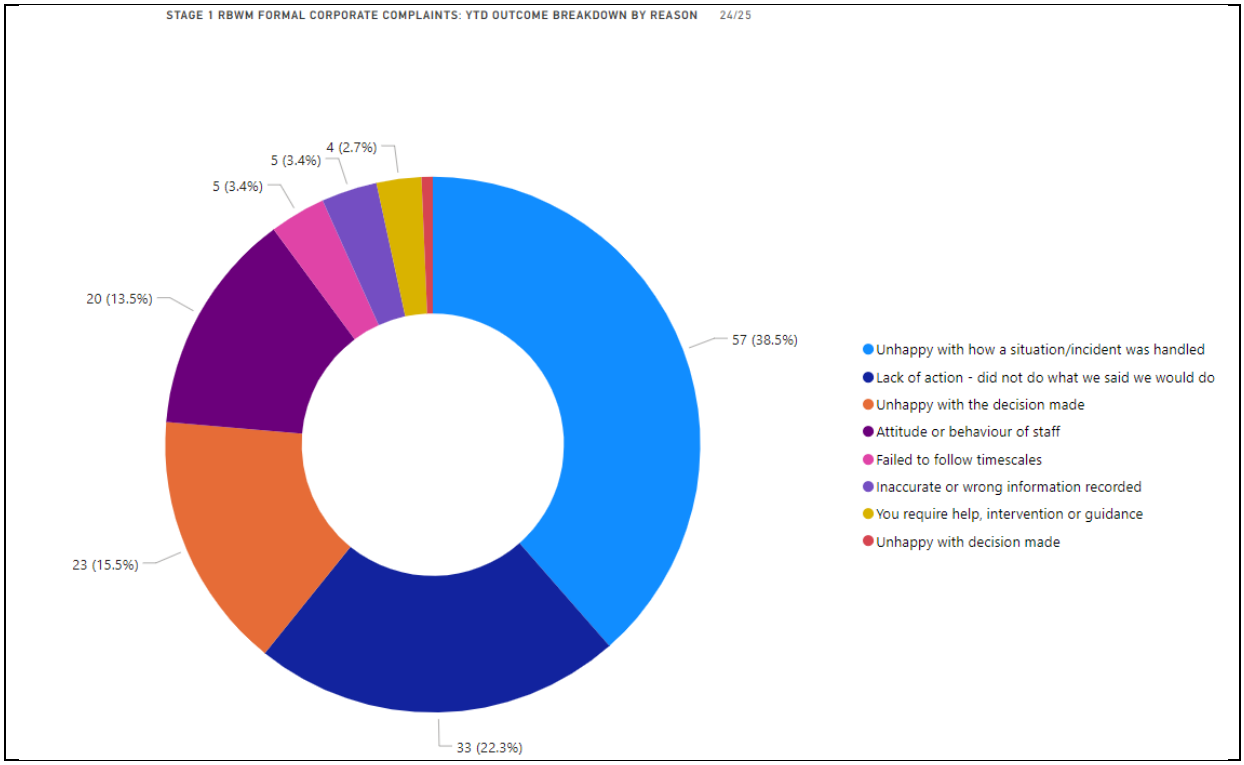
3.1. 148 formal corporate complaints were processed in 2024/25, which is a decrease of 17.7% (180) on 2023/24. Half of these Stage 1 complaints (50%) were not upheld.

3.2. The greatest number of complaints received for one service area were for Housing Options, at 21.2%. This is likely linked to a number of factors. Current demand for housing is high and availability of either social housing or temporary accommodation does not meet that demand.

3.3. Figure 1 shows the main reason for complaints was because a customer was 'unhappy with how a situation/incident was handled' (57, 38.5%).

Figure 1: Stage 1 complaints received





Stage 1 Outcomes

3.4 The greatest number of complaints were due to the customer being 'unhappy with how a situation/incident was handled' and 54.7% of these were either upheld (20.7%) or partially upheld (33.9%). It should be noted though that this category will include those who disagreed with a decision, which will not necessarily reflect whether or not the decision made was correct.

3.5 The complaint reason with the largest proportion of upheld outcomes (40.6%) was 'lack of action – did not do what we said we would do'. This reason is more likely to be actual fault so it would be expected that a greater proportion in this category would be upheld. As detailed in Figure 2, the areas with the most complaints that were upheld and partially upheld, across all complaint reasons, were Planning Development Management (1, 3.5% upheld and 11, 39.3% partially upheld), Council Tax (6, 30% upheld and 5, 25% partially upheld), Housing Options (7, 36.8% upheld and 2, 10.5% partially upheld) and Waste & Recycling (5, 38.5% upheld and 5, 38.5 partially upheld).

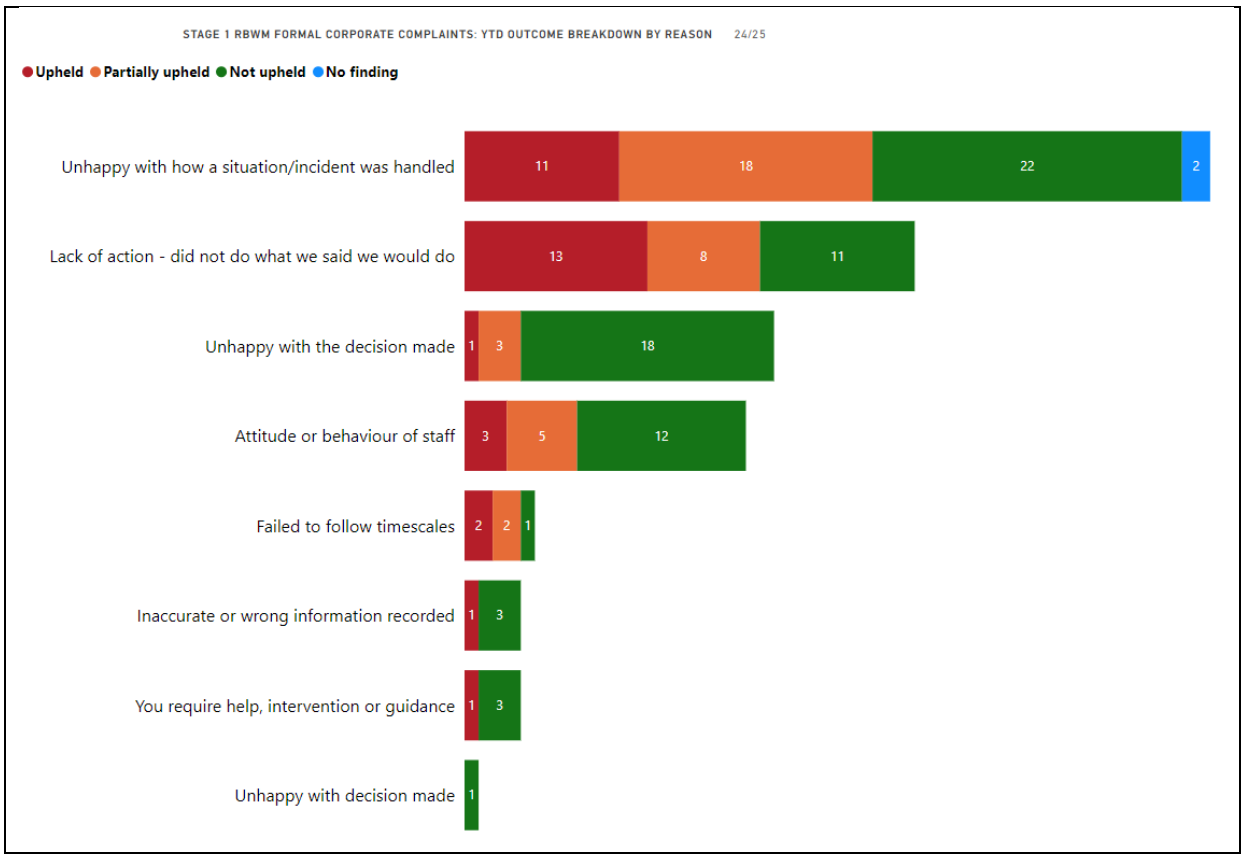
3.6 For Planning Development Management, the complaints which were upheld and partially upheld were mainly due to timeliness of officer response which is partly due to work loads and priorities. A number of management measures have been put in place to address these issues. For Council Tax, this is primarily due to the nature of the work undertaken by the team and the fact that volumes of work received for this area are high which may mean that residents have repeat contact with the team chasing an enquiry.

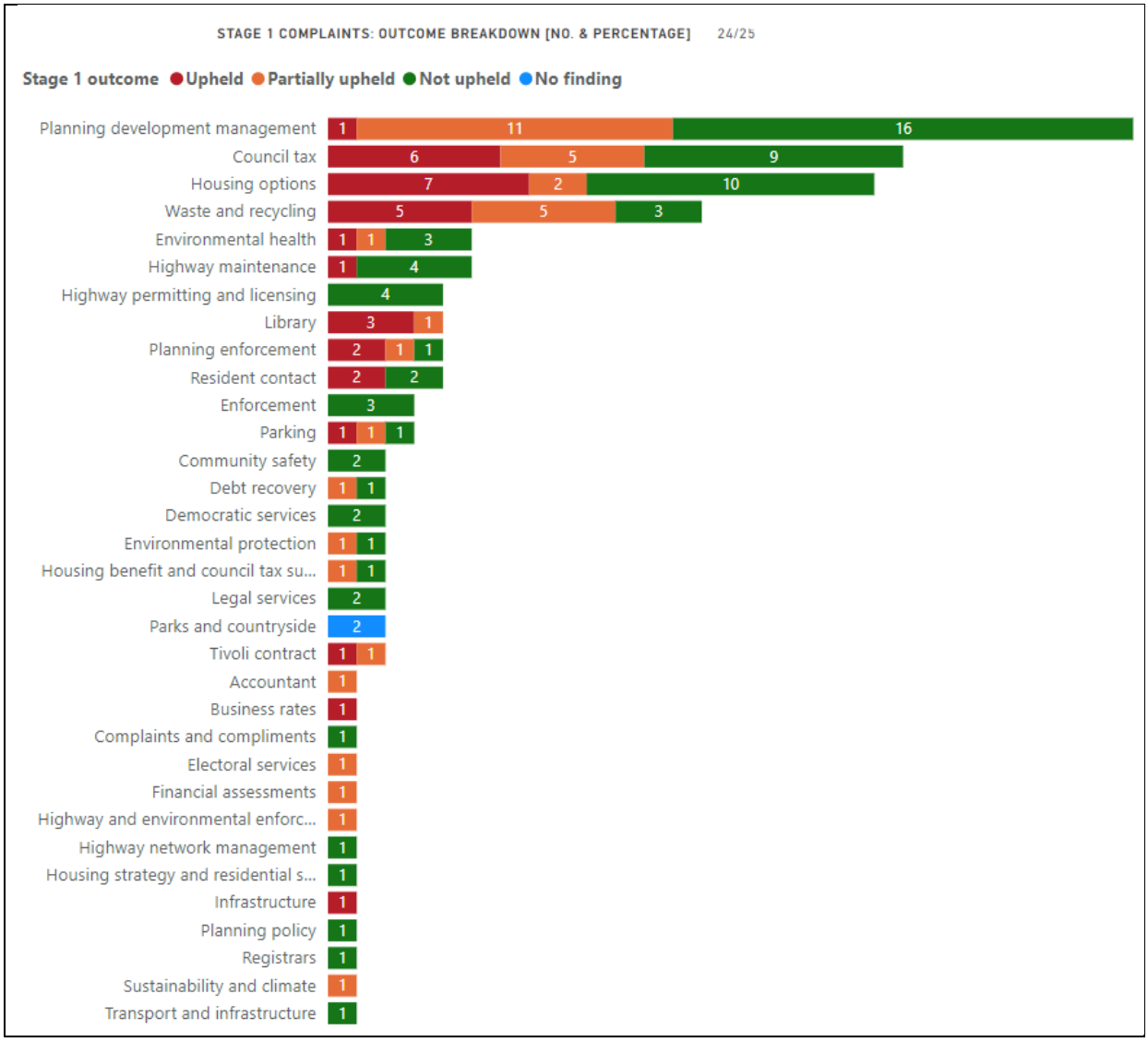
3.7 For Housing Options, this is again mainly to do with the complexity of the issues and the fact that RBWM is under resourced compared to other councils. There tend to be a greater number of partially upheld outcomes in this area as the housing complaints are

often complex, spanning a number of different issues and areas, so are more likely to have some parts upheld and others not.

3.8 For Waste and Recycling we have been significantly under resourced, although staff have now been recruited into the service area and are helping to resolve problems that are impacting on collections in conjunction with the collection contractor. The collections that tend to result in complaints are more complex and related to properties where the collection is complicated in some way by the set out or location of the property or collection point or where there is confusion about what can be collected in which bin. These figures do not include complaints which were still in progress, as a decision had not yet been made on them.

Figure 2: Outcomes of formal corporate complaints

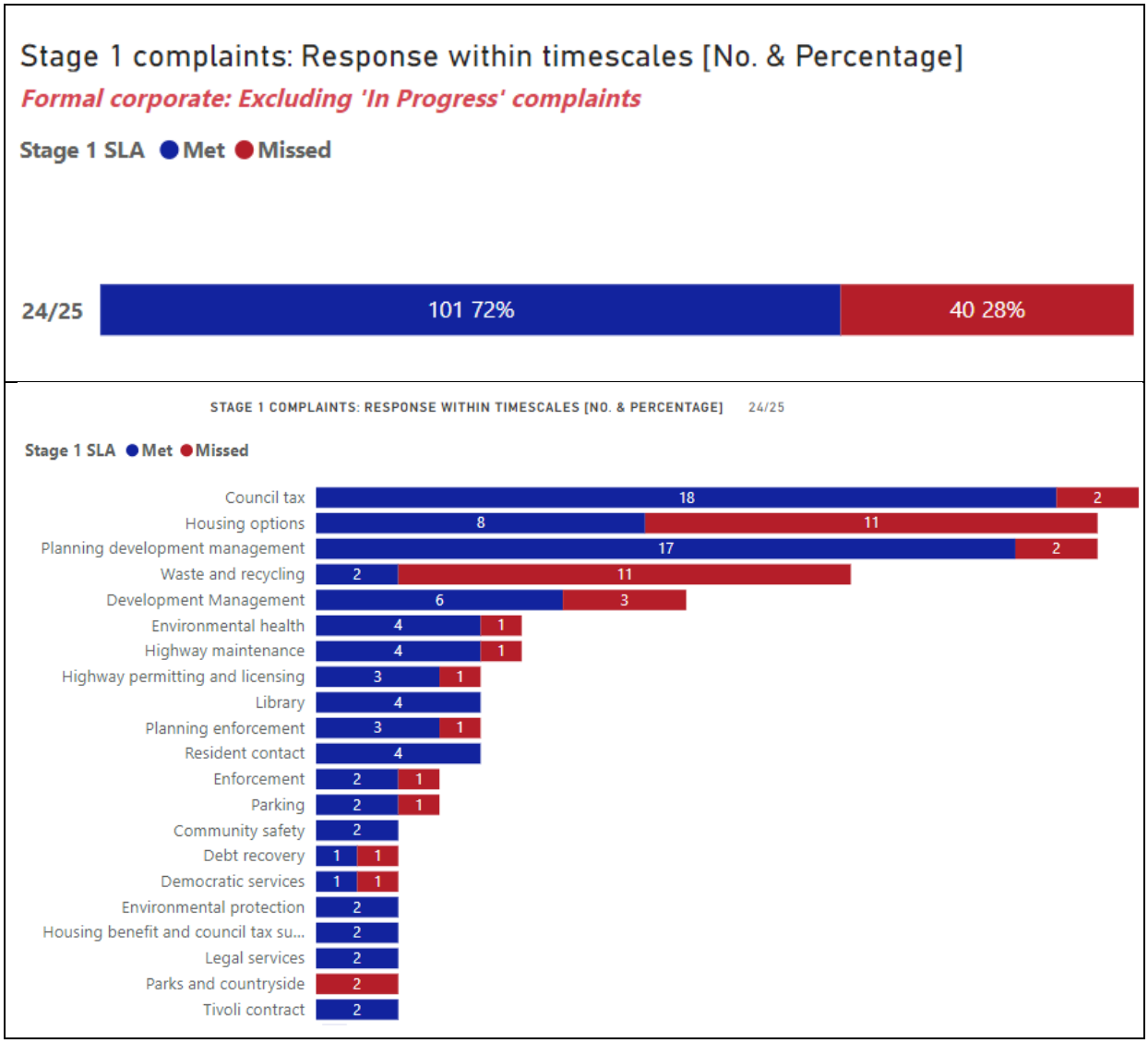




Stage 1 timescales

3.9 Timescales at Stage 1 were not met on 28% of occasions, as detailed in Figure 3, a marked decrease from 2023/24 (44%). Although the Council Tax and Planning Development Management teams are two of the three teams who received the highest volume of complaints, they responded to the majority of those complaints (90% and 82.1% respectively) within timescales. Housing Options and Waste and Recycling received the next highest volumes of complaints but in these areas timescales were not met on 57.9% and 84.6% of occasions respectively. This is largely due to the volume of complaints and the fact that RBWM teams are relatively under resourced compared to other councils, although additional capacity has recently been added.

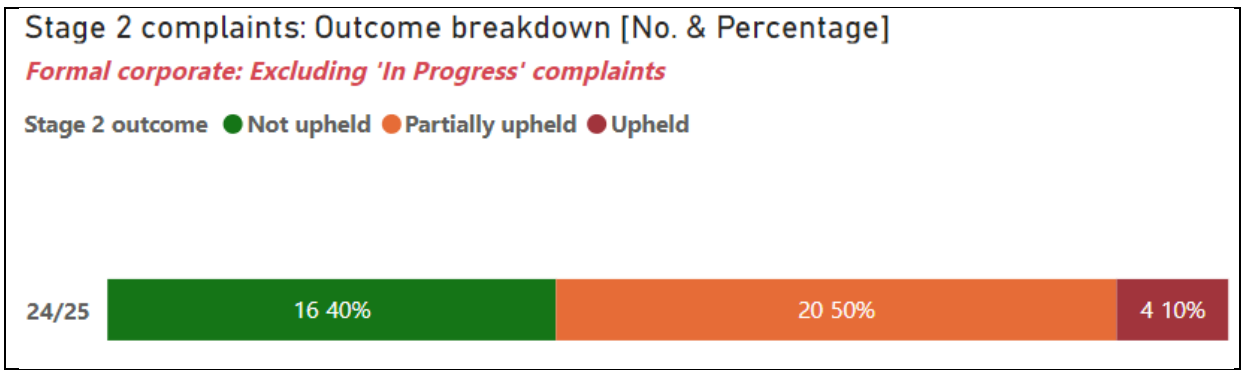
Figure 3: Complaints responded within timescales

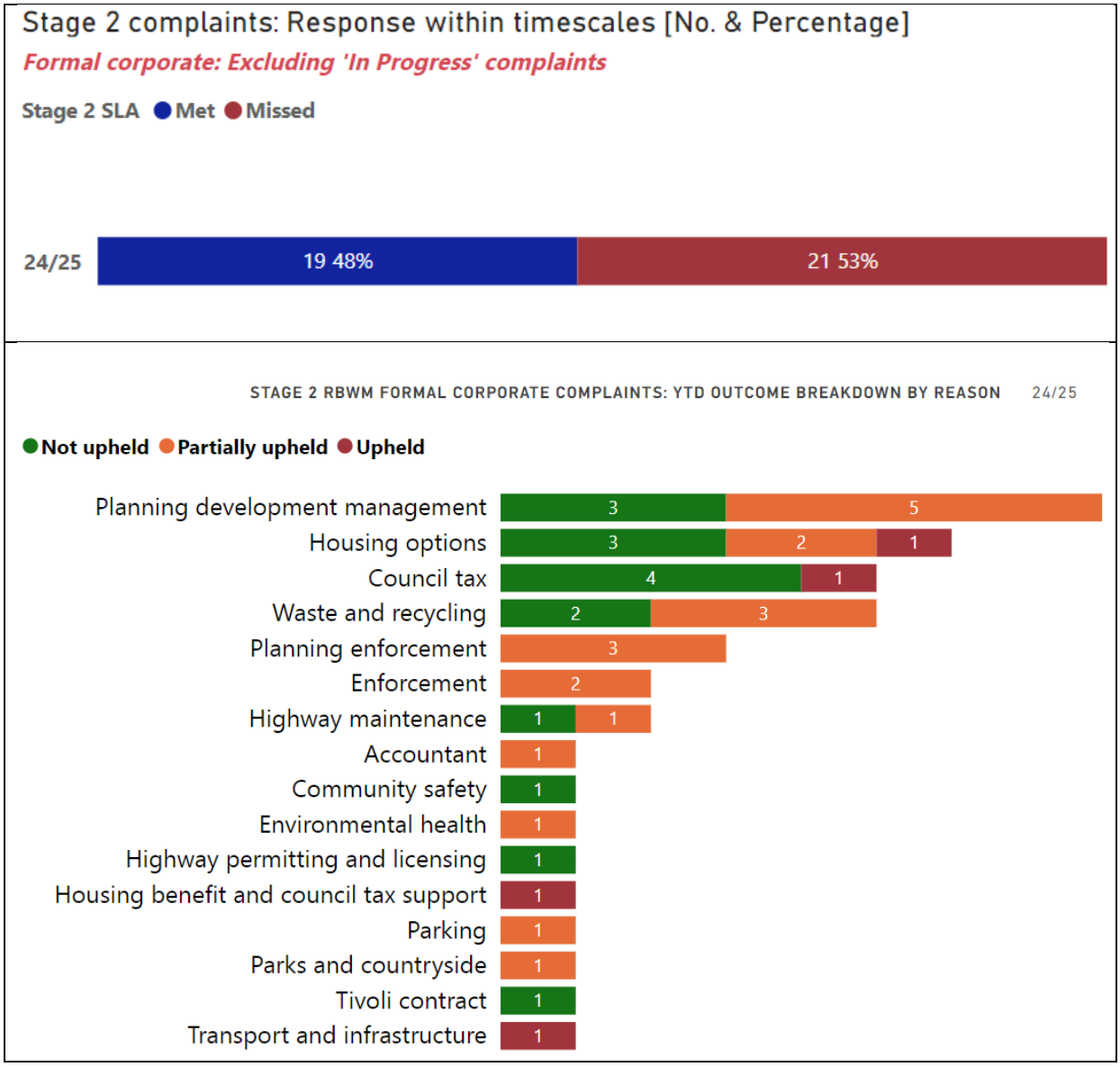


Stage 2 complaints received

3.6. Of the 148 Stage 1 complaints, 41 were progressed to Stage 2. Figure 4 shows that 40% of complaints at Stage 2 were not upheld, and that 48% were responded to within published timescales, the same proportion as in 2023/24.

Figure 4: Stage 2 complaints received





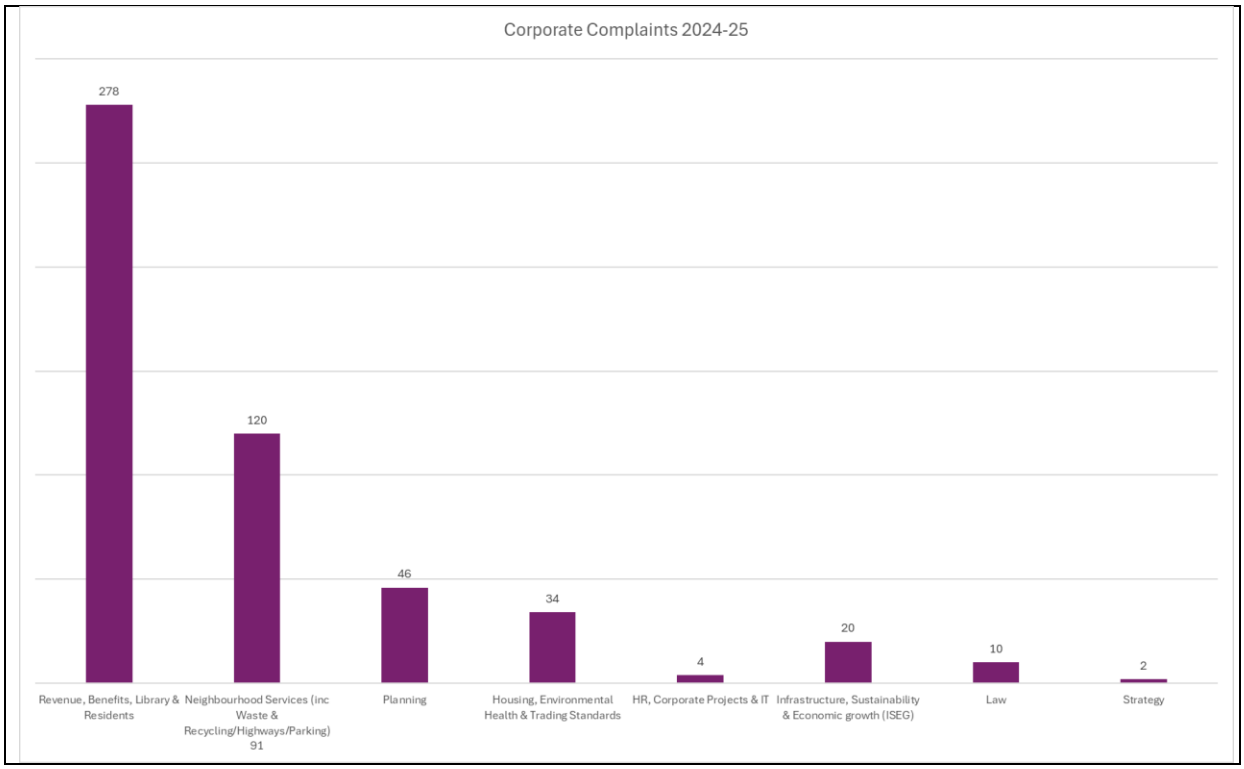
4. Compliments received

4.1 In 2024/25 RBWM corporate cervices received 514 compliments. This is a 13.7% increase on 2023/24, when 452 compliments were logged for RBWM corporate services. This is a particularly positive message, viewed alongside the decrease in formal corporate stage 1 complaints over the same period (section 3.1 above).

4.2 Figure 5 sets out the volume of compliments received and details the teams in receipt of the most compliments, with comparisons to 2023/24 figures (where available). These figures show that the services in receipt of more complaints are also generally the services which consistently receive the most compliments and tend to be the ones which impact a greater proportion of residents and households in the borough. The majority of these services have also seen an individual increase in the number of compliments received from 2023/24 to 2024/25. A selection of this year's compliments are quoted in Figure 6, to give an idea of some of the positive feedback received.

4.3 Work will be undertaken this year to look at the compliments received in more detail moving forward, with a view to drawing out key themes across the services.

Figure 1: Compliments received in 2024/25



Service	2024/25	2023/24
Revenue, Benefits, Library & Residents	278	299
Neighbourhood Services (inc Waste & Recycling/Highways/Parking)	120	91
Planning	46	17
Housing, Environmental Health & Trading Standards	34	14
HR, Corporate Projects & IT	4	9
Infrastructure, Sustainability & Economic growth (ISEG)	20	7
Law	10	6
Strategy	2	3

Figure 6: Sample of compliments received in 2024/25

"Your tree surgeons have completed their work today on the false acacia tree outside my house, and I have to say they did a really good piece of work. The tree looks much improved and has transformed the outlook and indeed the whole street. They were pleasant and professional and I cannot recommend them highly enough"

"I recently received a Completion Certificate for the above work and I would to thank everyone I had contact with in Building Control, for being so efficient, friendly and helpful. In particular that was: […],[…],[…]. *It was a pleasure being involved with these people and they are a credit to the Department."*

“I just wanted to give some feedback on the amazing service I was offered today by your warden […]. I am overwhelmed with joy that in this day and age where one cannot get a doctors appointment for love nor money I send an email at 11am and within 4 hours you had sent someone out to deal with my underlying problem. Excellent work RBWM!!! May I also say what a professional […] was in the face of a difficult situation. Thank you.”

“Many thanks for your email. I must say that I am very impressed with your swift action. Thank you again for your actions. The Council have improved!”

“I have received payment for my removal costs. I can’t thank you all enough xx I feel so grateful xx such a relief xx A million thank you’s. Thank you. Thank you. Merry Christmas”

“Being in my 80 years and living alone I felt so depressed and felt I couldn’t cope when I phoned and […] answered the phone. […] was so calm, efficient, helpful and listened to me. She helped my problem and I felt I could cope better. Thank you very much […]”

“I am writing this email to express my gratitude and thanks to […] **from the rough sleeper team.** […] **was my first point of contact for help over 12 months ago when my life turned upside down. I had inadvertently been made homeless and did not know where to turn.** […] **kept in contact with me throughout my ordeal, especially when I had no choice but to live in a tent for over 3 months. Due to my ongoing mental health and medical issues and being at the lowest point in my life,** […] **helped with all the daunting paperwork I had to deal with and was compassionate, kind and understanding. I was not the easiest person to deal with and would constantly contact her.** […] **encouraged me to stay strong and if it wasn’t for her help and understanding I don’t think I would be where I am today. Thank you again** […]**, I will never forget what you have done for me.”**

“Everyone was really friendly and helpful, I managed to complete 4 transactions with their help (library card, bus pass, advantage card and blue badge). As I am disabled the experience was very pleasant indeed. Thank You staff at Maidenhead Library”

“I would to compliment on the good work of a very young man on the recycling crew that was servicing Halls Lane in Waltham St Laurence, today. He took extra time to make sure that if contents were spilled on the road he picked up every single bit. Really very pleasant boy but unfortunately I don't know his name”

“I would like to send a personal thanks to one of your traffic wardens, […]. **Today I was subject to a verbal assault and attempted assault (a gentleman tried to run me over). The traffic warden looked after me. He asked the man concerned to stop speaking to a lady in such manner. He looked after me and helped me call the police and gave an evidence over the phone. This is now a police matter. Your worker went above and beyond his job to look out for me and I am forever grateful. Please pass on my thanks. He was also subject to some abuse from the man and was next to me when he drove towards us in his van. He may need some support too. If the council recognises staff in anyway, I recommend this gentleman is put forward for an award. He is credit to the council.”**

"I called today at 12.15 and spoke to a lady about clarifying council tax on my property. She was friendly, approachable and efficient, knew the answers to all of my questions. It was a delightful interaction and so rare these days with customer facing staff."

"Just a note to thank you for all your help. I found exactly what I was looking for in the planning records that you uploaded. I have been really impressed by how helpful and enthusiastic you have been, and I really appreciate you going out of your way to help me in this matter."

"Just wanted to say a big thank you for the effort you all go in keeping everyone happy (well, trying to!) and striving to bring disagreements to a conclusion - it's greatly appreciated. Have a lovely weekend."

"I'm just writing to say thank you so much for your help and how much I appreciate you doing that little bit extra - I feel I've been treated as a person and not a task."

"I would like to recognise the exceptional assistance provided to me by […]. […] has been very responsive to my requests and always follows up and provides clarifications when necessary. […] is an outstanding member of RBWM."

5. Lessons learned from complaints by service area

4.4 An important part of the complaints process is capturing the learnings and embedding good practice across the council. Below are the learnings that have been identified by various service areas:

Council Tax

Complaints are a standing agenda item at Team Meetings where examples are discussed with regard to any lessons learned. As a result the correct processes are reiterated. Examples from the past year include ensuring that any accounts with Enforcement Agents have balances updated. That owner/landlord details are checked and updated if required and that where more than one notification is received about a property, that both items are dealt with at the same time.

Planning

The Planning service deals with an area of work whereby our decisions change the status quo, altering the built environment and the nature of uses within the Borough. There are many different stakeholders who all have different views and desire different outcome, as such the service will always generate a number of unavoidable complaints from people who desired a different outcome.

In terms of avoidable complaints, the main theme which has been identified from our received complaints have related to frustrations about communication and the timeliness of responses. A number of measures put in place or being progressed are already and will continue to better align customer expectations and response timescales. These include:

- Improved resourcing and clarity around timescales for Major Applications through PPA's
- Clearer and most consistent work profiles/timescales due to team structure changes.
- Publication of guidance regarding amendments/application processing policies enabling clearer expectations and facilitating faster officer responses.
- Consultation on Local Validation List.

The significant increase in compliments received by the team is noted and indicates the positive impacts the service improvements and the culture of the team is having on customer service.

Waste & Recycling

The waste service is one that impacts on every resident and household, as a result the number of complaints received by this service area would be expected to be high in comparison with other some service areas.

The team continued to have resourcing issues but recruitment has not taken place and an additional three officers have joined the team and there is still additional recruitment underway. This has had an impact on the ability to respond and response times.

Following the review of any complaint, recommendations are made to improve service delivery and customer experience. The team work closely with the Complaints team to monitor progress and reduce the number of complaints not responded to within the set timeframes.

Housing

The Housing service continues to face a high level of demand for its services. Largely this is for reasons beyond RBWM's control – for example, the cost of living and the shortage of affordable housing in the private rented and social sectors. The direct housing services which the council provides, such as homelessness, can result in service users being placed, for significant periods of time, in temporary accommodation. This service prevents homelessness but is often a transitory step to a more permanent housing solution. As such it is often perceived in a positive manner – especially if the service is lengthy. The housing service in RBWM is relatively under resourced compared to other comparable local authorities. There is also a high turnover of staff, and this can lead to further perceptions about the service. Resourcing the service is problematic, with vacancies being difficult to fill because of a shortage of skilled housing staff nationally. These factors can contribute to some delays in responding to general enquiries, as well as complaints and FOI requests. However, record keeping within housing is good, which enables a good quality of response to be made to most enquiries. The service intends to build upon this strength for the coming year.

6. Lessons learned - final summary

6.1. The council welcomes and recognises the importance of compliments and complaints as well as wider customer feedback. We use this in discussion at our leadership meetings and to help drive our services forward. Our complaints processes and

procedures are regularly reviewed and, whilst found to be compliant, a small number of improvements have been made.

6.2. The council has a statutory duty pursuant to s.3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness" commonly known as "the best value duty".

In the Best value standards and intervention statutory guidance the following characteristics are defined as "characteristics of a well-functioning authority":

- The authority has an effective and accessible complaints process and provides appropriate redress
- Lessons are learned from complaints.

The following is an indicator of potential failure:

- A high rate of upheld complaints made to Ombudsmen and the lack of an action plan(s) to address areas of concern.

6.3 In their Annual Value for Money the Council's external auditor, Grant Thornton provided the following Value for Money Recommendation:

"We recommend that the Council should ensure that it learns from its experience of Local Government Ombudsman complaints, for example by considering options for satisfactory remedies when it becomes aware of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman and takes action on lessons to be learned from such complaints."

The Council is currently working towards adopting the LGSCO code (this is an action which is set out in the 25/26 AGS action plan which was agreed at A&G Committee in June 2025). The adoption of the Code will support a more systematic and transparent approach to complaint handling and service improvement. This will include reviewing remedies and ensuring that lessons learned from Ombudsman findings are embedded into practice to prevent recurrence and improve outcomes for residents.

7. Appendix A: LGSCO Annual Review 2025 letter

21 May 2025

By email

Mr Evans
Chief Executive
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council

Dear Mr Evans

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. We have listened to your feedback, and I am pleased to be able to share your annual statistics earlier in the year to better fit with local reporting cycles. I hope this proves helpful to you.

Your annual statistics are available here.

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

In a change to our approach, we will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 16 July 2025, alongside our annual Review of Local Government Complaints.

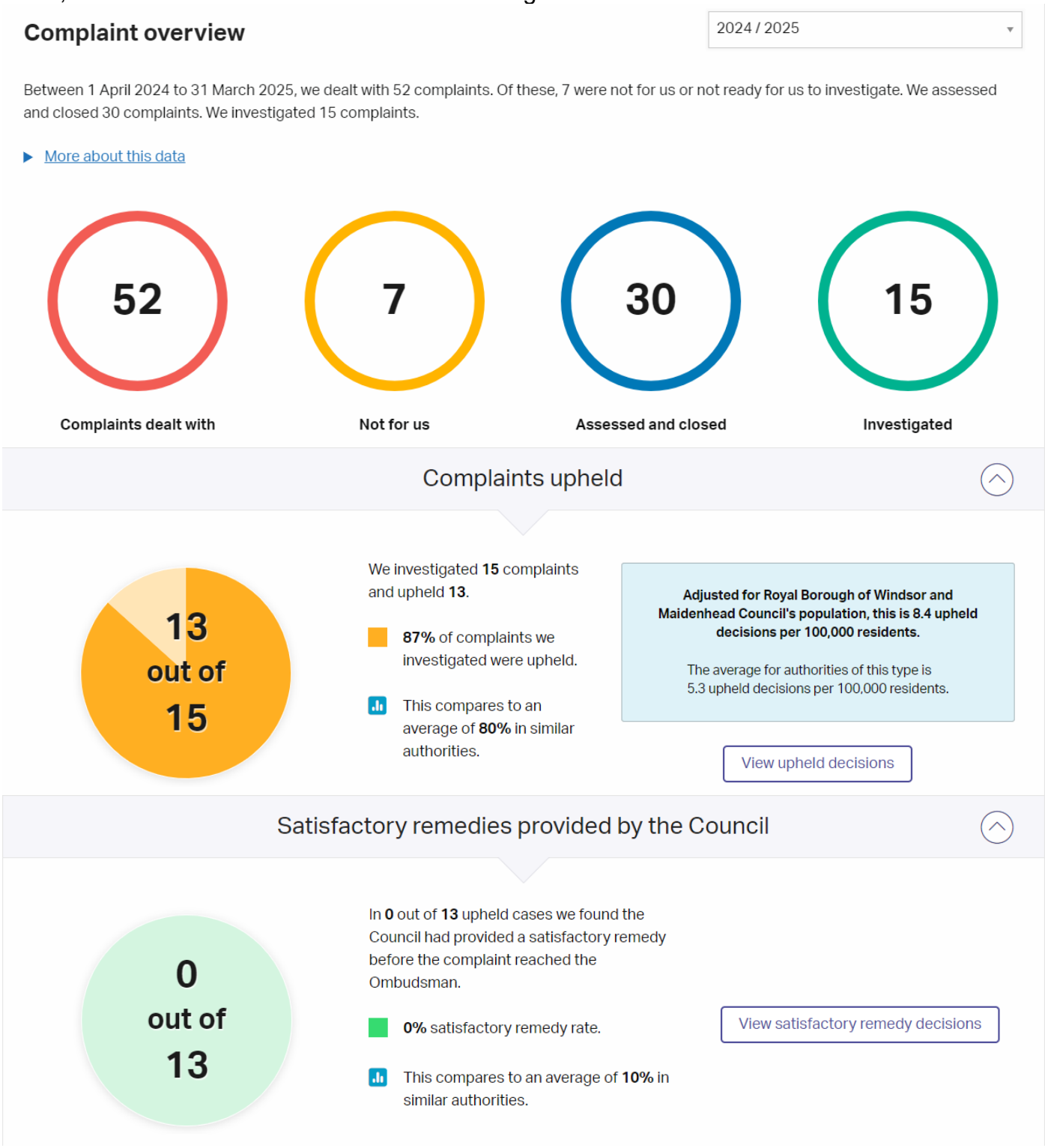
Supporting complaint and service improvement

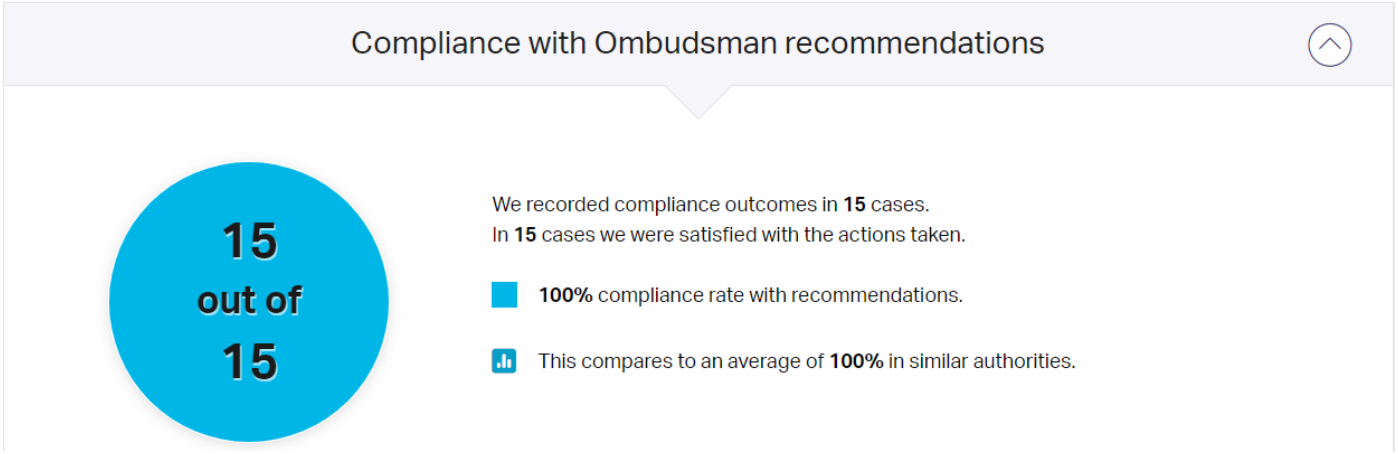
In February we published good practice guides to support councils to adopt our Complaint Handling Code. The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. The guides were issued alongside free training resources organisations can use to make sure front-line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular complaint handling training programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England





8. Appendix B: Council's complaints processes

The stages of the Council's process are detailed in the table below:

Stages	Adult services complaints	Children's services complaints	Formal Corporate complaints	Not within the formal complaints process
Stage 1	**Statutory** No specific timescale but aim to respond within 10 working days. Response from Service Manager or higher.	**Statutory** Up to 10 working days. Can agree extension for a further 10 working days. Response from Head of Service.	Up to 20 working days. Can agree extension for a further 10 working days. Response from Head of Service.	N/A
Stage 2	N/A	**Statutory** 25-65 working days. Completed by independent complaints investigators and report produced. Adjudicating letter in response to report completed by Children's Director of Social Care.	Up to 20 working days. Review of stage 1 complaint and response by Director.	N/A
Stage 3	N/A	**Statutory** Stage 3 independent panel. Up to 70 working days. Panel of three independent members who produce a report. Letter in response to the report completed by the Directors of Children's Services.	N/A	N/A
LGSCO	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	N/A
Alternative appeal process	N/A	N/A	N/A	Customer given timescales for response