

## KCC Annual Customer Feedback Report 2024/25

**By:** Amanda Beer – Deputy Chief Executive  
**To:** Governance and Audit Committee  
**Date:** 26 November 2025  
**Subject:** KCC Annual Customer Feedback Report 2024/25  
**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** This report provides a summary of the compliments, comments and complaints recorded by the Council. The report includes statistics relating to customer feedback received by the Council and a sample of complaints considered by the Ombudsman.

**Recommendation:** The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report for assurance.

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Council's annual report on compliments, comments and complaints.
- 1.2 Overall complaints volumes at stage one are down 3% on the previous year, however there is an increase in stage two complaints (up 49%) which was expected following a concerted effort to reduce the backlog within SEN.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this report customer feedback only relates to those comments, compliments and complaints received from members of the public and our external customers. It does not include internal feedback between departments or contractors.

### 2. Progress in refining practices within KCC

- 2.1 The council uses a customer feedback system enabling us to breakdown data easily, understand trends and react to evolving issues.
- 2.2 Following centralisation in the previous year of complaints handling, the focus has been on supporting directorates and services in reducing their backlogs. The team have been looking at streamlining processes to support this activity, in addition the team have also rolled out training where need has been identified by services. In the next year the team's focus will be on supporting directorates in improving timeliness, consistency and providing robust responses to our residents and service users.

### 3. Overview of Customer Feedback Received

- 2.1 A compliment is an expression of thanks or congratulations or any other positive remark. (Internal compliments are excluded from this process).

- 2.2 A comment is a general statement about policies, practices or a service as a whole, which has an impact on everyone and not just one individual. A comment can be positive or negative in nature. Comments may question policies and practices, make suggestions for new services or for improving existing services.
- 2.3 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not and however made, about the standard or the delivery of a service, the actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff which affects an individual service user or group of users. This is consistent with the definitions used by other local authorities.
- 2.4 The following table gives an overview of the feedback received by KCC as a whole compared with the previous year.

**Table 1** – Feedback received by KCC compared with previous year

Year	Complaints (Stage 1)	Comment	Compliments	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>5392</b>	<b>3557</b>	<b>1609</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>5537</b>	<b>1797</b>	<b>1324</b>	<b>304</b>
Difference	145	1760	285	-13
% difference	-3%	98%	22%	-4%

- 2.5 This year saw a slight decrease in volumes of cases received on the previous year but broadly complaint numbers are similar to the previous year.
- 2.6 The increase in comments can be attributed to more robust logging of these types of feedback, the most common were those received via GovMetrics on our website and those relating to the Booking System for Household Recycling and Waste Centres (HWRC)
- 2.7 Significant efforts were made in this year to reduce the SEN backlog with a dedicated team in SEN investigating cases and with support given through the customer feedback team to draft responses.

**Table 2** - Complaints received at stage 1 (local resolution)

Stage 1	Adults Social Care and Health	Children, Young People and Education	Growth, Environment & Transport	CED & DCED	Total
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>1064</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>2932</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>5392</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>1164</b>	<b>3157</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>5537</b>
Difference	72	102	-225	-94	-145
% difference	7%	9%	-7%	-42%	-3%

- 2.8 Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH), saw an increase of 7% from the previous year. ASCH saw increases across the board all of which contributed to the general rise in this directorate.
- 2.9 Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) saw the largest increase in complaints overall. The impact of the improvements within SEN service should start to be seen in the coming year. However, we may see an increase in those complaints that relate to the Council decisions. Work is continuing to reduce the backlog of complaints awaiting responses in this area.
- 2.10 Within Chief Executive's (CED) and Deputy Chief Executive's Departments (DECD), there was a decrease in the number of complaints received for these departments. This is largely due to topical complaints received in the previous year, which accounted for an increase in that year.
- 2.11 The majority of complaints in CED & DCED were logged regarding the Contact Centre (48% of cases), and Finance (23%)
- 2.12 Where customers complain about the Contact Centre, calls are listened to, where fault is found, training is carried out with staff members. The number of complaints is low in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of calls responded to on an annual basis.
- 2.13 Overall, we have seen a 3% decrease in the number of complaints received at stage one. A breakdown of complaints received by division/service can be found in Appendix A.

**Table 3 – Feedback received at Stage 2 compared with the previous year**

<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Adult Social Care and Health</b>	<b>Children, Young People and Education</b>	<b>Growth, Environment and Transport</b>	<b>CED &amp; DCED</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>681</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>458</b>
Difference	14	147	69	-7	223
% difference	34%	88%	30%	-37%	49%

2.14 ASCH have started to log additional issues raised following stage 1 informally as stage 2. Usually a 2-stage process with the Local Government Ombudsman acting as the second stage is employed for ASCH complaints, however there are times when it is appropriate to respond to additional queries raised following our stage 1 response. We therefore log these as an escalation but not in a formal stage 2 format.

2.15 We have seen an increase in complaints escalating to stage 2 within CYPE, this is largely due to issues relating to SEN complaints (55% of all cases). 24% of cases relate to children's social work. This increase can be attributed to the movement of cases in the backlog, this was expected activity as a significant number of stage one cases were responded to in this period.

2.16 We have seen a further steady increase in complaints escalating to stage 2 within GET, these mainly relate to Highway Manager cases. The service have been more proactive in encouraging cases to be escalated, rather than engaging in protracted conversations where customers disagree with decisions made.

## 2.17 Annual comparison of comments, complaints and compliments

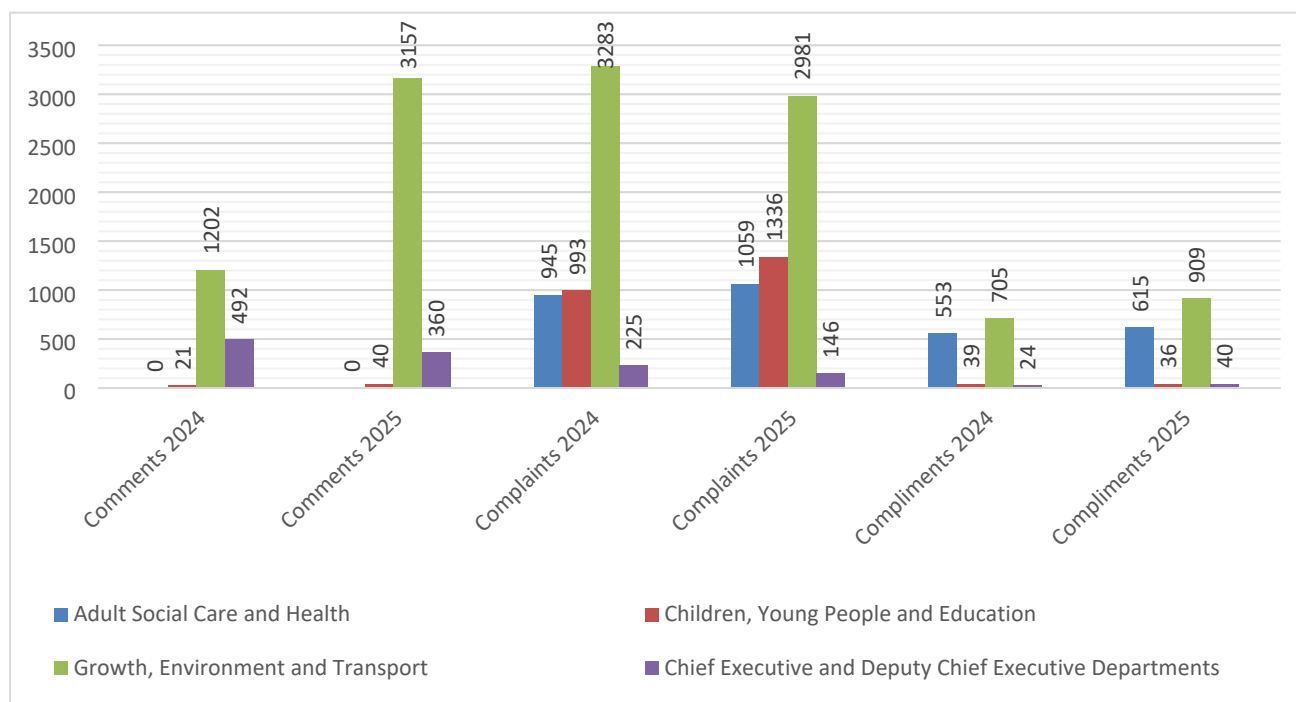


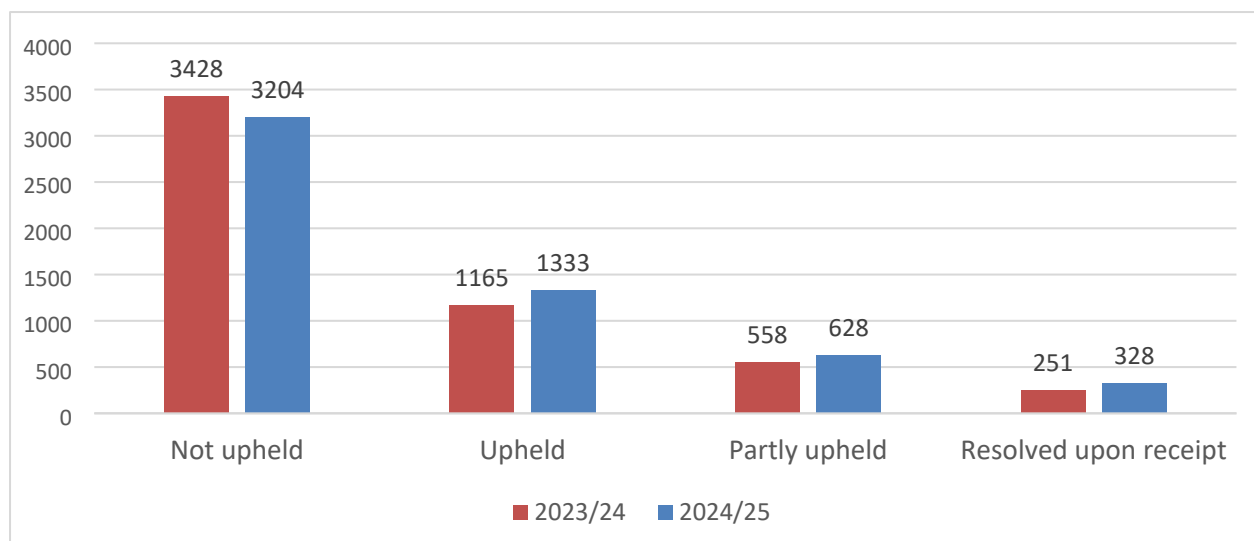
Table 4 - Cases closed by Directorate at Stage 1

	Comment	Complaint	Compliment	Total
Adult Social Care and Health	0	1059	615	1674
Children, Young People and Education	40	1336	36	1412
Growth, Environment and Transport	3194	2981	909	7084
CED & DCED	378	146	40	564
<b>Total for 2024/25</b>	<b>3612</b>	<b>5522</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>10734</b>
<b>Total for 2023/24</b>	<b>1715</b>	<b>5446</b>	<b>1321</b>	<b>8482</b>
<i>Difference</i>	<i>1897</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>279</i>	<i>2252</i>
<i>% Difference</i>	<i>111%</i>	<i>1%</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>27%</i>

\*ASCH log informal concerns and feedback of this nature under other categories

2.18 The rise in comments under GET relate to booking system comments. To capture all comments, the service are logging all cases relating to the booking system to review themes, this includes comments left on GovMetric on our website. 80% of cases (2,507) relate to the waste booking system.

## Case outcomes at Stage 1\*



\*Number of cases closed will not equal the number received

**Table 5 – Stage one - cases not upheld, upheld, partly upheld and resolved upon receipt**

Stage 1	Not upheld	Upheld	Partly upheld	Resolved upon receipt
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>3204</b>	<b>1333</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>3428</b>	<b>1165</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>

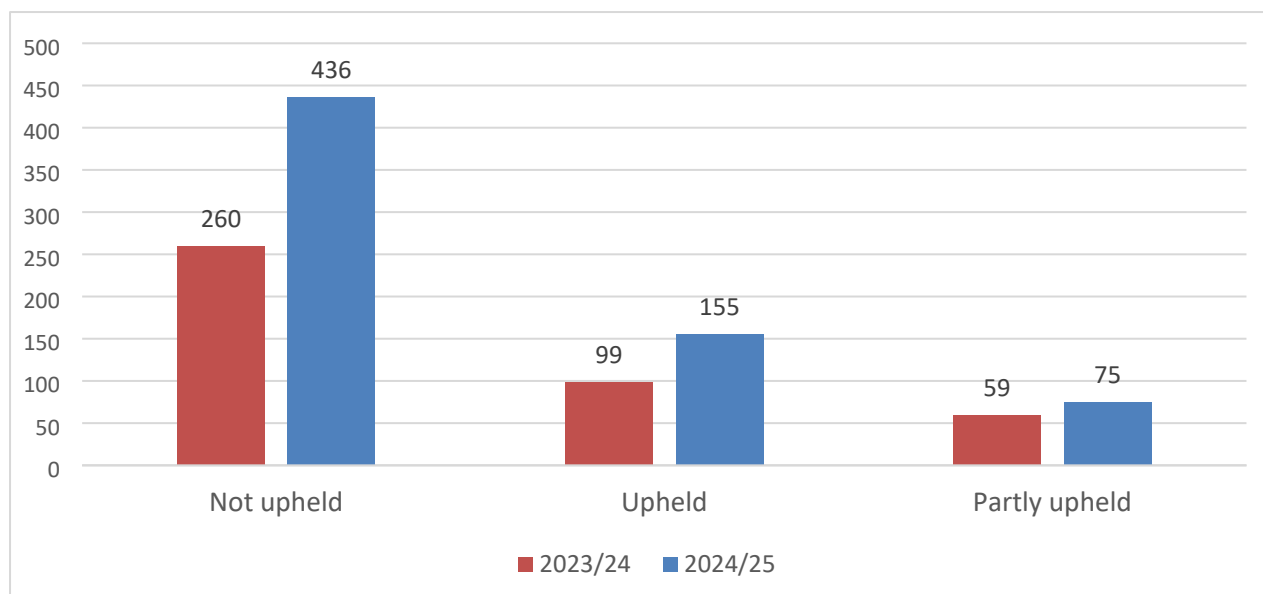
2.19 We are seeing a small increase in the volume of cases being upheld/partly held. There was a 5% decrease in not upheld complaints last year. 33 cases were withdrawn.

2.20 An example of a not upheld and partially upheld case.

A not upheld example may include where a resident complains about KCC policy, but that policy had been through consultation, comments had been considered at committee meetings and a key decision had been made to implement the policy.

Partially upheld cases will be where some elements of the complaint were not upheld, as in the example above but other elements, for example if they had cause to complain about staff behaviour and this was found to be upheld, then this would cause the overall complaint to be partially upheld.

## 2.21 Case outcomes at Stage 2\*



\*Number of cases closed will not equal the number received

**Table 6** – Stage two – Not upheld, upheld, partly upheld.

Stage 2	Not upheld	Upheld	Partly upheld
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>13%</b>

2.22 While there is a marked increase in the volume of cases progressing to stage 2, the split between outcomes remains broadly consistent with the previous year.

2.23 The majority of cases are not upheld at stage 2 (64%).

2.24 Table 7 below tracks the other types of feedback received by the Council including Member and MP enquiries and informal concerns compared with the previous year. Enquiries include Ask a Kent Librarian service requests which account for a significant proportion of the volumes received below.

**Table 7 – Volumes received for other types of feedback.**

	<b>Member/MP enquiry</b>	<b>Enquiry (includes Ask a Kent Librarian)</b>	<b>Informal Concerns</b>	<b>Representation</b>
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2319</b>	<b>15375</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2619</b>	<b>16158</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>0</b>
Difference	-300	-783	-111	0

2.25 All other feedback types have reduced slightly compared to the volumes last year. MP & Member Enquiries are down 11% on the previous year. This may be attributed to the general election held in this year, meaning that during pre-election period we are unable to accept MP enquiries.

2.26 A representation is a procedure for cases where a complainant wishes to complain about something eligible for progression through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure, but there is something else in progress which prevents them from having it accepted. This would include a Section 47 child protection enquiries, legal proceedings, a Child and Family Assessment, Tribunal, disciplinary etc.



**Table 8 - Reasons for complaints this year**

	<b>2024</b>		<b>2025</b>	
<b>Primary cause</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Quality of service</b>	<b>2764</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>2848</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>Policy and Procedure</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Communications</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Service not provided</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Staff Conduct</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Equalities and regulatory</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Not for KCC</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Value for money</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Comment/Enquiry use only</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Blank</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Issues with service</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	
<b>Impact of major incident</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	
<b>Service failure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5550</b>		<b>5788</b>	

\*Some cases will have more than one reason for the complaint

- 3.21 The biggest topic was 'quality of service' which accounted for 49% of cases. This figure is down from 50% last year, but it remains the most complained about issue. Policy and Procedure and Communications swapped places from last year, with Policy & Procedure now second with 15%.
- 3.22 Of the 2,848 cases recorded against Quality of Service, 692 (24%) were upheld. Upheld figures are demonstrated in table 9 below.
- 3.23 The categories of Issues with service and Service failure have now dropped from reporting as these are now shown across wider subject options
- 3.24 Impact of major incident was not required last year, this was introduced during Covid to measure the impact on service delivery or decisions.

**Table 9** – Breakdown of reasons for upheld\* complaints by Directorate Stage one and two\*\*

Complaint reason	Adults Social Care Services & Health	Children Young People & Education	Growth Environment & Transport	Strategic & Corporate Services	Total	%
Communications or Information	88	167	47	9	311	20%
Equalities & regulatory	7	9	16	4	36	2%
Policy and procedure	76	34	42	4	156	10%
Quality of service	92	338	247	15	692	45%
Service not provided	24	144	63	8	239	16%
Staff Conduct cause	9	28	45	6	88	6%
Value for money	0	3	0	0	3	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1525</b>	100%
<b>%</b>	19%	47%	30%	3%	100%	

\*table only includes upheld complaints and not those partially upheld

\*\*some complaints may have multiple reasons as to why they were upheld

#### 4. Compliance with KCC standards and LGSCO Code

- 4.1 KCC is committed to acknowledging any complaints received within 3 working days and to provide the customer with a response within 20 working days. As a whole KCC **responded to 70%** of complaints within corporate timescales which compares to **61%** the previous year. The KPI for complaints responses is 85%.
- 4.2 The LGSCO has introduced a Complaints Handling Code, this will come into effect in April 2026.
- 4.3 The code, whilst not mandatory, will be used to review Council performance. Councils are asked to complete annual self-assessment forms, stating their compliance with the code. This can be found in Appendix C.
- 4.4 Compliance with Local Government Complaints Handling Code. The Code does not replace any existing statutory complaint processes such as The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 or Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.
- 4.5 With the exception of the time to respond to stage one complaints (in which the LGSCO allows for 15 days), the Council broadly is in line with the Ombudsman's ambitions under the code.
- 4.6 In view of the code's exclusion of Adults and Children Act complaints, the Council's compliance with the code at stage one in **15 days is 60%**
- 4.7 With the removal of SEN, where there are ongoing backlogs, this is at **70%**.

KCC compliance at Stage One:	
20 working days	70%
15 working days	60%
15 working days (excl. SEND)	70%

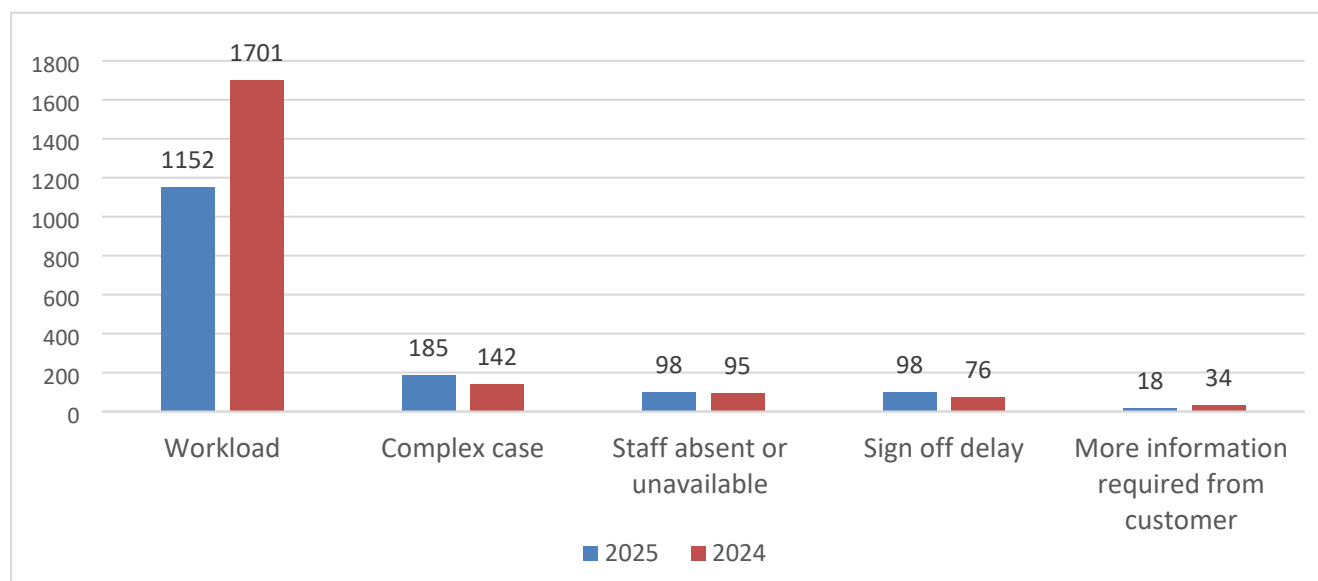
- 4.8 For stage two, the Council's policy allows for 20 days against the LGSCO's 25 days. **65%** were responded to within 25 days.
- 4.9 With the removal of SEN cases this is at **84%**.

KCC compliance at Stage Two:	
25 working days	65%
25 working days (excl. SEND)	84%

- 4.10 The increase in timeliness for the year is reflected in the delay reasons and in the reduction of those selecting 'workload' as the reason for delay. It is hoped that this trend will continue as backlogs reduce.

4.11 This year, workload was again cited as the main reason for late responses. While the volume of cases has reduced, it is still far and above the most seen reason for delays in customer responses. This reason significantly increases in those services where there is already pressure, for example SEN. However, there has been progress in reducing the backlog over the last year.

**Table 10 - Delay reasons**



**Table 11 - Top five overall delay reasons**

	Workload	Complex case	Sign off delay	Staff absent or unavailable	More information required from customer
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>1152</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>1701</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>34</b>
% of total complaints closed	72%	3%	2%	2%	<1%

4.12 Table 11 above shows the top five delay reasons cited for the organisation as a whole. It's important to note that when workload is cited, this is the workload of the service, impacting on their ability to respond to the complaints team, that is highlighted, not the workload of the complaints team itself. Other reasons (all with under 1% of the total) included third party delay, customer unavailable, joint response delay and waiting on legal advice.

- 4.13 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 makes provision for customers and the complaints team to set the timescales for responding. This can be up to 6 months for the most complex of cases and means that complaints will often not meet the 20-working day KCC standard. This is because an agreement with the customer has been formed to allow for more time to investigate and respond.
- 4.14 Whilst the legislation allows for longer, ASCH complaints are measured against a 20-working day timeline in line with KCC's policy. Here 60% were responded to in timescale.
- 4.15 Any joint working complaints with health, have an agreed 30 working day response time.

**Table 12 – Adult Social Care Complaints time to respond.**

<b>Days to respond (working)</b>	<b>Adults Social Care Services and Health</b>	<b>%</b>
Within 20 working days	641	60%
Within 4-6 weeks	149	14%
Within 6-8 weeks	112	11%
Over 8 weeks	161	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1063</b>	

- 4.16 The following tables below show the breakdown of delay reasons by Directorate.
- 4.17 In Adult Social Care the top 3 reasons remain unchanged from the previous year, with workload being cited for 50% of late cases. The team continues to work with the service to reduce the number of complaint responses that are delayed.
- 4.18 Within CYPE workload continues to be the significant reason cited for late responses. This is particularly evident in areas already under significant pressure such as SEN, which accounts for 70% of the total number of cases closed late for the directorate. The complaints team continues to work with the service and the backlog of older cases has reduced significantly.
- 4.19 In GET, following work to reduce the complaints backlog, the number of late responses has significantly reduced. However, as with other directorates, when cases are late, the workload of the services is the most common reason cited.

4.20 **Table 13** - Top three delay reasons by directorate**Adults Social Care and Health**

	<b>Complex case</b>	<b>Workload</b>	<b>Sign off delay</b>
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>27</b>
% of complaints closed late	50%	34%	9%

\*Top 3 reasons remain unchanged

**Children Young People and Education**

	<b>Workload</b>	<b>Sign off delay</b>	<b>Staff absent or unavailable</b>
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>
% of complaints closed late	87%	5%	3%

\*Top 2 reasons remain unchanged

**Growth Environment and Transport**

	<b>Workload</b>	<b>Staff absent or unavailable</b>	<b>Complex Case</b>
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>20</b>
% of complaints closed late	62%	14%	11%

\*Top 3 reasons remain unchanged

**CED & DCED**

	<b>Workload</b>	<b>Staff absent or unavailable</b>	<b>Complex Case</b>
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
% of complaints closed late	34%	25%	13%

\*Top reason remains unchanged

## 5. Customer communications channels

- 5.1 Information on 'How to complain' is available on our website. The public can provide feedback to the Council through a number of different channels including via our online form, phone, email and through Social Media.
- 5.2 The breakdown below indicates by percentage which channel customers have chosen to communicate feedback (compliments, comments & complaints).

**Table 14** - Channels used to communicate compliments, comments, informal concerns and complaints

	Phone	Letter	Email	Comment card/ Face to Face	Online	Contact via Corporate Director, Member or MP	Govmetric	Other
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Volume</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>2715</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>3075</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>3641</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Volume</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>2452</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>3758</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1465</b>	<b>36</b>

- 5.3 A significant proportion of complaints are submitted via digital methods. 89% of feedback received arrived digitally, up from 69% the previous year. While we maintain accessible channels, we are seeing the majority of customers contacting us online.
- 5.4 There was a significant increase in GovMetric feedback now being recorded on the system. GovMetric captures feedback on our website and after phone calls in the Contact Centre. The majority related to issues with booking Household Waste and Recycling Centre slots.

## 6. Compensation across all complaints received by KCC

- 6.1 In 2024/25 £669,604.11 was paid in compensation, settlements, changes to the amount we charge and waived charges as a result of complaints to the organisation this includes;
- £239,680.60 has been paid or waived as part of local resolution in Adult Social Care and Health. This figure also includes the adjustments to the cost of care provided. The service has adapted their processes to ensure that this information is consistently calculated and recorded as part of the complaint outcome. This figure also includes one payment of £114,721.36 agreed with the LGSCO in respect of reimbursement of fees. (23 012 780)
  - £649.10 has been paid out for Growth, Environment and Transport.

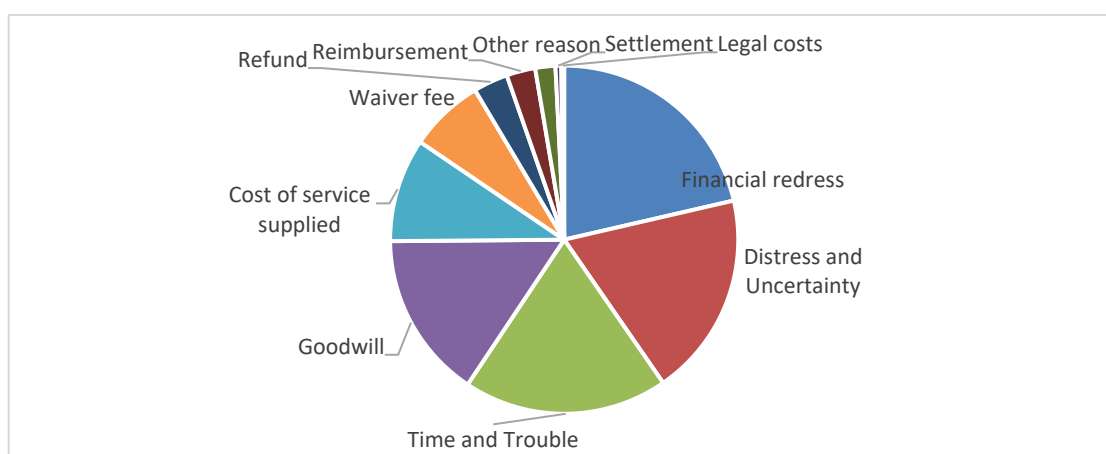
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- £429,274.41 has been paid out for Children, Young People and Education Directorate including Community Learning and Skills and Children Social Work Services
- Nothing was paid last year under CED & DCED
- £302,117.68 of the payments above were made following Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Decisions found against KCC.

6.2 This is an increase of £193,618.44 from 2023/24 when £108,499.24 was paid out in settlements or through waived charges.

6.3 These figures include the substantial reimbursement that was awarded during 23/24 but was not closed until this financial year, as previously advised.

**Table 15 - Compensation complaint reason chart**



Reason	Volume	%
Financial redress	80	21%
Distress and Uncertainty	71	19%
Time and Trouble	71	19%
Goodwill	58	16%
Cost of service supplied	36	10%
Waiver fee	26	7%
Refund	12	3%
Reimbursement	10	3%
Other reason	7	2%
Settlement	2	1%
Legal costs	1	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>374</b>	



- 6.4 It is important to note that monies paid out during the 2023/24 financial year may relate to complaints recorded in previous years. This is due to the time that elapses between the date the complaint was lodged and achieving resolution. This is particularly true of Ombudsman complaints.

## 7. Levels of complaints to the standards committee (Member complaints)

### Complaints recorded in 2024/25

- 7.1 During 2024/25 the Monitoring Officer has responded to 2 complaints of alleged misconduct of the breach of the Elected Member Code of Conduct. A further 11 cases are currently open and pending a decision.

**Table 16**

Number of Complaints				
2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	Outcome
2	0	2	9	No Action or resolved upon receipt. Dismissed by the Monitoring Officer
0	1	0	0	Action taken by party
11	0	0	0	Awaiting Outcome (Cases still open with the Monitoring Officer)

## 8. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints review 2024/25

### Overview of Ombudsman

- 8.1 In cases where a customer is unhappy with the responses received about their complaint from the Council they can exercise their right to involve the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The Ombudsman will investigate cases where a customer has exhausted the Council's own complaints policy and feel that their case has not been appropriately heard or resolved.
- 8.2 Each year, the Ombudsman issues an annual review to each local authority regarding their performance. This year the LGSCO have release stats pertaining to the volume of cases received and investigated in May.
- 8.3 The annual review statistics are publicly available, allowing councils to compare their performance on complaints against their peers; copies of the Annual Review letter as

well as any published Ombudsman complaints are issued to the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to encourage more democratic scrutiny of local complaint handling and local accountability of public services.

- 8.4 Decision statements made are published on the Ombudsman's website six weeks after the date of the final decision. The information published will not name the complainant or any individual involved with the complaint. Cases in which the complainant, despite redaction of names, can be easily identified are not published.

## 9. KCC Performance – Ombudsman complaints

- 8.1 It should be noted that there will be discrepancies between the volume recorded by the Ombudsman and the authority. This is due to the Ombudsman recording complaints that it does not progress to Kent County Council, as it is able to resolve the issue at first point of contact, either through referring the customer to the Council or it is identified as out of jurisdiction.
- 8.2 The LGSCO prioritises investigations, in which there is public interest to investigate. This has meant that the change in upheld rates over the last two years has increased as they are less likely to carry out investigations on 'borderline issues'.
- 8.3 During 2024/25 KCC received a total of **291** decisions from the Ombudsman this included **87** referred back for local resolution or closed. The full letter and Ombudsman statistics can be found in Appendix B.
- 8.4 Each complaint provides an opportunity to learn from our customers and improve our systems and we need to focus on those complaints that are upheld to ensure that lessons are learned.
- 8.5 The Ombudsman's report noted that the national average upheld in County Councils is **89%** of complaints they investigated.
- 8.6 The Kent County Council's average is 83%; this was an increase from last year's 81% upheld.
- 8.7 Adjusted for Kent County Council's population, this is **3.9% upheld** decisions per 100,000 residents. The average for authorities of this type is **5.3% upheld** decisions per 100,000 residents.
- 8.8 In **6%** of upheld cases the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. This is an increase from 3% last year. This compares to an average of 10% in similar authorities.
- 8.9** The Ombudsman found the highest proportion of complaints upheld nationally to be in Education and Children's services, of 291 cases received by the LGSCO for Kent, 195 were about Education and Children Services. 50 cases were upheld and 4 were not upheld, 88% of KCC cases in this area were upheld. Nationally 91% of cases heard by the LGSCO in this area are upheld.

8.10 There was one instance in which the Council did not carry out agreed actions, which meant that the Council complied with the Ombudsman's recommendations in 98% of cases. This was raised in the LGSCO's letter to the Council.

8.11 The Ombudsman raised that timeliness is still an ongoing issue for the Council. As such a review will be undertaken where backlogs still remain, with a view to improving timeliness.

## 10. Public Report

10.1 No Public Reports were issued against Kent County Council in 2024/2025.

## 11. Local authority report – Kent County Council

11.1 For further information on interpretation of statistics click on this link to go to [Interpreting our complaints data - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

### Complaints and enquiries received

11.2 The following table examines the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman over the last three years against the LGSCO's service categories.

**Table 17**

	Adult care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and other services	Education and children's services	Environmental services	Highways and transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
<b><u>2024/25</u></b>	<b>47</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>291</b>
<b><u>2023/24</u></b>	75	0	6	186	10	22	1	1	3	304
<b><u>2022/23</u></b>	67	1	4	146	5	19	0	0	1	243

### Decisions made

11.3 The following table examines the number of complaints decided by the Ombudsman over the last three years and decision category given by the LGSCO.

11.4 There has been a small decrease in the number of cases needing the Council's input and response in the last year, however, even those closed after initial enquiries can represent a significant workload for both the Customer Feedback team and the services it supports.

**Table 18 – LGSCO complaint decisions**

	<u>Detailed investigation carried out</u>		Advice given	Closed after initial enquiries	Incomplete / Invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld					
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>291</b>
2023/24	76	18	2	101	16	91	304
2022/23	53	8	7	91	8	62	229

## 12. Ombudsman Complaints – Themes and Outcomes

12.1 The following section examines the statistics for LGSCO complaint investigations by Directorate.

**Table 19 - Children, Young People and Education**

	Upheld	Not upheld	Closed: out of jurisdiction/ no further action or withdrawn	Premature	Total
Children Social Work Services	6	1	30	8	45
Kent Test/ School Admission appeals	0	1	5	0	6
Home to School Transport/ Free School Meals	3	1	4	0	8
Special Educational Needs	41	4	19	36	100
The Education People	0	0	0	1	1
Community Learning and Skills	0	0	0	0	0
Closed by LGSCO – not sent to KCC	0	0	2	29	22
Closed under CYPE but not CYPE services	0	0	4	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>195</b>

**Table 20 - Growth, Environment and Transport**

	Upheld	Not upheld	Closed: out of jurisdiction/no further action or withdrawn	Premature	Total
Environment & Waste	0	0	2	1	3
Growth and Communities (inc LRA)	0	0	0	0	0
Highways & Transportation	0	1	34	1	36
Closed by LGSCO – not sent to KCC	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40</b>

**Table 21 – Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive Departments**

Upheld	Not upheld	Closed: out of jurisdiction/no further action or withdrawn	Premature	Total
0	0	7	2	9

**Table 22 - Adult Social Care and Health**

Upheld	Not upheld	Closed: out of jurisdiction/no further action or withdrawn	Premature	Total
13	5	23	6	47

### 13. LESSONS LEARNED

13.1 Where the Ombudsman has made a decision against the Council, steps are taken by officers in the service to ensure that any lessons learned are applied across the service to improve the customer experience and avoid any further complaints of a similar nature.

13.2 With regards to lessons learned across the Council, the following table shows a list of actions that have been recorded where they exceed 100 complaints.

**Table 23** - Top remedy actions

Action	Total	%
Formal apology	891	33%
Explanation	565	21%
Financial remedy	282	10%
Provided service requested	281	10%
Arrange staff training or guidance	241	9%
Discuss at team meeting	156	6%
Change or review communications	102	4%

12.1 Below are summaries of the most common actions taken as a result of complaints;

1. **Apologies and Acknowledgements:** issuing apologies for various issues such as delays, errors, and poor service. These apologies are often accompanied by acknowledgements of the inconvenience or distress caused to the customers.
2. **Improving Communication:** A number of actions focus on improving communication with customers. This includes ensuring timely updates, clarifying processes, and providing clear information to avoid misunderstandings.
3. **Conducting Assessments:** actions taken here include the scheduling and completion of various assessments, including care needs assessments, financial assessments, and mental capacity assessments. These actions aim to ensure that customers receive appropriate support based on their needs.
4. **Providing Training:** Training is often taken to address issues raised by customers. This includes refresher training for staff, training on specific policies, and training to improve customer service skills.
5. **Reviewing Processes:** Many actions in these instances involve reviewing and improving existing processes to prevent future issues. This includes reviewing communication methods, assessment procedures, and service delivery standards.

12.2 An Organisational Learning Panel has been established and will meet for the first time in October 2025. This group will review cases which may have organisational wide learning opportunities. Representatives from across KCC will attend.

## 14. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report for assurance.

13.2 The Committee is asked to review the self-assessment form in appendix C and comment on the Council's commitment with regards to the LGSCO's code of complaint handling.

Report Author:

Pascale Blackburn-Clarke  
Customer Experience and Relationship Manager  
03000 417025  
Pascale.blackburn-clarke@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Corporate Director:

Amanda Beer, Chief Executive  
03000 415835  
Amanda.beer@kent.gov.uk

## Appendix A – Directorate overview of Customer Feedback Received

### Children, Young People and Education

#### All Feedback Reported

	Complaints (Stage One)	Comments	Compliments	Resolved Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries & complaints*
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>1164</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>2022/23</b>	<b>1240</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>121</b>

The below table compares the number of complaints received in 2024/25 with those received in 2022/23 and 2023/24

Service	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Integrated Children's Services	<b>991</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>452</b>
Education (includes Community Learning & Skills)	<b>236</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>150</b>
SEN & Disabled Children's Services	<b>n/a</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>464</b>
Corporate Directors Office (includes The Education People)	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Total Complaints</b>	<b>1240</b>	<b>1164</b>	<b>1266</b>



## KCC Annual Customer Feedback Report 2024/25

### Growth, Environment and Transport

#### All Feedback Reported

	Complaints (Stage one)	Comments	Compliments	Resolved Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries & complaints*
2024/25	2932	3194	909	40
2023/24	3157	1233	702	33
2022/23	3231	196	662	26

The below table compares the number of complaints received in 2024/25 with those received in 2022/23 and 2023/24

Service	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Environment ( <i>was Environment, Planning and Enforcement</i> )	145	73	103
Growth & Communities ( <i>was Economic Development</i> )	4	96	68
Highways and Transportation	2822	2565	2267
Waste	n/a	235	323
Libraries, Registrations and Archives	260	187	171
GET Corporate Directors Office	n/a	1	0
<b>Total Complaints</b>	<b>3231</b>	<b>3157</b>	<b>2932</b>

## KCC Annual Customer Feedback Report 2024/25

### Adult Social Care and Health

#### All Feedback Reported

	Complaints (Stage One)	Comments	Compliments	Resolved Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries & complaints*
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>1064</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>2022/23</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>48</b>

The below table compares the number of complaints received in 2024/25 with those received in 2022/23 and 2023/24

Service	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Adult Social Care and Health	<b>958</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>1064</b>
<b>Total Complaints</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>1064</b>

## KCC Annual Customer Feedback Report 2024/25

### Strategic and Corporate Services

#### All Feedback Recorded

	Complaints (Stage One)	Comments	Compliments	Resolved Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries & complaints*
2024/25	130	378	40	9
2023/24	173	514	23	7
2022/23	151	39	22	4

The below table compares the number of complaints received in 2024/25 with those received in 2022/23 and 2023/24

Service	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Finance (includes Insurance)	26	47	30
Governance, Law and Democracy ( <i>was FOI</i> )	15	31	15
Marketing and Resident Experience	41	36	63
Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance	34	3	5
Infrastructure	11	32	16
Strategic Commissioning (includes Public Health)	1	6	1
Other including HR	10	18	0
<b>Total Complaints</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>130</b>

## **Appendix B**

### **Ombudsman Letter**

**Appendix – C – Self Assessment**