



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Agenda

10.00 am

Thursday, 5 September 2024

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.

1. Introductions/Attendance at Meeting
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny held on 27 June 2024 (Pages 3 - 6)
4. Performance Indicators - Quarter 4 2023/24 – Report of the Assistant Director Community Services, Assistant Director Economic Growth, Assistant Director Law and Governance, Assistant Director Housing and Revenues and Assistant Director Resources (Pages 7 - 36)
5. Revenue Budget Monitoring 2024/25 - Quarter 1 – Report of the Assistant Director Resources (Pages 37 - 64)
6. Annual Review of the Investment Fund - Update – Report of the Assistant Director Resources (Pages 65 - 72)
7. Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 1 2024/25 – Report of the Assistant Director Transport and Capital Projects (Pages 73 - 88)
8. Complaints Made To The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and The Housing Ombudsman Service –

Report of the Complaints and Information Governance Manager
(Pages 89 - 102)

9. Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2023 2024 – Report of the Complaints and Information Governance Manager (Pages 103 - 250)
10. Work Programme – Report of the Assistant Director Law and Governance (Pages 251 - 266)
11. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting
12. Questions



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 28 August 2024

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

Councillors Allen, Baker, Dillon, Durham, Haszeldine, Henderson, Marshall, McGill, Ray and Mrs Scott

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Olivia Hugill, Democratic Officer, Operations Group, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays E-mail: Olivia.hugill@darlington.gov.uk

ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 27 June 2024

PRESENT – Councillors , Allen, Baker, Dillon, Durham, Haszeldine, Henderson, McGill, Ray and Mrs Scott

ABSENT – Councillors Marshall

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Porter and McEwan

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Mark Ladyman (Assistant Director Economic Growth), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Brian Robson (Head of Capital Projects), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues) and Olivia Hugill (Democratic Officer)

ER95 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25

RESOLVED – That Councillor Baker be appointed as Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

ER96 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25

RESOLVED – That Councillor Dillon be appointed as Vice-Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

ER97 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

ER98 TO CONSIDER THE TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25 ON THE DATES AGREED IN THE CALENDAR OF MEETINGS BY CABINET AT MINUTE C106/FEB/24

RESOLVED – It was agreed that for the Municipal Year 2024/25, meetings of this Scrutiny Committee be held at 10.00 a.m. on the dates agreed in the Calendar of Meetings by Cabinet at Minute C106/Feb/24.

ER99 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 APRIL 2024:

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 11 April 2024 be approved as a correct record.

ER100 PROJECT POSITION STATEMENT AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING OUTTURN 23/24

The Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects and the Assistant Director Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the current position in

relation to the delivery of the Council's Capital Programme, the financial outturn positions as 31 March 2024 and the proposed financing of the 2023/24 capital expenditure, together with an update on the current status of all construction projects being undertaken by the Council.

It was reported that there had been significant enhancements made to the Council's assets in three major programme areas of schools, housing and transport which used mainly external funding as well as several other largescale schemes in the Borough. The investments delivered a wide range of improvements to the Council's assets and most importantly to Council services. This included refurbishments of Council homes, improved learning environments in schools, better traffic flows and opportunities for sustainable travel.

The report detailed the total capital expenditure for 2023/24 was £60.084m. The report also included that the Council currently had 27 live projects with an overall project outturn value of £158.405m. Most projects have been running to time, cost and quality expectations with no foreseeable issues.

Discussion ensued around the Skinnergate project and the delay in demolition, members wanted clarification whether the demolition had started yet. Conversation merged into Darlington Station Demolitions, whether the compensation amount has been agreed yet and if this will affect the programme itself. The report stated that the Railway Heritage Quarter had a significant amount of money still in dispute, Members wanted to understand if this would be resolved at the end of the contract.

Members wanted officers to expand on the risks and disputes as detailed in the report for the Railway Heritage Quarter, whether the risks were unusual for this type of construction project.

Members questioned why cost inflation is not reflected in Appendix 6 for the Library, officers confirmed it is factored in and will be reflected next time. Members also questioned if the replacement of electric/old gas Boilers scheme is part of the heat scheme that is used amongst other Councils.

RESOLVED – That the report be approved.

ER101 REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2023/24

The Assistant Director Resources submitted a report (previously circulated), which was being considered by Cabinet at its meeting scheduled for 16th July 2024, requesting Members to consider the 2023/24 revenue outturn.

It was reported that the Council's General Fund reserves position at the 31 March 2024 is £17.667m, which is an improvement of £0.545m on the planned balances in the 2023-27 MTFP. This improvement related to the £0.485m underspend in the Council's 2022/23 financial results, £1.059m projected Group overspends in the 2023/24 financial year and a £1.119m improvement in corporate resources. The report included a number of carry forward requests which will assist with projected slippage and pressures in the coming year.

Discussion ensued around the improvements going forward and how this affects the financial

situation. Members scrutinised the overspend on agency staff and how we will be able to cease this.

The report stated that following a year end reconciliation of the concessionary fare scheme by TVCA, the council was refunded £0.103m, Members wanted clarification around what the refund will be used on. Members scrutinised the decrease in income from the crematorium and wanted to understand what has been put into effect to increase the income.

Discussion continued around the Council's use of Artificial Intelligence, Members wanted to understand what this meant and how it will be used. Members wanted clarification around the Housing Revenue Account outturn regarding collection of rent and the bad debt provision, is this is normal and how this can be resolved?

RESOLVED – That the item be approved.

ER102 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the work programme for this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

Members proposed the following items be added to the Work Programme, Market Asset Management, Office Demand Study, Agile Working, Cost of Living Support, Artificial Intelligence and the use of this, Section 106 Funding, Railway Heritage Quarter (Hopetown), Usage of the Council assets, and Procurement.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be noted.

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ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 5 SEPTEMBER 2024

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QTR 4 2023/24

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2023/24 at Quarter 4.

Background

2. This report provides performance information in line with an indicator set and scrutiny committee distribution agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 4 June 2018, and subsequently by scrutiny committee chairs.
3. The indicators included in this report are aligned with key priorities. Other indicators may be referenced when appropriate in narrative provided by the relevant assistant directors, when providing the committee with performance updates.
4. 22 indicators are reported to the committee, 18 of them are updated on a six-monthly basis and all 22 annually.
5. One indicator is reported by Culture, three by Planning, five by Economic Growth, two by Human Resources, one by Health & Safety, two by Complaints & Information Governance, four by Housing, one by Legal, and three by Environmental Health.

2022/23 comparison to 2023/24

Culture

6. The weekly average footfall in the town centre decreased (CUL 080a – 251,691 to 237,731). A comprehensive programme of 59 events were delivered throughout the year to attract people to the town. A marketing campaign with video was released to attract new businesses, getting 30,000 views. The redevelopment of the covered market is well advanced. Occupancy rates in the town centre is currently at 88%. Investment from the Towns Fund is ongoing to support the High Street.

Planning

7. The percentage of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within an agreed time decreased (ECI 104 – 89.5% to 84.6%). 11 of the 13 applications were decided within the target time. The two that did not meet the deadline were delayed by the Extension of Time date not being extended to cover the signing of S106 agreements.

8. The percentage of non-major planning developments decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time increased (ECI 105 – 92.4% to 96.6%). There were 345 decisions issued for the 357 applications received. The most frequent reason for cause of delay was the Nutrient Neutrality Certification. All 12 of the decisions that did not meet the deadline were decided within 26 weeks.
9. The percentage of non-major planning developments decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time over the last 24 months increased (ECI 106 – 91.8% to 94.4%). There were 752 decisions issued for the 710 applications received. The most frequent reasons for cause of delay are the Nutrient Neutrality Certification and missing of Extension of Time targets. Darlington percentage is above both the latest North East and England averages.

Economic Growth

10. The monthly unemployment claimant count percentage decreased (ECI 321 - 4.3% to 4.2%). It has remained relatively static since April 2022. This trend is mirrored in both regional and national statistics. Darlington's rate is marginally higher than England (4.1%) and lower than North East (4.7%).
11. The economically active rate increased (ECI 327 – 80.3% to 84.6%), better than the North East (74.6%) and England (78.8%) average. Working age economically inactive people have various reasons for not looking for and/or being able to start work, e.g., students, sickness, caring and family responsibilities and early retirement.
12. The average (median) annual income for Darlington residents increased (ECI 329 - £25,811 to £27,282), above the North East (£26,952) but below the England (£29,919) averages. Annual income increased by 5.7%, a rate that is lower than the England and North East rates of 6.8% and 6.7% respectively.
13. The average (median) annual income for Darlington employees increased (ECI 329 - £25,155 to £26,509), below the North East (£26,576) and England (£29,995) averages. This represents 4 years in a row of year-on-year increases. Residents of Darlington have a higher average income than those employees who work in the borough.
14. The number of new homes delivered within the year decreased (ECI 401 - 516 to 359). Housing delivery has seen a drop in the 2023/24 financial year largely due to the delayed 'lag' effect as a result of the Nutrient Neutrality designation affecting the whole Tees Catchment. Applications are now progressing and gaining consent largely due to the Natural England Nutrient Neutrality credits scheme in which the borough fared well in the proportion of credits allocated.

Human Resources

15. The number of working days per full-time equivalent (FTE) lost due to sickness by Council employed staff decreased in 2023/24 (FHR 001 – 9.6 to 9.3), an improvement of 0.29 days on 2022/23. Managers at all levels continue to manage sickness within their teams, using the Council's sickness management policies, supported by Human Resources officers. The Wellbeing programme continues to produce benefits to the

workforce and the Council as a whole, with further development and events planned for 2024/25.

16. The percentage of voluntary leavers decreased in 2023/24 (FHR 019 – 10.0% to 8.3%). Exit surveys and interviews are carried out to help understand why employees leave the Council and to inform on improvements. 85% of employees who completed an exit survey said they would work for the Council again. Work has been completed on personal development reviews with the Council rolling out the new "My Journey process", incorporating succession planning and further promotion of employee engagement. We continue to develop and improve our employment package to ensure the Council attracts and retains the best talent for all roles.

Health and Safety Indicators

17. The number of reportable employee accidents / ill health to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations decreased in 2023/24 (FHR 003 - 15 to 11). All accidents and ill health reports are investigated by management and the Health & Safety team to establish the causes, to identify issues or trends and make recommendations to prevent reoccurrence. Health and Safety is a key priority for the Council at all levels and is promoted through all working practices.

Complaints and Information Governance Indicators

18. The number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman increased (FHR 008 - 6 to 10). The eight complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman related to the following service areas, Adult Services (1), Children Services (2), Commissioning & Contracts (2), Education and Inclusion (2) and Finance (1). The one complaint upheld by the Housing Ombudsman related to Housing Management Services (1) and Income Management (1).
19. The number of complaints upheld by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) increased (FHR 009 - 6 to 9). Five of the nine upheld complaints related to delays in responding to Subject Access Requests (SARs). Risk of enforcement action from the ICO in relation to SARs remains on the Council's Risk Register and work is ongoing to reduce that risk below the risk appetite line. The other four were for, retaining a former employee's data for longer than retention period, data breaches (2), and delay of an e-mail response to an FOI request.

Housing and Revenues Indicators

20. The amount of Council Tax arrears collected decreased (HBS 002 - £1,971,156 to £1,880,721) but exceeded the target for the year. The higher amount collected last year was due to the restarting of recovery action of arrears following the Covid pandemic. This recovery action is ongoing. The amount of outstanding arrears decreased from £4.3 million to £4.2million over the last financial year, even with the current cost of living pressures.

21. The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered decreased (HBS 003 - £635,633 to £543,542), falling below the target for the year. Collection rates are currently at 126% of the new overpayment debt created (£431k), and the overall outstanding debt has decreased (currently at £1.34 million). It is likely that as Housing Benefit claims continue to transfer to Universal Credit, the amount of Housing Benefit overpayments created (and therefore the amount collected) will decrease.
22. The percentage of Council Tax collected in-year has increased (HBS 009 – 96.1% to 96.4%), exceeding the target for the year. The collection rate of 96.39% is the highest it has been since 2010-11 and is above both the North-East average (94.93%) and the England average (95.94%). The overall amount collected in 2023/24 was £72.5 million compared to £68.4 million last year.
23. The percentage of Business Rates collected in-year increased (HBS 010 – 99.79% to 99.97%), exceeding the target for the year and is the highest collection rate in the North-East (average of 97.78%) and the fourth highest in England (average 97.23%). The overall amount collected in 2023/24 was £31.2 million compared to £31.8 million last year.

Legal

24. The percentage of contracted spend as a percentage of total non-salary spend increased (LGP 008 – 83.9% to 80.0%). The continued engagement with departments through communication announcements and checking of spend against the Contracts Register on a regular basis have helped officers with their understanding of the authority procurement procedure.

Environmental Health

25. The percentage of food premises which are inspected within the year in which they are due increased (REG 301 – 65.8% to 96.6%). Following the pandemic officers have been engaged in a Post Covid Recovery Plan. All inspections were triaged in terms of risk and inspected accordingly. The backlog of 1,000 inspections has been cleared and overdue inspections completed by the food safety team using a range of resources, including out of hours inspections and contract inspectors to carry out this work.
26. The percentage of premises broadly compliant for food hygiene increased (REG 308 – 99.0% to 99.2%). The consistent high level of compliance is due to a robust, consistent, and proportionate advice, inspection, and enforcement regime by officers.
27. The percentage noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt increased (REG 312a – 96.8% to 97.8%). The 90% target continues to be achieved even though the number of complaints has increased. There were 911 complaints in 2023/24, 347 relating to barking dogs, 366 other types of domestic noise and 81 about commercial and industrial premises.

Performance Summary

- 28. All 22 indicators had Quarter 4 data to report.
- 29. When taking into consideration what is best performance for each indicator:
 - a) 15 of the 22 indicators have increased when compared to the previous year.
 - b) 7 of the 18 indicators have decreased when compared to the previous year.
- 30. A detailed performance scorecard is attached at Appendix 1.
- 31. Detailed performance and narratives for each indicator is attached at Appendix 2.

Recommendation

- 32. It is recommended that performance information provided in this report is reviewed and noted, and relevant queries raised with appropriate Assistant Directors.

Ian Thompson
Assistant Director – Community Services
Mark Ladyman
Assistant Director – Economic Growth
Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director – Law and Governance
Anthony Sandys
Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues
Brett Nielsen
Assistant Director – Resources

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Council Plan	<p>This report contributes to the Council Plan by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key priorities</p> <p>ECONOMY - building a strong sustainable economy and highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all.</p> <p>HOMES – affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents</p>
Addressing inequalities	<p>This report supports the promotion of diversity</p> <p>There are no specific indicators on inequalities contained within this report</p>

Tackling Climate Change	There are no specific carbon impact issues in this report. There are no specific indicators on climate change contained within this report
Efficient and effective use of resources	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes. This report has no impact on the Council's Efficiency Programme.
Health and Wellbeing	This report supports performance improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Councils Crime and Disorder responsibilities
Wards Affected	This report supports performance improvement across all Wards
Groups Affected	This report supports performance improvement which benefits all groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

Economy and Resources												Scrutiny Committee 2023 - 2024 QUARTER 4			APPENDIX 1		
												Year End data direction of travel					
Indicator	Title	Return Format	Reported	What is best	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024 - Qtr 1	2023/2024 - Qtr 2	2023/2024 - Qtr 3	2023/2024 - Qtr 4	Qtr 4 - 2021/2022 compared to 2020/2021	Qtr 4 - 2022/2023 compared to 2021/2022	Qtr 4 - 2023/2024 compared to 2022/2023			
CUL 080a	Town centre footfall weekly average	Number	Monthly	Higher	139,536	274,444	251,691	298,884	280,682	267,317	237,731	↑	↓	↓			
ECI 104	% of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)	Percentage	Quarterly	Higher	80.0%	85.7%	89.5%	100.0%	85.7%	83.3%	84.6%	↑	↑	↓			
ECI 105	% of non major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)	Percentage	Quarterly	Higher	85.0%	91.3%	92.4%	93.9%	94.9%	96.0%	96.6%	↑	↑	↑			
ECI 106	24 months to date % of non major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)	Percentage	Quarterly	Higher	85.6%	88.5%	91.8%	92.4%	92.2%	93.1%	94.4%	↑	↑	↑			
ECI 321	Monthly unemployed claimant count	Percentage	Monthly	Lower	7.22%	4.57%	4.33%	4.21%	4.25%	4.18%	4.22%	↑	↑	↑			
ECI 327	Economically active rate	Percentage	Quarterly	Higher	77.8%	81.1%	80.3%	82.7%	84.1%	82.4%	84.6%	↑	↓	↑			
ECI 329	Average annual income - Darlington residents	£	Annually	Higher	£24,146	£24,784	£25,811	Annual indicators no data to report for these quarters			£27,282	↑	↑	↑			
ECI 330	Average annual income - Darlington employees	£	Annually	Higher	£23,299	£24,689	£25,155				£26,509	↑	↑	↑			
ECI 401	New homes delivered against annual target	Number	Quarterly	Higher	545	511	516	83	173	298	359	↓	↑	↓			
FHR 001	Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools)	Average Days	Monthly	Lower	6.7	8.2	9.6	1.9	4.3	6.9	9.3	↓	↓	↑			
FHR 003	Number of reportable employee accidents / ill health	Number	Quarterly	Lower	5	12	15	3	7	9	11	↓	↓	↑			
FHR 008	Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman	Number	Quarterly	Lower	5	7	6	1	5	9	10	↓	↑	↓			
FHR 009	Number of complaints upheld by the Information Commissioners Office	Number	Quarterly	Lower	1	2	6	5	6	8	9	↓	↓	↓			
FHR 019	Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers	Percentage	Quarterly	Lower	6.6%	10.5%	10.0%	2.1%	4.2%	6.3%	8.3%	↓	↑	↑			
HBS 002	Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected	£	Monthly	Higher	£1,234,774	£1,546,390	£1,971,156	£359,484	£991,422	£1,505,217	£1,880,721	↑	↑	↓			
HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered	£	Quarterly	Higher	£646,397	£568,423	£635,633	£120,048	£327,697	£433,888	£543,542	↓	↑	↓			
HBS 009	% of Council Tax collected in year	Percentage	Monthly	Higher	95.75%	94.87%	96.09%	27.08%	52.91%	78.79%	96.39%	↓	↑	↑			
HBS 010	% of Business Rates collected in-year	Percentage	Monthly	Higher	97.06%	98.08%	99.79%	33.19%	58.87%	84.85%	99.97%	↑	↑	↑			
LGP 008	Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend	Percentage	Quarterly	Higher	86.6%	85.6%	83.9%	84.6%	84.2%	89.2%	86.0%	↓	↓	↑			
REG 301	Environmental Health : % of food premises which are inspected within the financial year in which they are due	Percentage	Annually	Higher	18.1%	43.5%	65.7%	Annual indicators no data to report for			96.6%	↑	↑	↑			

Economy and Resources												Scrutiny Committee			2023			- 2024			QUARTER 4			APPENDIX 1		
												Year End data direction of travel														
Indicator	Title	Return Format	Reported	What is best	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024 - Qtr 1	2023/2024 - Qtr 2	2023/2024 - Qtr 3	2023/2024 - Qtr 4	Qtr 4 - 2021/2022 compared to 2020/2021	Qtr 4 - 2022/2023 compared to 2021/2022	Qtr 4 - 2023/2024 compared to 2022/2023												
REG 308	Environmental Health: % of premises broadly compliant for food hygiene	Percentage	Annually	Higher	97.7%	98.5%	99.0%	these quarters			99.2%	↑	↑	↑												
REG 312a	% of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)	Percentage	Quarterly	Higher	97.7%	95.6%	96.8%	97.5%	98.4%	98.2%	97.8%	↓	↑	↑												
									Better than =	↑		12	16	15												
									Not as good as =	↓		10	6	7												
									The same as =	↔		0	0	0												
									No comparative data	NA		0	0	0												
									Total			22	22	22												

DBC Number

CUL 080a

Indicator Name

Town centre footfall weekly average for the month

Theme or Portfolio

Stronger Communities Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Support the development of the town centre economy by putting appropriate measures in place and demonstrating it is a safe place to visit

Narrative

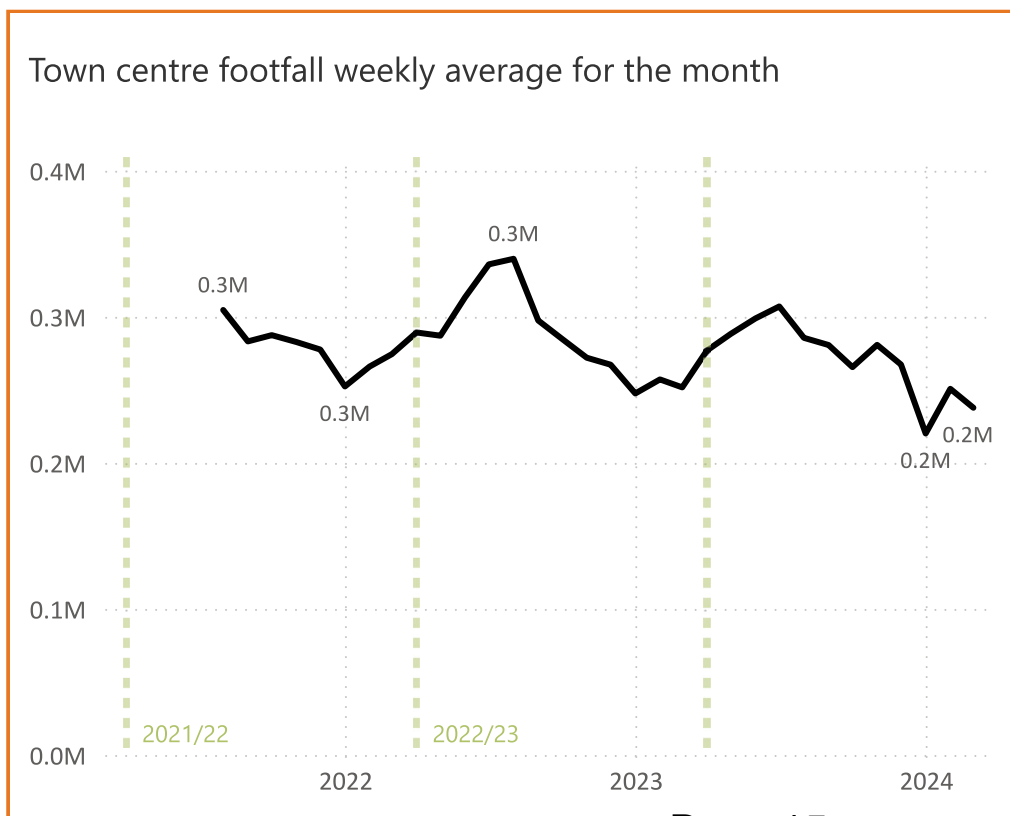
The average monthly footfall for 2023/24 has fallen slightly to 271,640 from 286,938 (2022/23), an average reduction of 5.3%. The months of May, November and December had increased footfall when compared to the previous year.

Investment from the Towns Fund is ongoing to support the High Street, a comprehensive programme of 59 events and animation programmes were delivered throughout the year to attract people to the town. A marketing campaign with video, was released to attract new businesses to the town that reached over 30,000 views across all media platforms.

The redevelopment of the covered market is well advanced, with a whole range of new traders now contracted to open soon.

Occupancy rates in the town centre are currently at 88%.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

ECI 104

Indicator Name

Percentage of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time

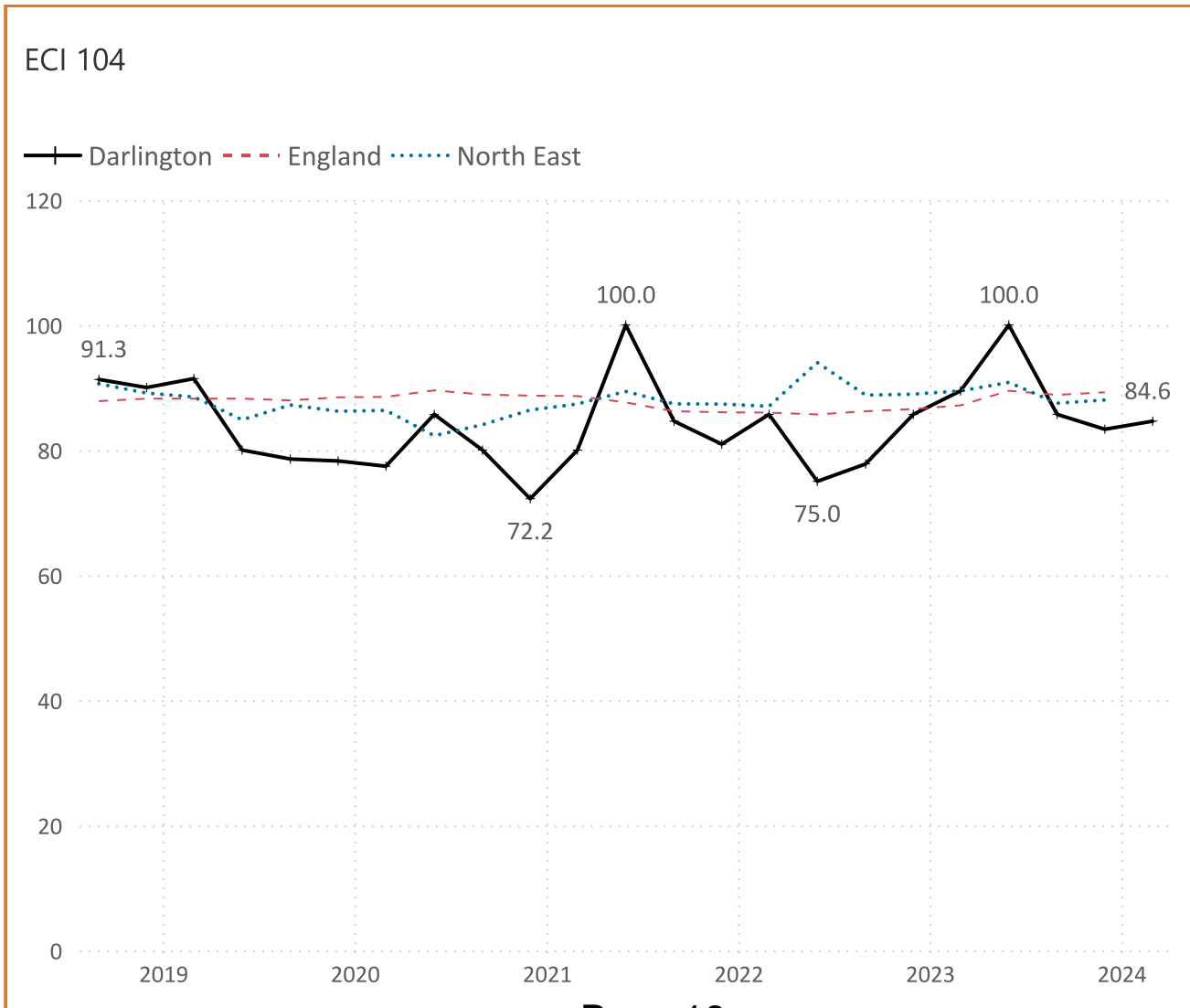
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

The percentage of major planning applications decisions decided within 13 weeks has fallen slightly from 89.4% for 2022/23 to 84.6% for 2023/24. This percentage is just below the December 2023 England average of 89.2% and North East average of 88.0%. A total of 11 major decisions were decided within 13 weeks from the annual total of 13. The two decisions that did not meet the deadline were delayed by the Extension of Time date not being extended to cover the signing of S106 agreements.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

ECI 105

Indicator Name

Percentage of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time

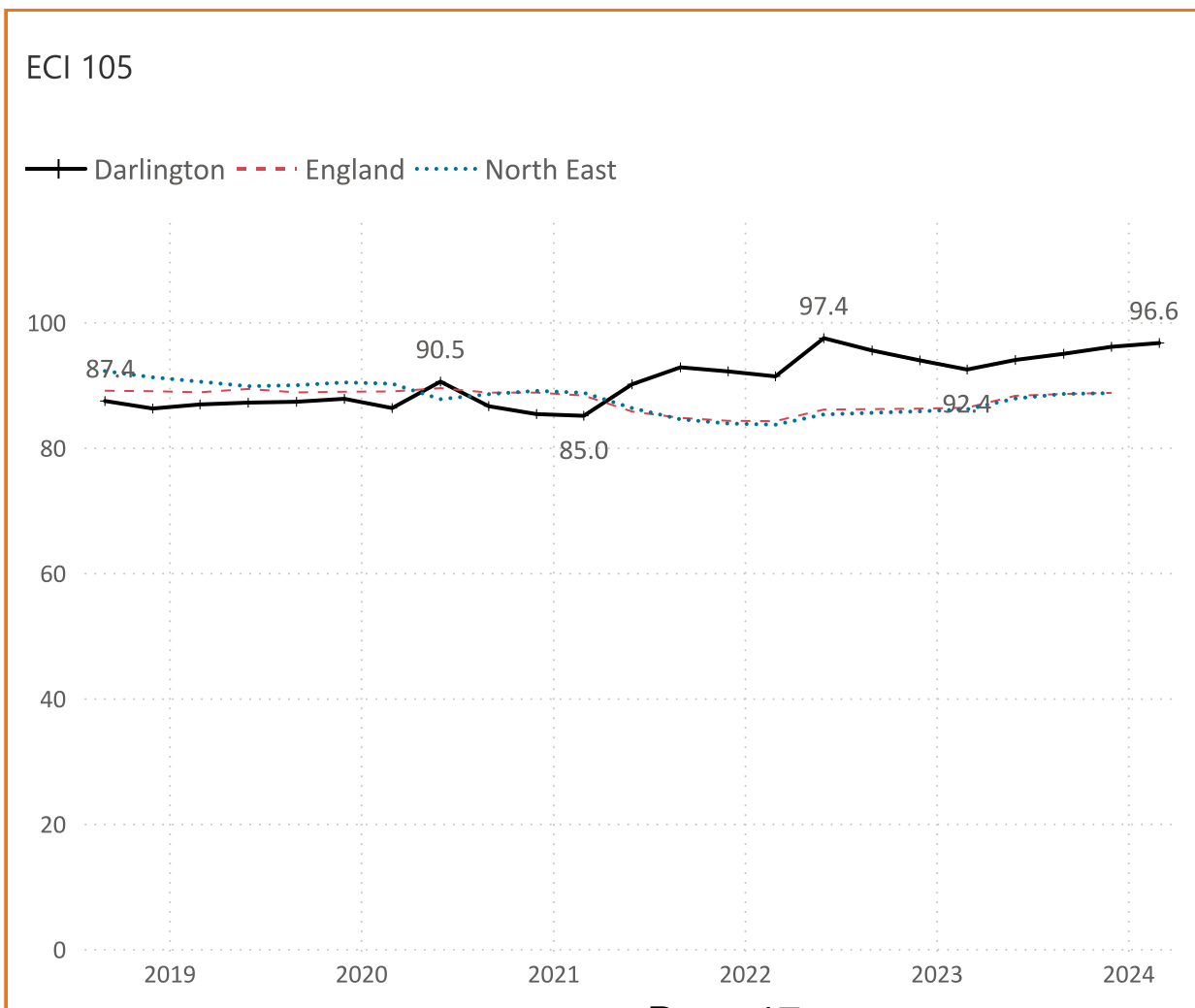
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

The percentage of non-major planning application decisions decided within 8 weeks has risen from 92.4% for 2022/23 to 96.6% for 2023/24. This percentage is above the December 2023 England average of 88.7% and North East average of 88.7%. Darlington's percentage has been above the England and North East average since June 2021. A total of 345 non-major decisions were decided within 8 weeks from the annual total of 357. 10 of the 12 decisions that did not meet the deadline occurred within the first 6 months of the financial year. All 12 of the decisions were decided within 26 weeks. They were delayed due to various issues the most frequent being caused by Nutrient Neutrality Certification

Graph/Table



DBC Number

ECI 106

Indicator Name

Percentage of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (24 months to date)

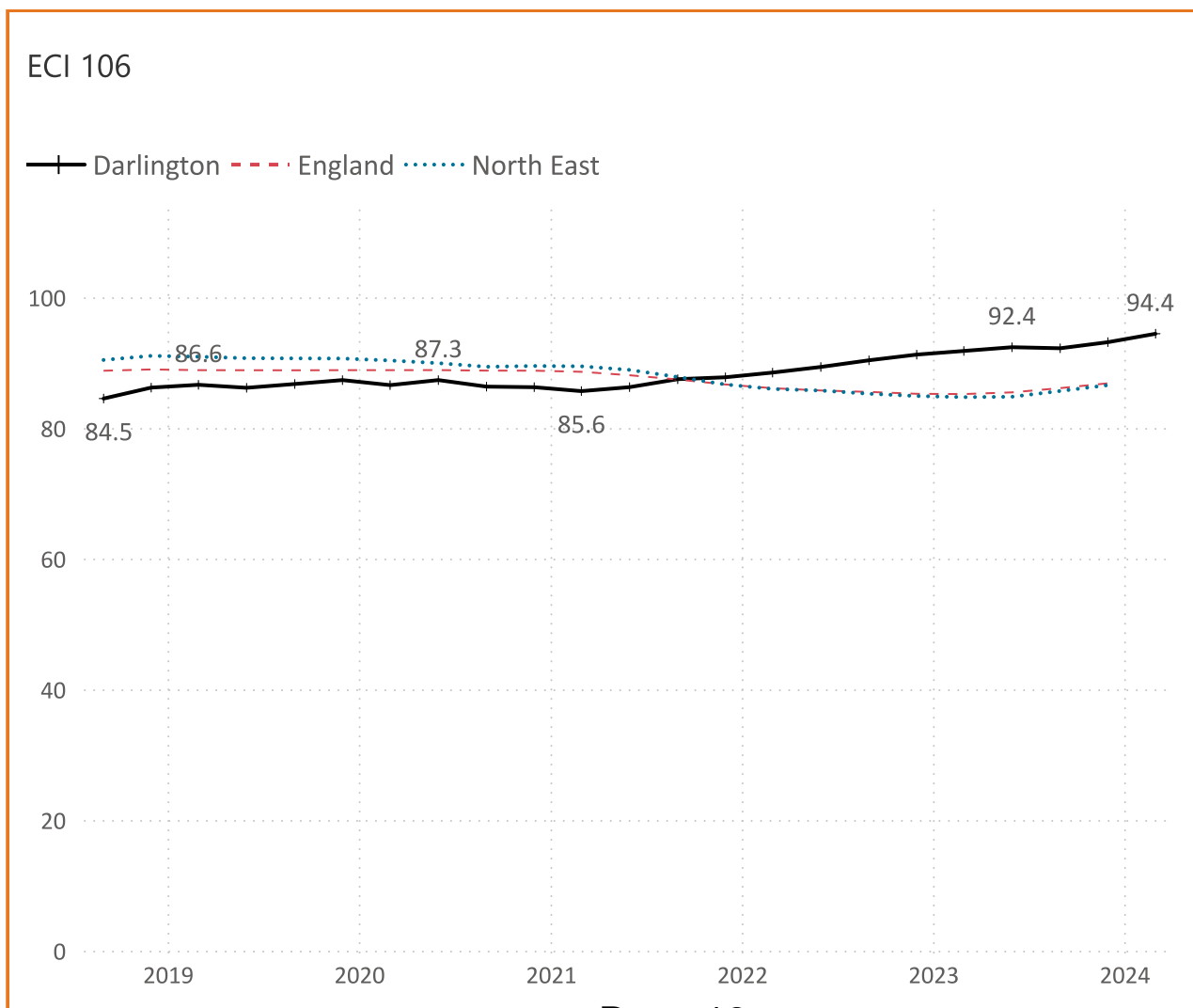
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

The percentage 24 month rolling percentage of non-major planning application decisions decided within 8 weeks has risen from 91.8% for 2022/23 to 94.4% for 2023/24. This percentage is above the December 2023 England average of 86.8% and North East average of 86.5%. Darlington's percentage has been above the England and North East average since December 2021. A 24 month total of 710 non-major decisions were decided within 8 weeks from the 24 month total of 752. The 42 which were not decided within the target were delayed due to various issues some by Nutrient Neutrality, some missing Extension of Time targets.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

ECI 321

Indicator Name

Monthly unemployed claimant count (%)

Theme or Portfolio

GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

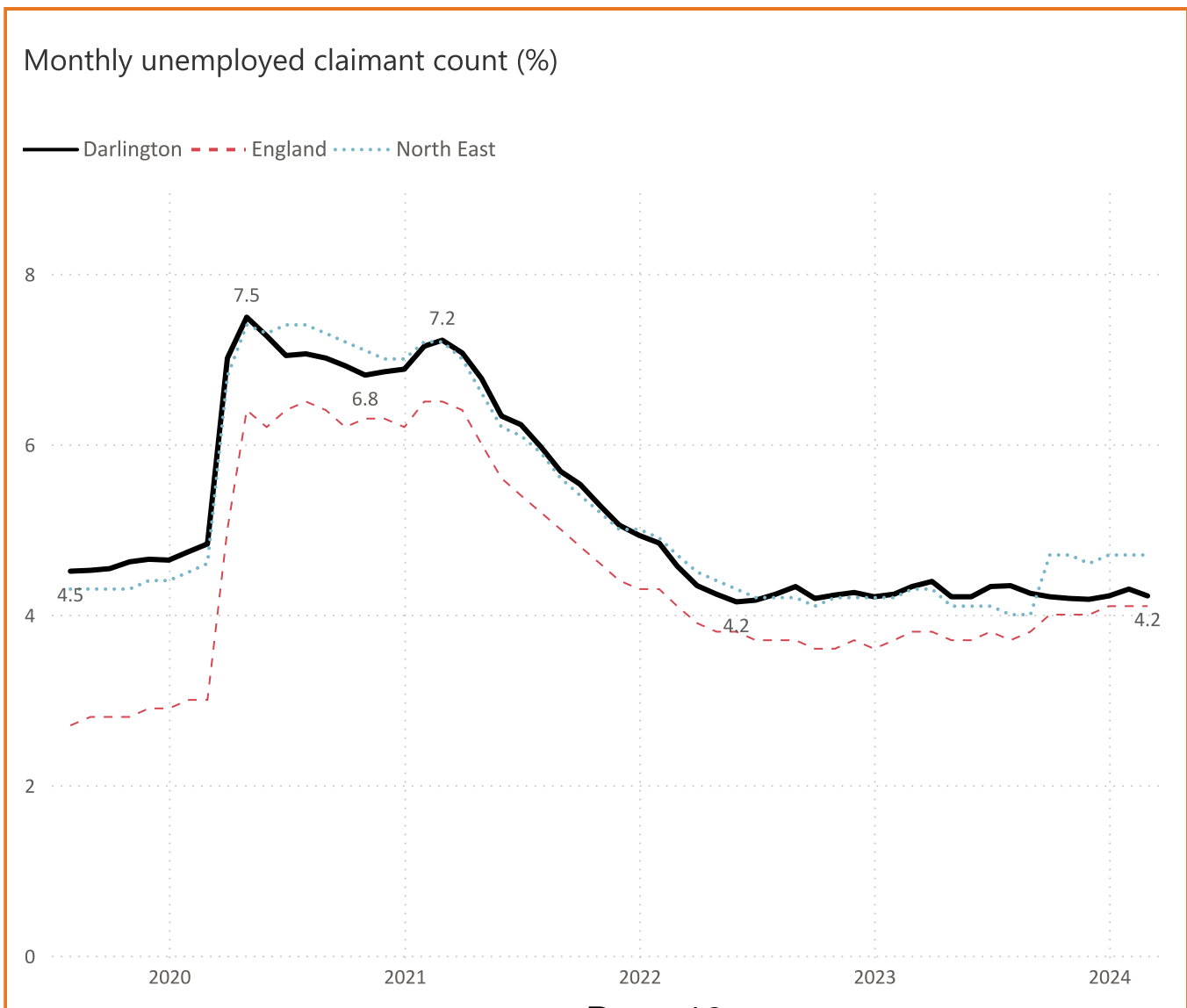
Priority or Key Action

Delivering - More sustainable well-paid jobs

Narrative

Since mid-2022 to date, the monthly unemployed claimant count in Darlington has remained relatively static - a trend which is mirrored in national statistics. The claimant count in March 2024 now stands at 4.2% (identical to July 2022). The rate in Darlington (4.2) is marginally higher than the England rate of 4.1%. The overall North East rate however is now at 4.7%, having increased from 4.2% since July 2022.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

ECI 327

Indicator Name

Percentage of working age adults who are economically active

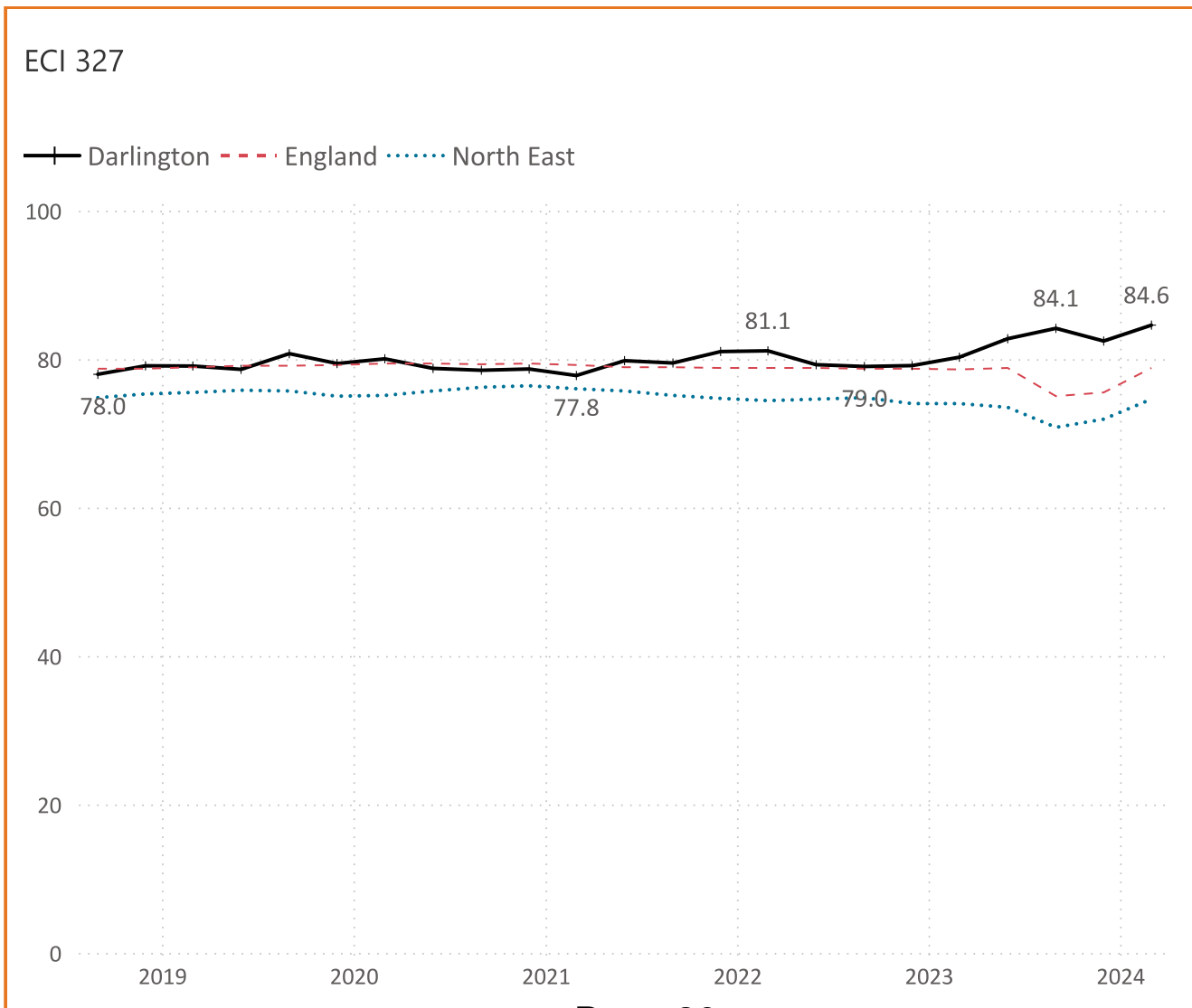
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

The Darlington economically active rate (employed and unemployed) has shown an increase from March 2023 and has now been higher than the rate for England and North East for the year. The percentage of working age adults who are economically active now stands at 84.57% (March 2024), a 5.4% increase since March 2023. Meanwhile the data for both the north-east and England has only slightly risen from March 2023, 74.6% in the North East, and 78.8% for England. Working-age economically inactive people have various reasons for not looking for and/or being able to start work. eg students, sickness, caring and family responsibilities and early retirement.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

ECI 329

Indicator Name

Average (median) annual income: Darlington residents

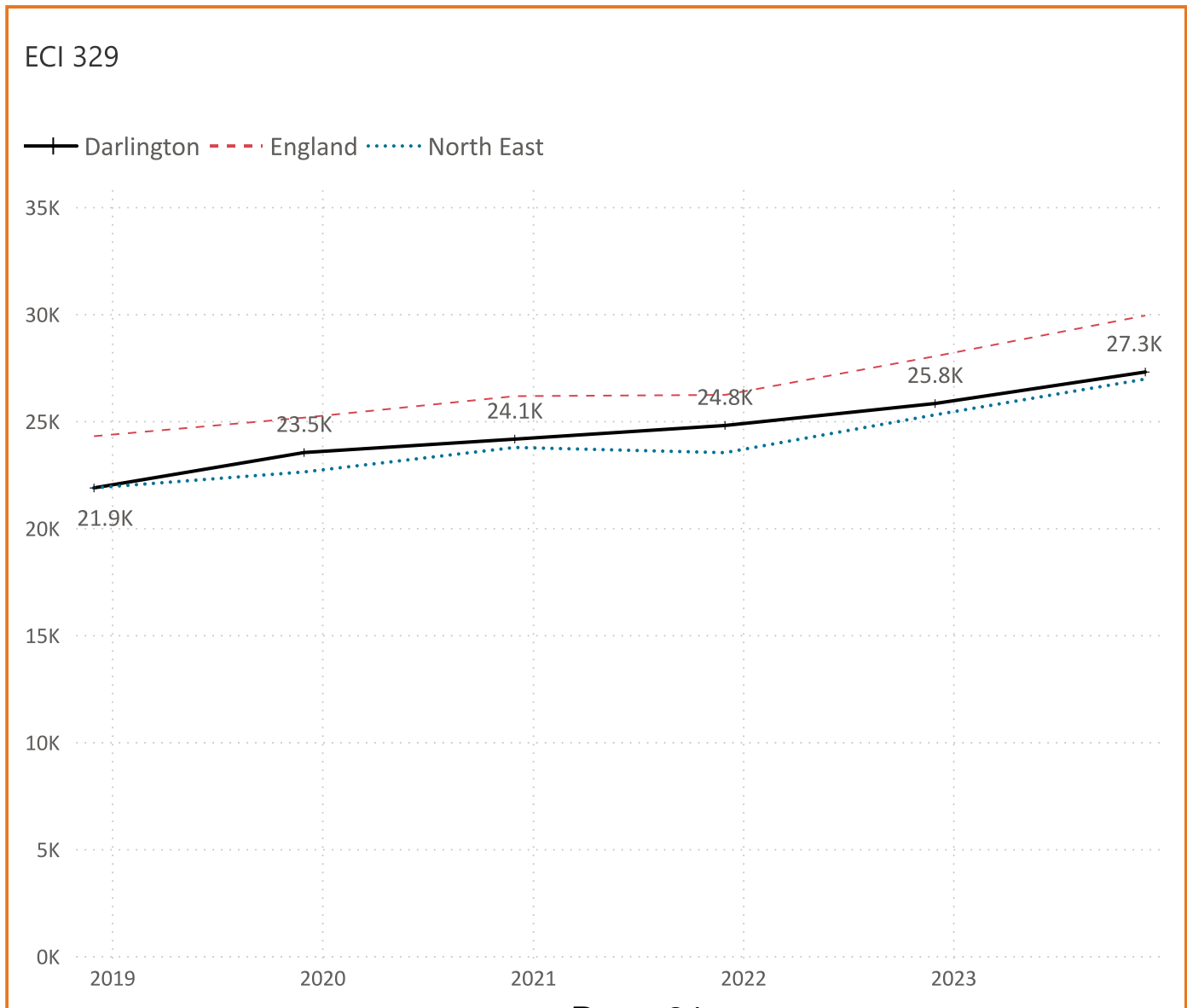
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

Darlington residents average (median) annual income has risen for the 5th year in succession to £27,282. This is slightly higher than the figure for the North east region (£26,952), but lower than the England average £29,919. Between December 2022 and December 2023, Darlington residents average (median) annual income increased by 5.7%, a rate that is lower than the England and North East rates of 6.8% and 6.7% respectively.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

ECI 330

Indicator Name

Average (median) annual income: Darlington employees

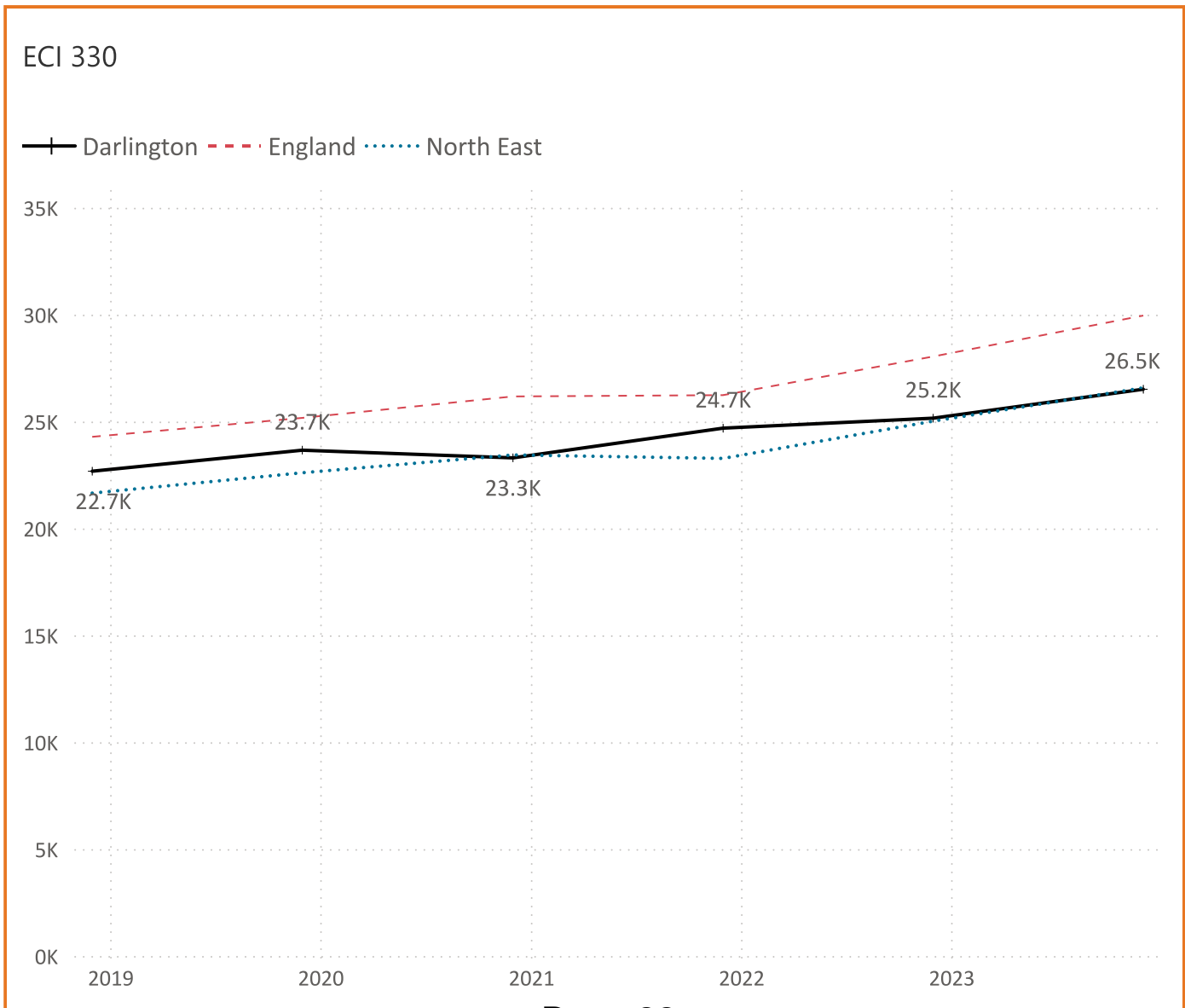
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

Employees average income in Darlington have increased in 2023 to £26,509 (5.4%) - this represents 4 years of year on year increases. The income level is similar to the North east average at £26,576, and below the England figure of £29,955. Residents who live in Darlington have a higher average income than those employees who work in the borough. However, 2023 saw a reduction in the gap between employees and resident average earnings.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

ECI 401

Indicator Name

New homes delivered, annually

Theme or Portfolio

GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

Priority or Key Action

Delivering - More homes

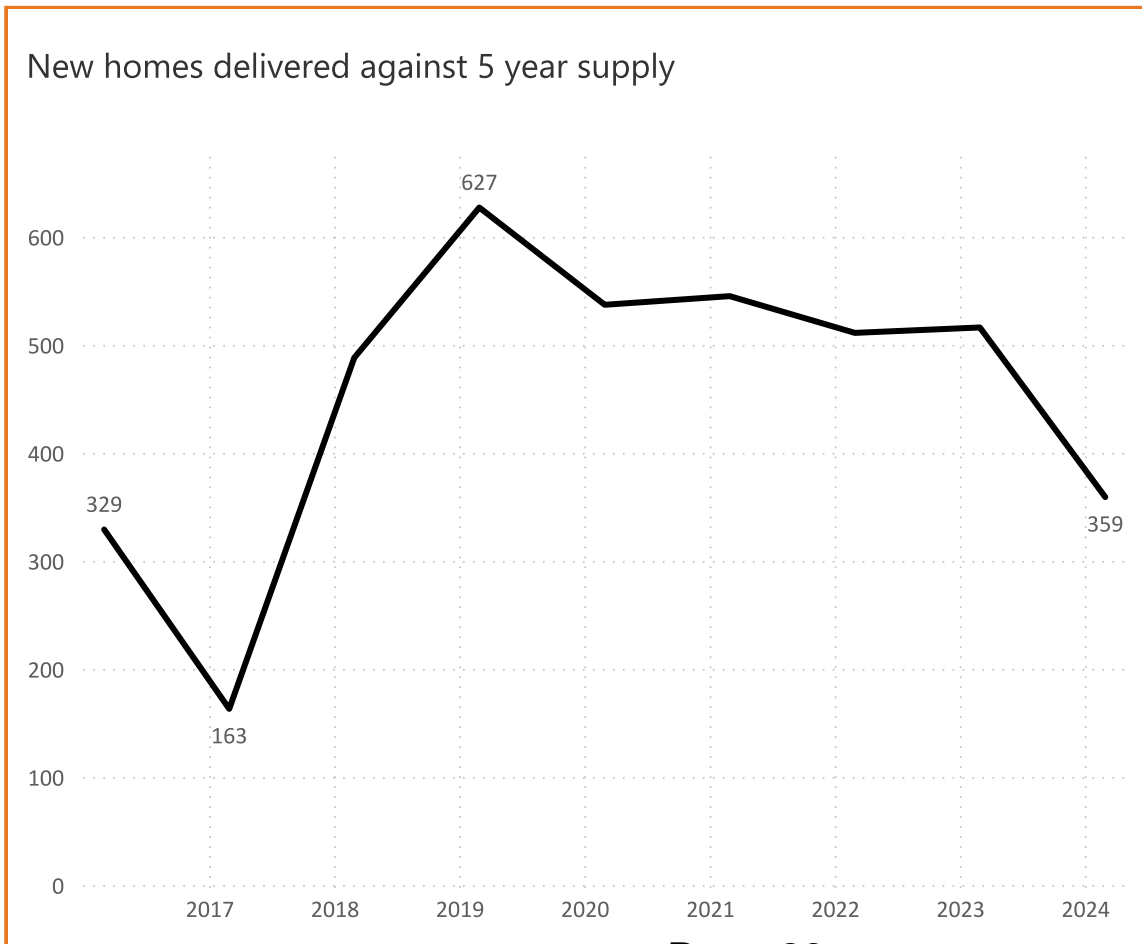
Narrative

Housing delivery has seen a drop in the 2023/24 financial year largely due to the delayed 'lag' effect as a result of the Nutrient Neutrality designation affecting the whole Tees Catchment.

Applications are now progressing and gaining consent largely due to the Natural England Nutrient Neutrality credits scheme. The borough has fared well in the proportion of credits allocated to developments in Darlington helping to unlock around 2000 homes.

Looking at the latest monitoring data on housing starts this lag in delivery may continue for the current financial year 2024/25 but will hopefully recover beyond that with the permissions currently being granted likely to have started building out.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

FHR 001

Indicator Name

DBC number of working days per FTE lost due to sickness (excluding schools)

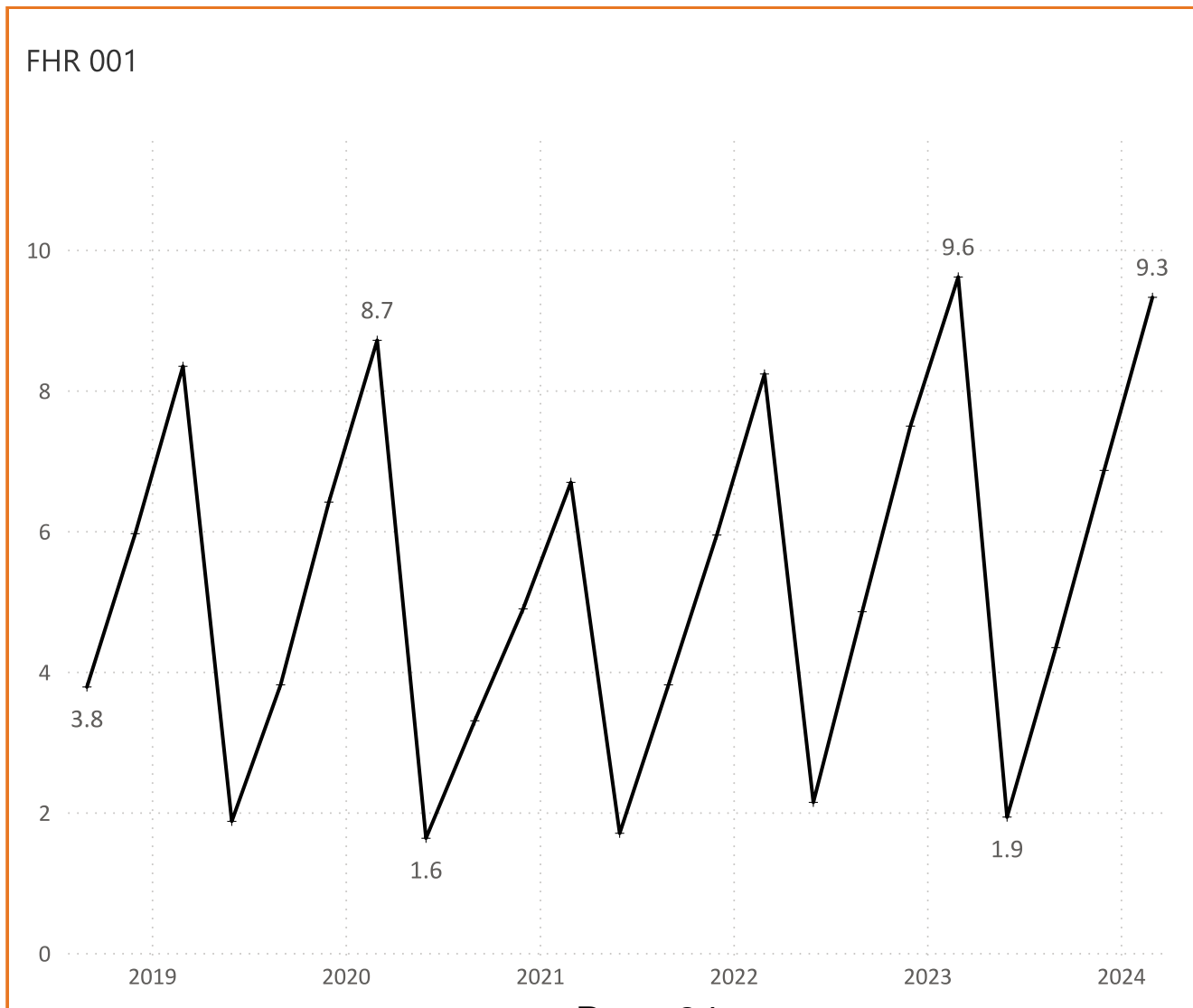
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

At the year end the number of days lost to sickness in 2023/24 has improved by 0.29 days per full time equivalent when compared to 2022/23. Managers at all levels continue to manage sickness within their teams, using the Council's sickness management policies, supported by Human Resources officers. The development of My Journey and the promotion of quality conversations between managers and their employees will compliment our wellbeing programme and assist with absence going forward. The Wellbeing programme continues to produce benefits to our workforce and Council as a whole, with further development and events planned for 2024/25.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

FHR 003

Indicator Name

Number of reportable employee accidents / ill health

Theme or Portfolio

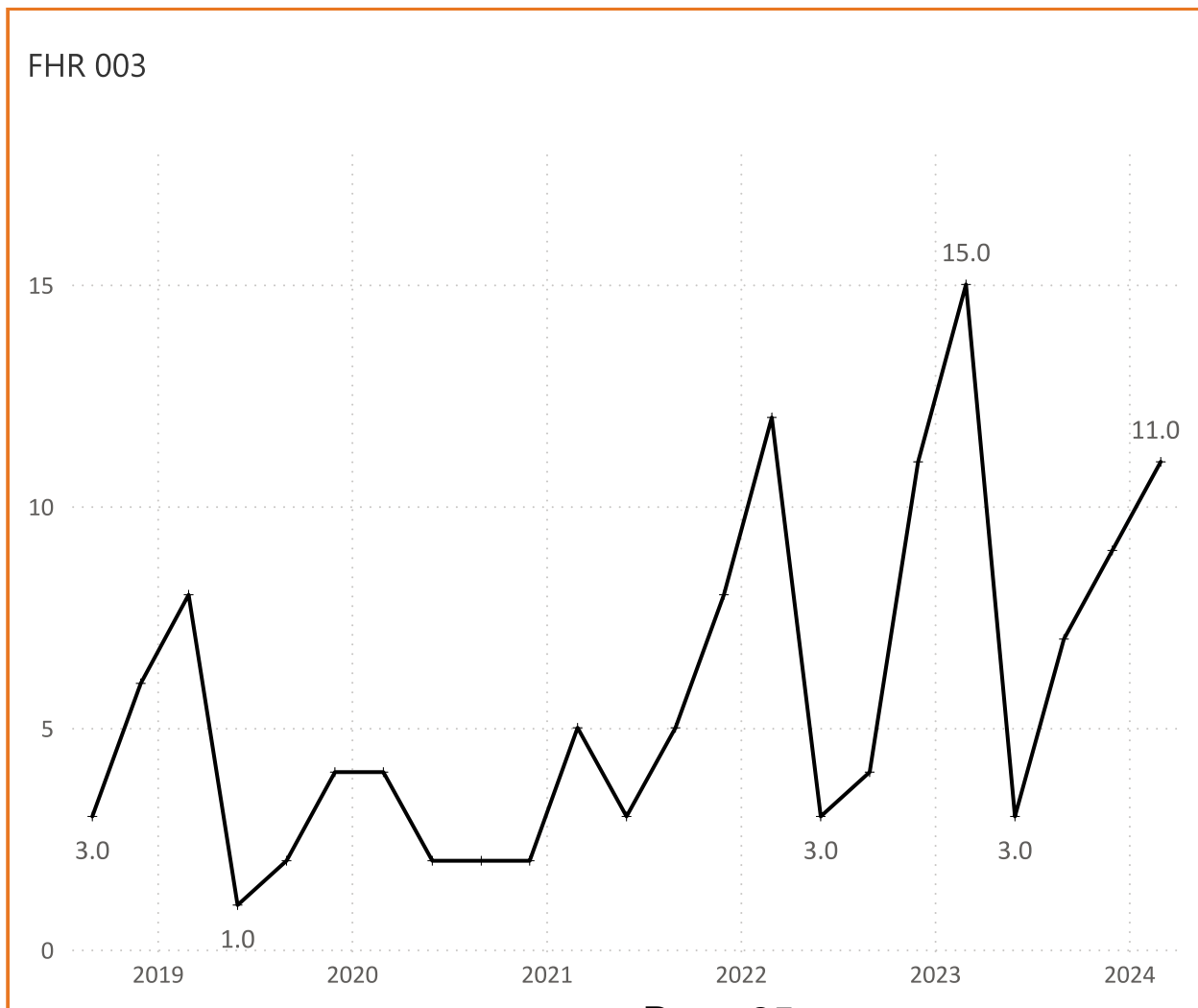
Priority or Key Action

Narrative

Eleven reports were made to the Health and Safety Executive as required by the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations in 2023/24, including one diagnosis of a work related occupational disease/ill health. This is a reduction compared to fifteen reports in 2022/23 which included two occupational disease/ill health.

All accidents and ill health reports are investigated by management and the Health & Safety team to establish the causes, to identify issues or trends and make recommendations to prevent reoccurrence. Health and Safety is a key priority for the Council at all levels and is promoted through all working practices.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

FHR 008

Indicator Name

Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman

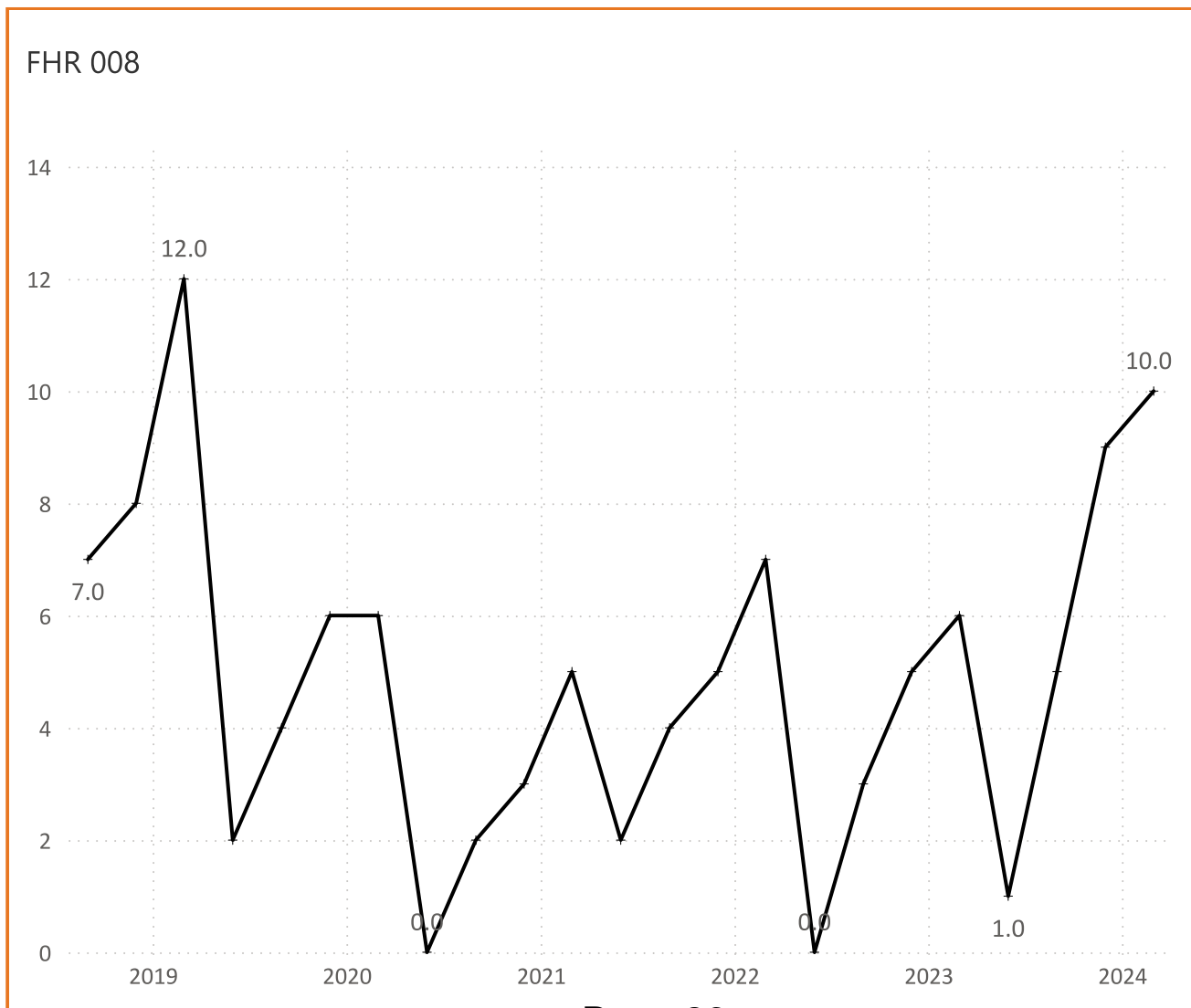
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

The number of complaints upheld compared to March 2023 has risen from 6 to 10. The 8 complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman related to Adult Services -1, Children Services - 2, Commissioning & Contracts - 2 (Care Homes -1 & Home Care - 1), Education & Inclusion - 2 and Finance (Adults) - 1. The 2 complaint upheld by the Housing Ombudsman related to Housing Management Services - 1 & Income Management - 1.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

FHR 009

Indicator Name

Number of complaints upheld by the Information Commissioner's Office

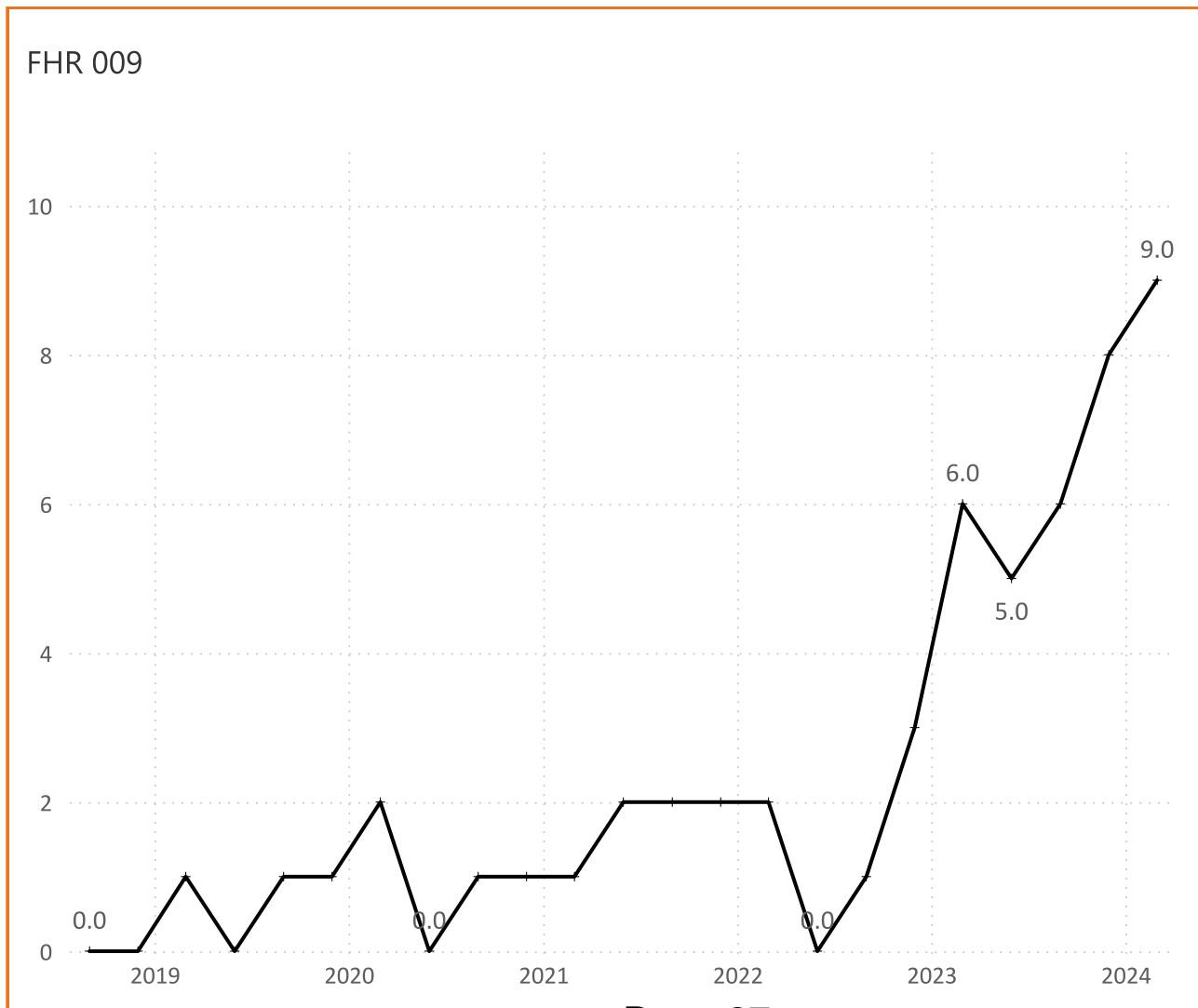
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

There has been an increase from 6 to 9 upheld complaints, compared to March 2023. 5 of the 9 upheld complaints related to delays in responding to Subject Access Requests (SARs). Risk of enforcement action from the ICO in relation to SARs remains on the Council's Risk Register, and work is ongoing to reduce that risk below the risk appetite line. 1 related to HR retaining a former employee's data for longer than the Council's stated retention period. 2 related to data breaches (1 was the result of an email being sent to the wrong person, as a result of someone typing into the 'To' field and selecting the wrong recipient) and 1 related to a delay in responding to an FOI request.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

FHR 019

Indicator Name

Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers (Divided by average number of staff in period)

Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

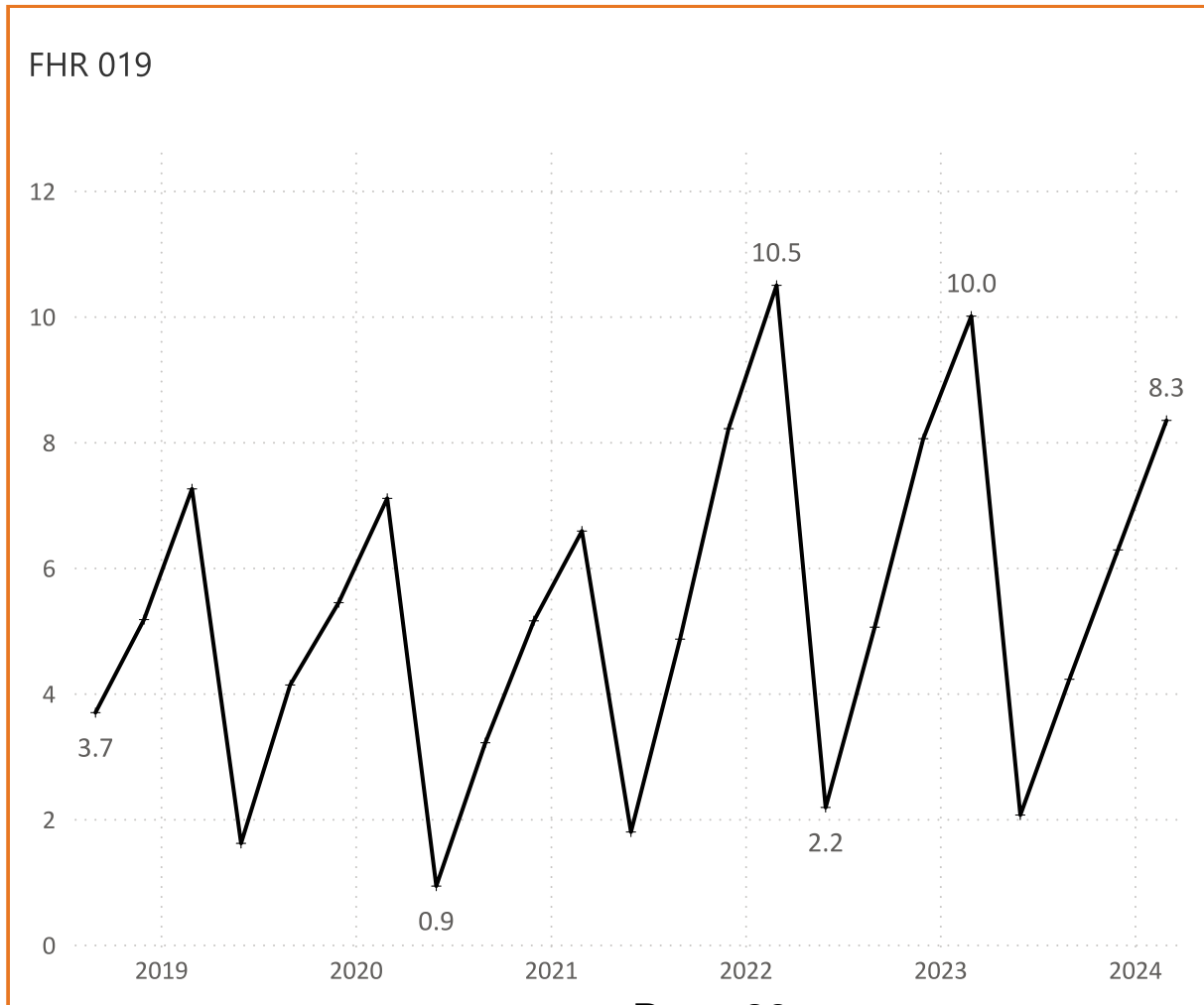
Narrative

The number of voluntary leavers during 2023/24 was lower than in 2022/23 (167 v 192).

We undertake exit surveys and interviews to understand why employees leave the Council and to inform improvements. 85% of employees who completed an exit survey said they would work for the Council again.

Work has been completed on our personal development reviews and we are rolling out our new "My Journey process", from May 2024 incorporating succession planning and further promotion of employee engagement. We are continuing to review a number of other processes and continue to develop and improve our employment package to ensure the Council attracts and retains the best talent for all roles.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

HBS 002

Indicator Name

Amount of Council Tax arrears collected (£)

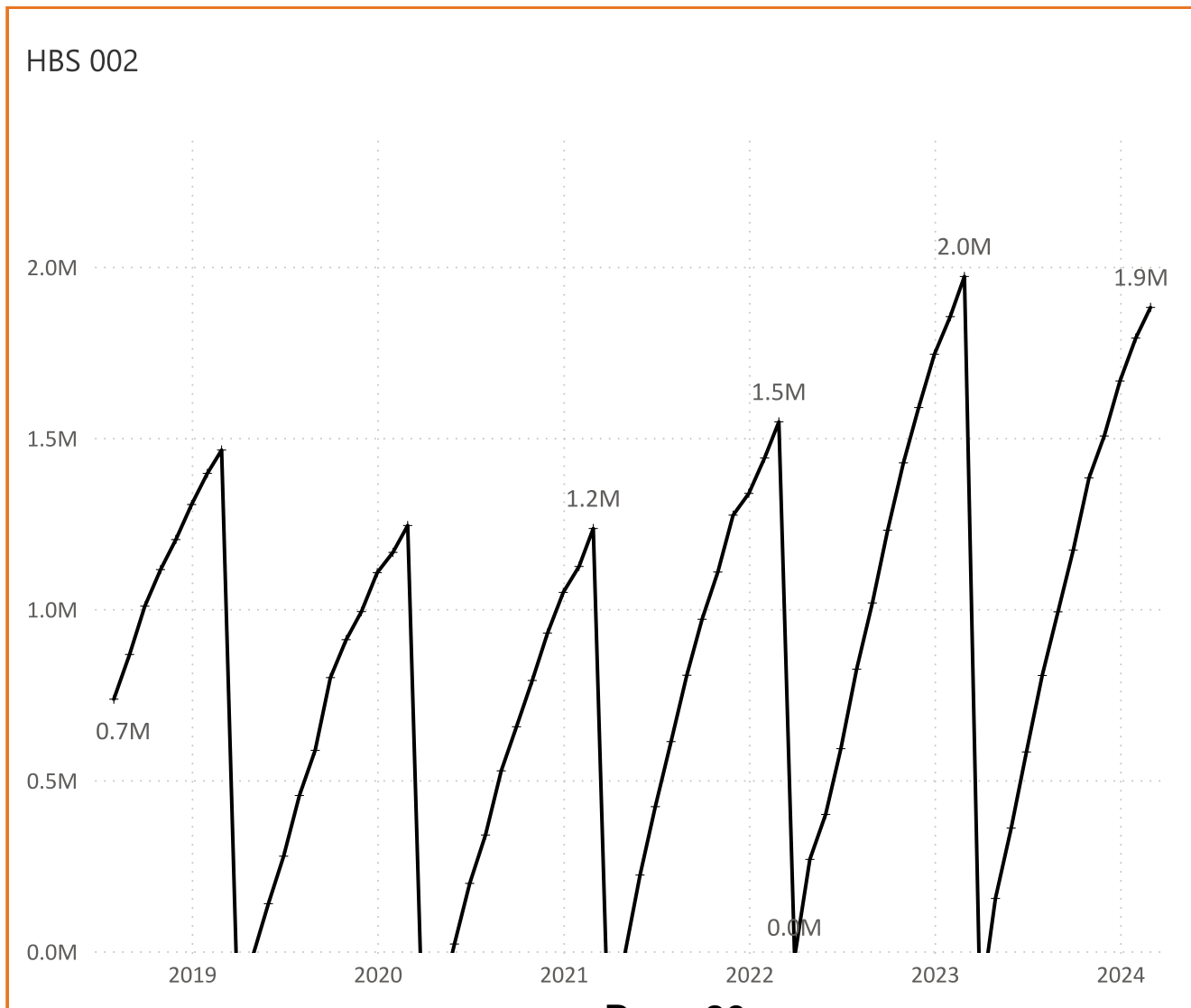
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

The amount of Council Tax arrears collected for quarter 4 has exceeded the target for 2023-24, with £1.88m collected. This is lower than the £1.97m collected for the same period in 2022-23. However, the higher amount last year was due to having restarted recovery action following the Covid pandemic. We are still dealing with arrears resulting from Covid and now also with the current cost of living crisis. However, the amount of outstanding arrears still decreased from £4.3m at the end of quarter 4 in 2022-23 to £4.2m at the end of quarter 4 in 2023-24.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

HBS 003

Indicator Name

Amount of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered (£)

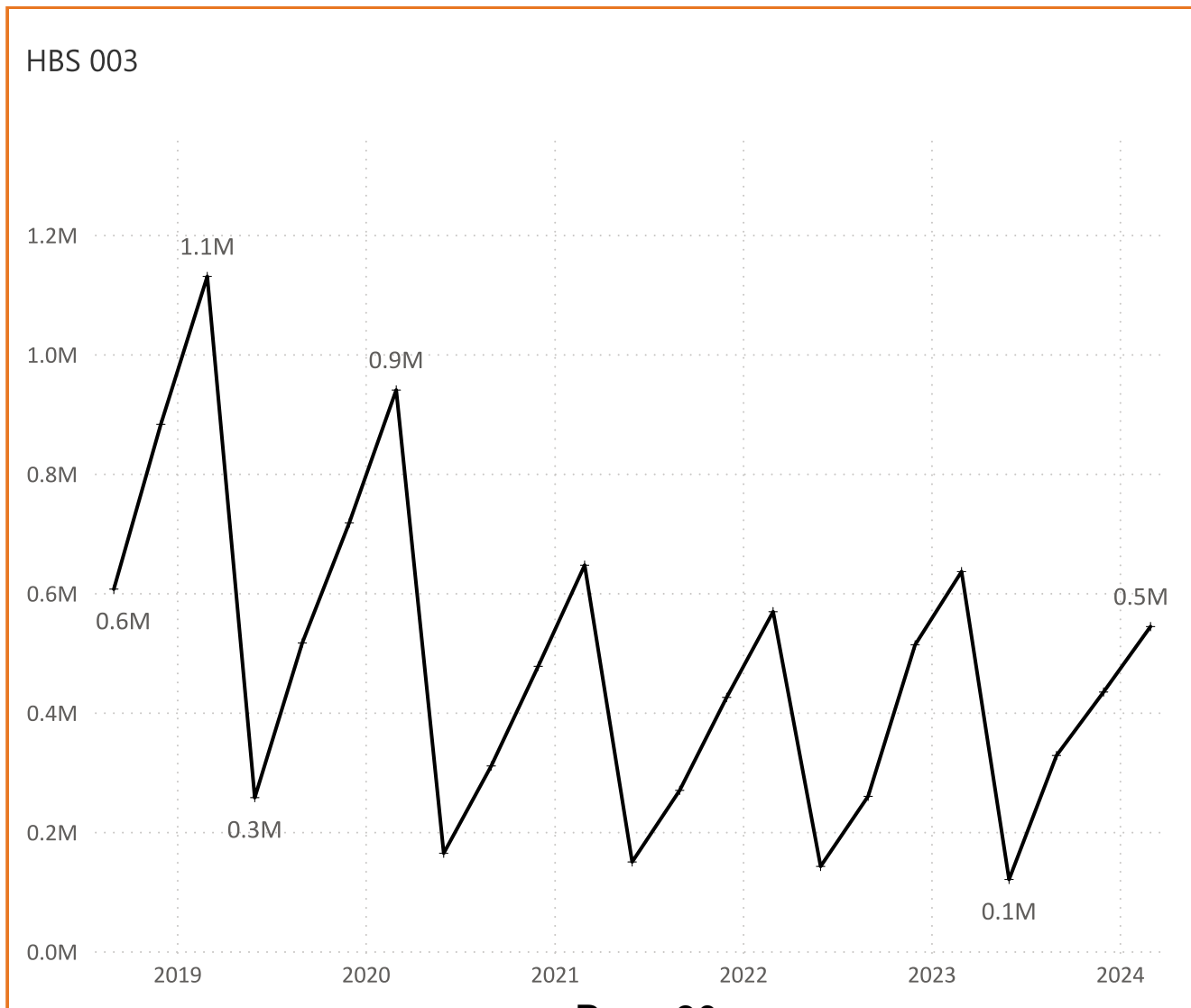
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments collected in quarter 4 has fallen below the target for 2023-24. £544k of overpayments were collected, compared to £636k collected for the same period in 2022-23. However, collection rates are currently at 126% of the new overpayment debt created (£431k), and the overall outstanding debt has decreased (currently at £1.34 million). It is likely that as Housing Benefit claims continue to transfer to Universal Credit, the amount of Housing Benefit overpayments created (and therefore the amount collected) will decrease.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

HBS 009

Indicator Name

Percentage of Council Tax collected in-year

Theme or Portfolio

Resources Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Maximise council tax and business rate income through robust income collection processes

Narrative

The percentage of Council Tax collected exceeded the target for quarter 4, with 96.39% of Council Tax collected in 2023-24. This is an increase in collection, compared to 2022-23, which was 96.09%. The collection rate of 96.39% for 2023-24 is the highest since 2010-11. The overall amount collected by quarter 4 was £72.5m, compared to £68.4m by quarter 4 in 2022-23.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

HBS 010

Indicator Name

Percentage of Business Rates collected in-year

Theme or Portfolio

Resources Portfolio

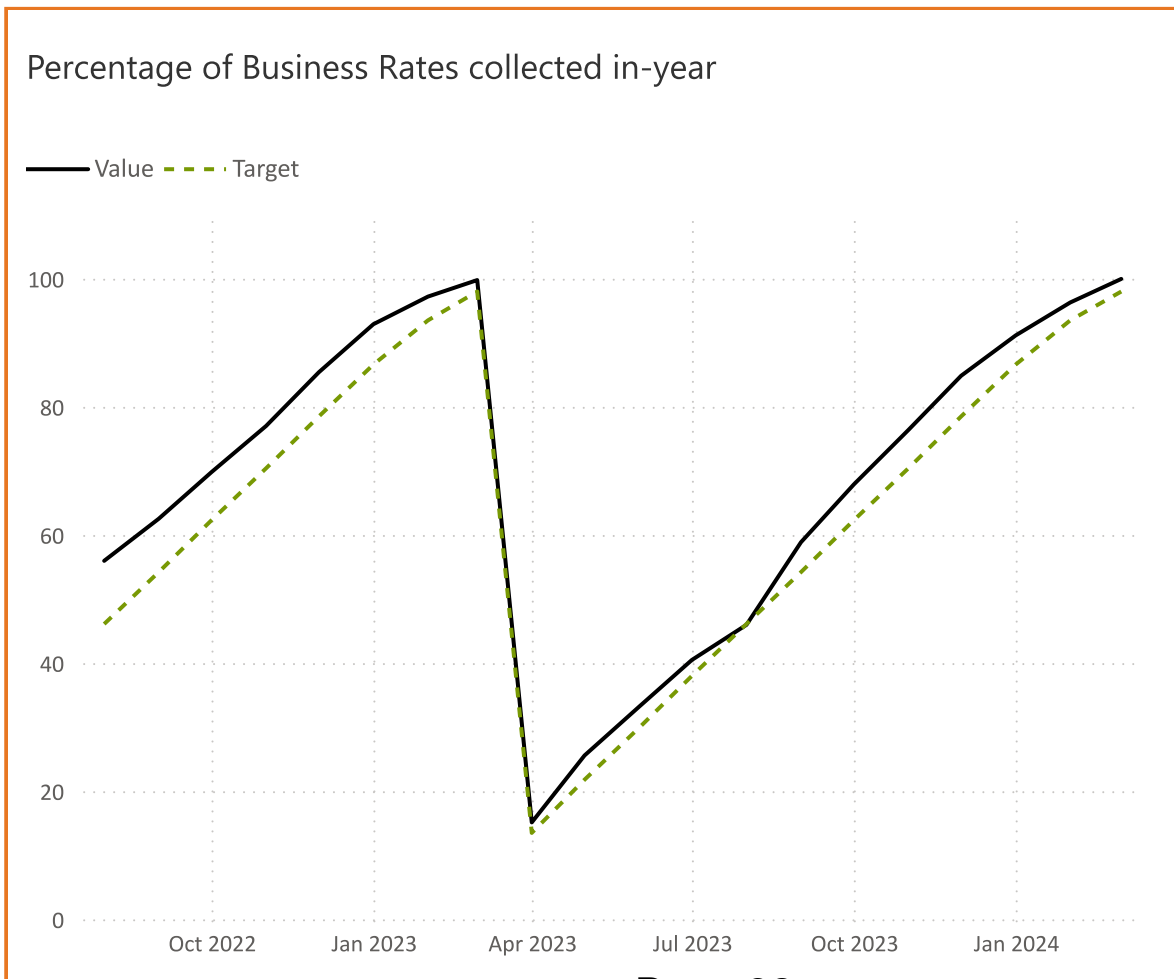
Priority or Key Action

Maximise council tax and business rate income through robust income collection processes

Narrative

The percentage of Business Rates collected exceeded the target for quarter 4, with 99.97% of Business Rates collected, compared to 99.79% in quarter 4 of 2022-23. The overall amount collected by quarter 4 was £31.2 million compared to £31.8 million by quarter 4 of 2022-23. There was a national revaluation of business properties with effect from 1 April 2023, which increased the overall amount of rateable values for Darlington by £2.8 million or 3.2%. However, there was also a generous transitional protection scheme in place, which limited the increase payable for those businesses that would have had an increase in their Business Rates in 2023-24. However, despite the revaluation, the overall rateable values for Darlington decreased slightly in 2023-24 from £90.4m to £90.3m. This was due to some backdated adjustments to rateable values following appeals to the Valuation Office and some businesses being taken out of the rating list temporarily due to development works.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

LGP 008

Indicator Name

Contracted spend as a percentage of total non-salary spend

Theme or Portfolio

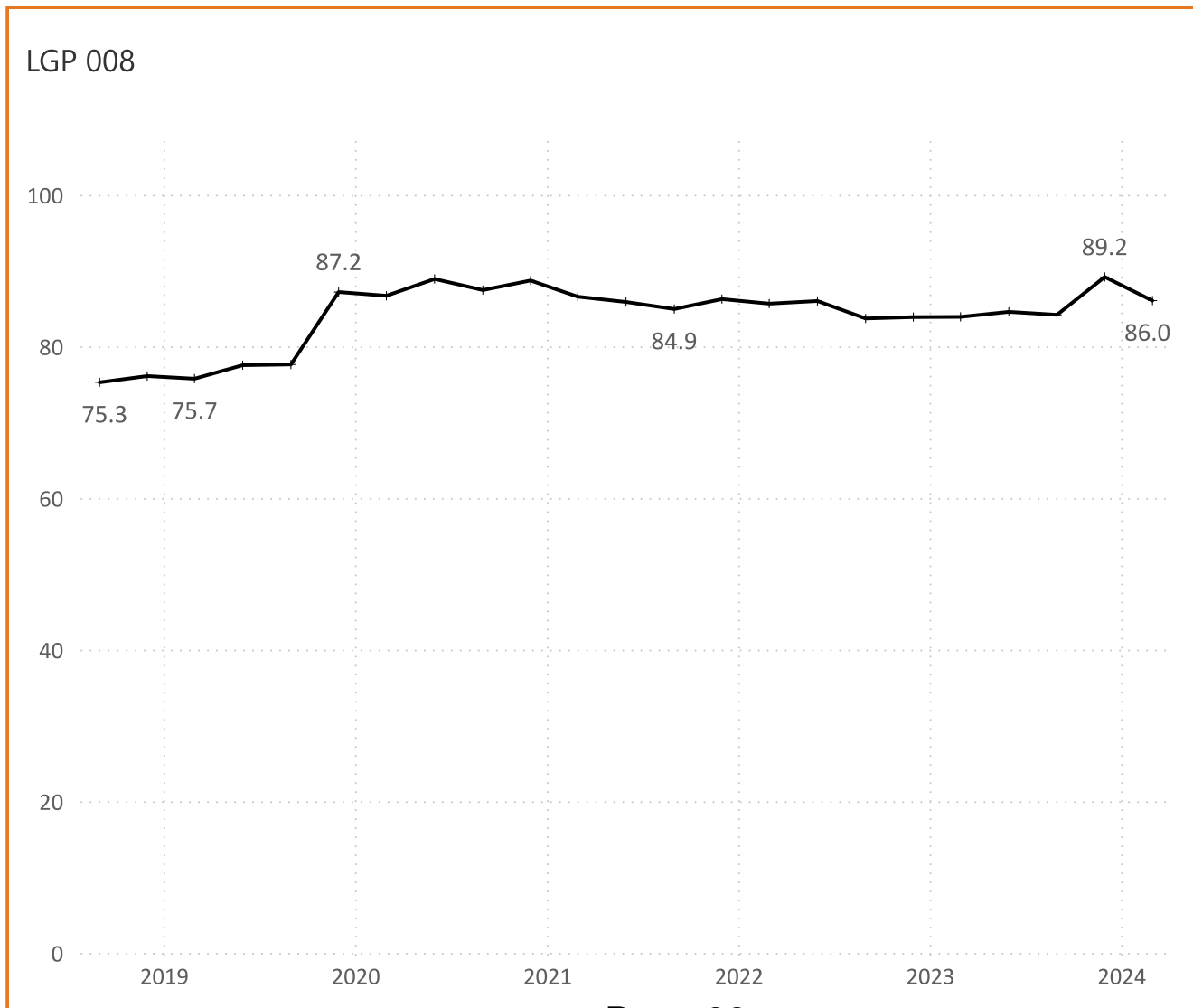
Priority or Key Action

Narrative

Increased engagement and regular procurement updates through communication announcements over the last 6 months has helped officers to better understand the procurement rules which has contributed to the figure rising slightly overall, in the last 2 quarters to 86%

In quarter 3 the figure rose to 89%. This is due to a higher volume of procurement activity and continued engagement with departments and checking the spend against the Contracts Register on a regular basis.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

REG 301

Indicator Name

Percentage of food premises which are inspected within the year in which they are due

Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

Following the pandemic officers have been engaged in a Post Covid Recovery Plan. The pandemic had resulted in a backlog of over 1000 inspections. All inspections were triaged in terms of risk and inspected accordingly. The backlog has now been cleared and overdue inspections have been completed. The recovery plan required that the backlog was completed by March 2024 and the food safety team used a range of resources including out of hours inspections (overtime) and contract inspectors to carry out this work.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

REG 308

Indicator Name

Percentage of premises broadly compliant for food hygiene

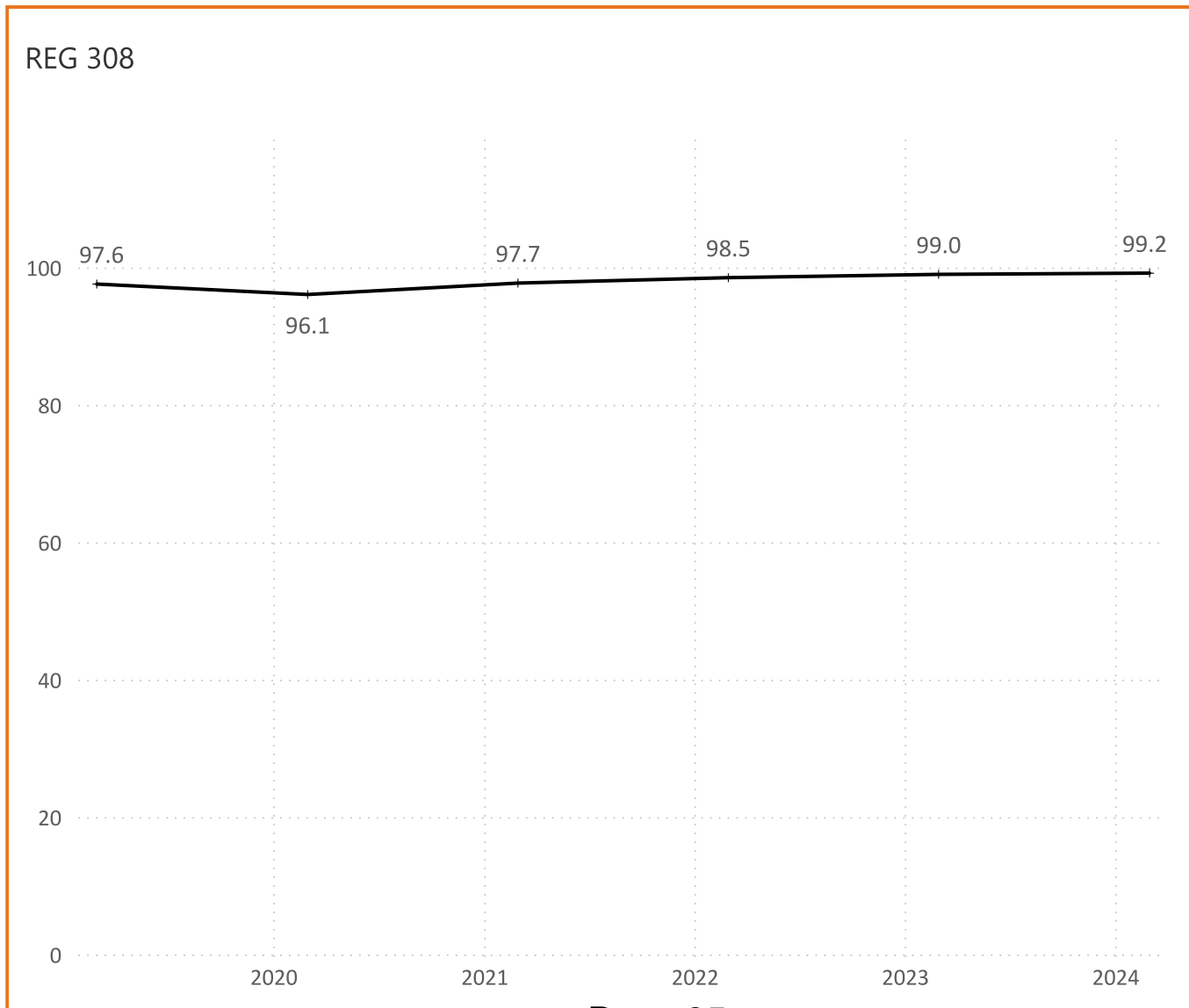
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

Premises within the Borough have shown a consistently high level of compliance year on year. This is due to a robust, consistent, and proportionate advice, inspection, and enforcement regime by officers. Inspectors have worked extremely hard to ensure that standards are maintained. This Indicator illustrates the continued high level of compliance of food premises within the Borough of Darlington which is dependant on regular visits by a statutory service.

Graph/Table



DBC Number

REG 312a

Indicator Name

Percentage of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)

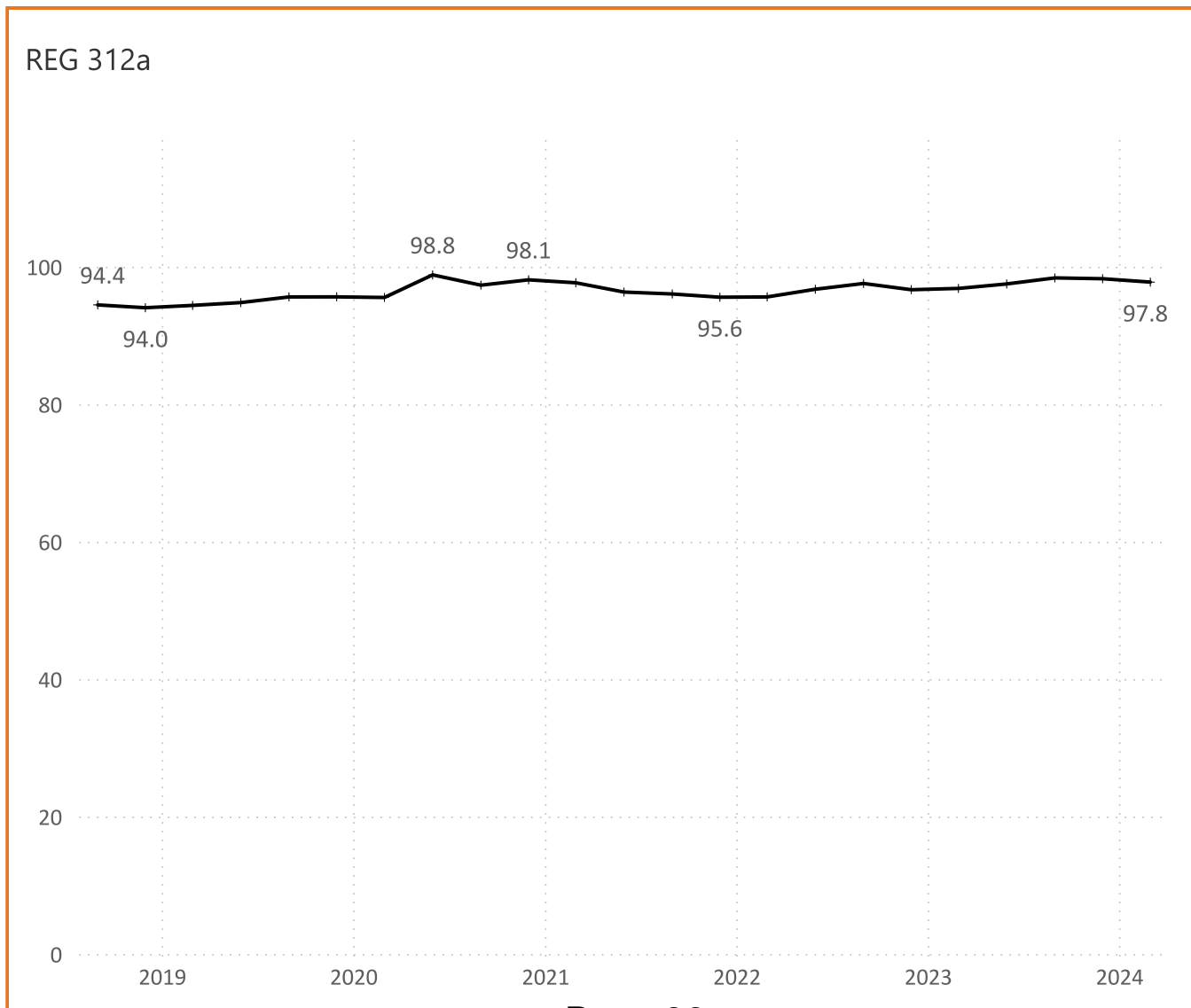
Theme or Portfolio

Priority or Key Action

Narrative

Environmental Health continue to meet this performance target despite noise complaints increasing year on year with 911 complaints received in 2023/24. The highest number of complaints received relate to noise disturbance from barking dogs (347) followed by other types of domestic noise complaints (366). As well as domestic noise 81 complaints were received relating to noise from commercial and industrial premises.

Graph/Table



**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 SEPTEMBER 2024**

REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 – QUARTER 1

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an early forecast of the 2024/25 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management process.

Summary

2. Attached at **Annex 1** is the revenue budget monitoring 2024/25 quarter one is due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 10 September 2024.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that Members consider and discuss the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2024/25 – Quarter 1

**Brett Nielsen
Assistant Director Resources**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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**CABINET
10 SEPTEMBER 2024**

REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 – QUARTER 1

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an early forecast of the 2024/25 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management process.

Summary

2. This is the first revenue budget management report to Cabinet for 2024/25. The latest projections show an overall decline of £1.376m on the 2024-28 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This is due to £2.542m of departmental pressures, a reserves contribution of £0.155m, offset by £1.321m of additional balances following the 2023/24 outturn.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) The forecast revenue outturn for 2024/25 be noted.
 - (b) Further regular reports be made to monitor progress and take prompt action if necessary.

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
 - (a) To continue effective management of resources.
 - (b) To continue to deliver services to agreed levels.

**Elizabeth Davison
Group Director Operations**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Brett Nielsen : Extension 5403

Council Plan	The Council's revenue budget contributes to all priorities outlined within the Council Plan.
Addressing inequalities	This report is providing an update on the revenue budget position therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
Tackling Climate Change	This report is providing an update on the revenue budget position therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report contains updated information regarding efficiency savings contained within the MTFP.
Health and Wellbeing	This report is providing an update on the revenue budget position therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Wards Affected	No specific impact on an individual area as a result of this report
Groups Affected	No specific impact on an individual area as a result of this report
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. This is the first revenue budget management report to Cabinet for 2024/25 and provides an early forecast of the 2024/25 revenue position as part of the Council's continuous financial management process.
6. As this report is early in the financial year, the focus is on budget areas where there are known pressures and potential savings from the final 2023/24 outturn position and budget managers knowledge of events affecting the services they manage, therefore several budget lines are shown as on target or with a small variance at this stage of the year.
7. The information in this report has been taken from the financial records to June and managers' projections for the remainder of the year. Assumptions have been made

concerning future demand for services particularly in social care, therefore changes in projected outturn are inevitable as demand materialises and as the Council is a large and complex organisation.

8. The Council operates frequent, regular and predictive budget management processes, including quarterly reports to Cabinet, changes in projected outturn, will be reported to future meetings.
9. Overall, the projected General Fund reserves position as at the 31 March 2025 is £10.967m, which is £1.376m less than the planned balances in the 2024-28 MTFP. This change relates to £2.542m of departmental pressures, a general reserves contribution of £0.155m, offset by £1.321m of additional balances following the 2023/24 outturn.

Departmental Resources

10. Departmental resource projections are summarised in **Appendix 2** and detailed in **Appendices 2(a) to 2(e)**. It is difficult to exactly predict year end positions at this early stage of the year, therefore many management projections indicate budgets to be online in this report. Budgets with identified significant early variances are detailed in the following paragraphs.
11. The **People Group** budget is projected to be overspent by £0.859m at the end of the financial year. The main changes to the MTFP position are detailed below:
 - (a) **The Group Director of People** budgets are showing a projected year end overspend of £0.071m due to ongoing increased demand falling on the Child Protection and Review service, with the use of additional agency workers.
 - (b) **Children's Services** are projecting an overspend of £0.275m at the year end.
 - (i) The Assessment and Care Planning & LAC budgets are projected to be overspent by £0.195m due to additional staffing requirements across the teams to accommodate the increase in children's referrals, additional costs of supporting families to prevent children coming into care and providing support for young people who are leaving care. These increased costs have in part been offset by additional DfE and Home Office grant funding.
 - (ii) The Adoption and Placements and Disabled Children's budgets are projected to have a combined net budget pressure of £0.110m due to increased and more complex packages of care. There is one new complex high-cost domiciliary package and an increase over budgeted places of 23 Special Guardianship Orders, which have been offset by lower growth in other placements to date. Further placements have been forecast in the current projection, however this budget area is very volatile and demand for further places and more complex places could materialise during the remainder of the year. This budget area is closely monitored and further updates will be provided in future budget management reports.

(c) **Adult Social Care & Health** is projected to be overspent by £0.533m.

(i) This pressure is mainly in the External Purchase of Care budgets due to increased projected spend in domiciliary care through additional high costs packages and increased direct payments.

12. The **Services Group** is projecting an overspend of £0.260m. The main changes to the MTFP position are detailed below:

(a) **Capital Projects, Transport & Highways Planning** is projecting an overall overspend of £0.405m.

(i) Concessionary Fares are projected to be overspent by £0.327m. TVCA have calculated the expected cost based on the most recent passenger numbers which are higher than estimated by TVCA at budget setting. Bus patronage will be monitored monthly throughout the year and the actual cost of the scheme will be dependent on actual patronage.

(ii) Highways, there is a projected net overspend of £0.080m for electricity within street lighting & car parks. Figures are based on projections calculated by NEPO and are subject to change given the volatility of the energy market.

(b) **Community Services** is projected to be overspent by £0.168m.

(i) The Cemeteries and Crematorium services are projecting a pressure of £0.040m on burials and a shortfall on cremation income of £0.070m. While projected cremation numbers have increased to 1,360 per year there has been an increase in direct cremations which are charged at a lower fee and therefore result in lower income. Whilst income is below target, the income shortfall would have been more had direct cremations not been offered.

(ii) Overall, Leisure and Cultural Services are projected to be overspent by £0.076m. The most significant element of this overspend is linked to increased security costs required at the Dolphin Centre, Crown Street Library and Hippodrome. This security is required due to a general increase in anti-social behaviour arising in the proximity of these venues.

(c) **Community Safety** overall is expected to be perform better by £0.130m. This is mainly from Car Parking and Enforcement budgets, which are expected to be in a better position by £0.100m as patronage at the council's car parks remains positive and continues to perform better than levels projected in the MTFP.

(d) **Corporate Landlord** is projected to be underspend by £0.180m as rises in energy prices built into the MTFP for 2024/25 are not expected to be as high based on the latest information supplied by NEPO. Any such estimates are subject to change given the volatility of the energy market. Electricity is expected to underspend by £0.080m while gas is expected to be £0.100m.

13. The **Operations Group** is projecting a year end budget overspend of £1.423m. The main changes to the MTFP position are detailed below:
- (a) **Law & Governance** is projecting an overspend of £0.398m. This is due to ongoing pressures carried over from 2023/24 of specialist legal costs (£0.237m) and additional locum staffing (£0.126m) required to due to current demand for services and increased complexity of cases within children's services.
 - (b) **Housing & Revenues** is projecting an overall overspend of £1.040m.
 - (i) The main movement in this area is due to a shortfall in the housing benefit subsidy income of £1.176m. Due to an increase in homelessness and the lack of move on accommodation in Darlington, there has been a significant increase in the nights spent in emergency and temporary accommodation. In the first quarter this year, the nights spend have increased by 137%. Consequently our contracted temporary provision is fully utilised, and we have needed to place people in alternative hotels and bed and breakfast provision.
 - (ii) The housing benefit subsidy received from the Department of Work and Pensions only covers a basic rental value, which has not been uplifted since 2011, and not the actual cost of accommodation with the shortfall being paid by the council. This pressure is being seen across the country with Newham Council as an example predicting a £40m pressure this year. The issue is being raised with the government as the housing benefit subsidy levels are wholly inadequate.
 - (iii) The Local Taxation budget is anticipated to achieve additional income of £0.081m from additional legal charges.
 - (iv) Customer Services are projecting an underspend of £0.050m due to staff turnover and changes.
14. The **Chief Executive & Economy Group** is projected to breakeven at the year end. However, there are variances within **Economic Growth** as follows:
- (a) Development Management faces challenging market conditions driven by several factors, including the impact of nutrient neutrality, bio-diversity net gain and market saturation, continue to suppress the level of new planning applications coming from large developers which will see a projected under recovery on fees by £0.110m.
 - (b) Environmental Health is projected to be underspent by £0.047m due to staff turnover.
 - (c) Place Strategy is projected to underspend by £0.040m due to savings in staffing from turnover and additional funding to support service delivery.
15. The School balances and allocations are shown in **Appendix 2(f)**.

Council Wide and Corporately Managed Resources

16. Council Wide and Corporate Resources budgets are currently forecast to be on target. However within the Council Wide budget this assumes that the current pay offer is approved. At the time of writing no agreement has been made regarding this year's pay award, with the exception of Chief Officers.
17. A contribution from reserves of £0.155m has been made into Housing Benefits budget to provide for grant income that will no longer be received directly by the service.

Housing Revenue Account

18. HRA projections are shown in **Appendix 3** with an overall projected balanced budget. There is an increase in contribution from balances of £0.172m.
 - (a) There is a projected shortfall of £0.297m in the rent account as the handover of some new build properties was later than initially anticipated at budget setting time.
 - (b) Projected additional income of £0.139m on the contribution towards expenditure budget areas, from additional recovery for rechargeable works and NWL commission.
 - (c) Additional interest income of £0.444m, due to the continuing high interest rate being received on the HRA balances.
 - (d) A projected pressure of £0.390m in the operational budgets, from additional running costs, including premises insurance, subscriptions and professional fees and IT costs.
 - (e) Repairs and maintenance budgets are projected to overspend by £0.078m due to increase prices and additional works.

Conclusion

19. The Council's projected revenue reserves at the end of 2024/25 are £10.967m, £1.376m lower than the initial 2024-28 MTFP position. This position relates to £2.542m of departmental pressures, a contribution of £0.155m from general reserves, offset by £1.321m of additional balances following the 2023/24 outturn.
20. The Council is facing a significant pressure from the shortfall in the housing benefit subsidy received from the Department of Work and Pensions. This is not only impacting on Darlington but is a national issue across the country.
21. The increase in Children's Services demand and cost pressures continue to be significant concern in Darlington and nationally. Within the MTFP, Council approved investment in children's social care through ensuring placement sufficiency, which is being implemented and monitored closely. It is early days for the project, but early signs have provided some promising outcomes.
22. All services continue to scrutinise their budgets to reduce spend or generate income to assist with the in year budget and future years budget positions.

23. As a Council and a region we continue to lobby government to highlight the pressures that councils are facing to delivery statutory services.

Outcome of Consultation

24. No external consultation has been carried out in preparing this report.

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REVENUE BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2024/25

<u>Projected General Fund Reserve at 31st March 2025</u>		2024-28 MTFP (Feb 2024)
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) :-		£000
MTFP Planned Opening Balance 01/04/2024		16,384
Approved net contribution from balances		(4,041)
Planned Closing Balance 31/03/2025		12,343
Increase in opening balance from 2023-24 results		1,321
Projected corporate underspends / (overspends) :-		
Contribution from general fund reserves to Housing Benefits		(155)
Projected General Fund Reserve (excluding Departmental) 31st March 2025	at	13,509
Planned Balance at 31st March 2025		12,343
Improvement		1,166

<u>Departmental projected year-end balances</u>		Improvement / (decline) compared with 2024-28 MTFP
		£000
People Group		(859)
Services Group		(260)
Operations Group		(1,423)
Chief Executive & Economy		0
TOTAL		(2,542)

<u>Summary Comparison with :-</u>		2024-28 MTFP £000
Corporate Resources - increase in opening balance from 23/24 results		1,321
Corporate Resources - additional in-year Improvement/(Decline)		(155)
Quarter 1 Budget Rebase		0
Departmental - Improvement / (Decline)		(2,542)
Improvement / (Decline) compared with MTFP		(1,376)
Projected General Fund Reserve at 31st March 2025		10,967

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GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2024/25

	Budget				Expenditure		
	Original 2024/25	Approved Adjustments	Approved C/fwds	Amended Approved Budget	Projected Outturn	C/fwds to approve	Variance
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Departmental Resources							
People Group	84,432	1,066	0	85,498	86,357	0	859
Services Group	25,242	1,775	0	27,017	27,277	0	260
Operations Group	13,580	775	0	14,355	15,778	0	1,423
Chief Executive & Economy	1,577	403	0	1,980	1,980	0	0
Total Departmental Resources	124,831	4,019	0	128,850	131,392	0	2,542
Corporate Resources							
Council Wide	631	240	0	871	871	0	0
Financing Costs	3,547	0	0	3,547	3,547	0	0
Joint Venture - Investment Return	(1,517)	0	0	(1,517)	(1,517)	0	0
Contingencies Budget							
Apprentice Levy	202	0	0	202	202	0	0
Total Corporate Resources	2,863	240	0	3,103	3,103	0	0
Net Expenditure	127,694	4,259	0	131,953	134,495	0	2,542
Contributions To / (From) Reserves							
Planned Contribution to General Fund Reserves (MTFP)	(6,283)	0	0	(6,283)	(6,283)	0	0
Departmental Brought Forwards from 2023/24	0	(4,104)	0	(4,104)	(4,104)	0	0
Contribution from general reserves to Housing benefits	0	(155)	0	(155)	0	0	155
General Fund Total	121,411	0	0	121,411	124,108	0	2,697

Note: Appendix 1 shows an increase in reserves of £1.321m brought forward from 2023/24

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REVENUE BUDGET MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2024/25

	<i>Budget</i>			<i>Expenditure</i>			<i>(Under)/ Over Spend £000</i>
	<i>Original Budget £000</i>	<i>Approved Adjustments £000</i>	<i>Amended Approved Budget £000</i>	<i>Expenditure to June £000</i>	<i>Projected Spend £000</i>	<i>Total Projection £000</i>	
	<u>Council Wide</u>						
Corporate Running Costs	28	240	268	0	268	268	0
Procurement savings	(24)	0	(24)	(12)	(12)	(24)	0
Pay Award	627	0	627	0	627	627	0
In Year Over/(Under) Spend	631	240	871	(12)	883	871	0

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REVENUE BUDGET MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2024/25							
	Budget			Expenditure			(Under)/ Over Spend £000
	Original Budget £000	Approved Adjustments £000	Amended Approved Budget £000	Expenditure to June £000	Projected Spend £000	Total Projection £000	
<u>People Group</u>							
Group Director of People	611	0	611	175	507	682	71
<u>Adults & Children Services</u>							
Transformation & Performance	793	134	927	195	732	927	0
Business Support	1,649	74	1,723	407	1,316	1,723	0
	2,442	208	2,650	602	2,048	2,650	0
<u>Children's Services</u>							
Children's Services Management & Other Services	681	(22)	659	178	491	669	10
Assessment Care Planning & LAC	4,429	119	4,548	1,281	3,462	4,743	195
First Response & Early Help	3,758	(323)	3,435	788	2,607	3,395	(40)
Youth Offending/ASB	307	0	307	15	292	307	0
Adoption & Placements	21,263	(77)	21,186	5,038	15,938	20,976	(210)
Disabled Children	1,372	112	1,484	208	1,596	1,804	320
Quality Assurance & Practice Improvement	138	0	138	(142)	280	138	0
	31,948	(191)	31,757	7,366	24,666	32,032	275
<u>Development & Commissioning</u>							
Commissioning	1,967	472	2,439	475	1,936	2,411	(28)
Voluntary Sector	293	0	293	35	272	307	14
	2,260	472	2,732	510	2,208	2,718	(14)
<u>Education</u>							
Education	702	74	776	5,946	(5,176)	770	(6)
Schools	0	0	0	754	(754)	0	0
Transport Unit	3,111	0	3,111	332	2,779	3,111	0
	3,813	74	3,887	7,032	(3,151)	3,881	(6)
<u>Public Health</u>							
Public Health	0	0	0	(2,156)	2,156	0	0
	0	0	0	(2,156)	2,156	0	0
<u>Adult Social Care & Health</u>							
External Purchase of Care	35,886	442	36,328	3,979	32,875	36,856	528
Intake & Enablement	727	0	727	552	175	727	0
Older People Long Term Condition	1,832	3	1,835	556	1,279	1,835	0
Physical Disability Long Term Condition	14	0	14	13	1	14	0
Learning Disability Long Term Condition	2,253	0	2,253	564	1,662	2,226	(27)
Mental Health Long Term Condition	1,163	0	1,163	353	842	1,195	32
Service Development & Integration	1,068	(3)	1,065	(116)	1,181	1,065	0
Workforce Development	415	61	476	19	457	476	0
	43,358	503	43,861	5,920	38,472	44,394	533
In Year Over/(Under) Spend	84,432	1,066	85,498	19,449	66,906	86,357	859

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REVENUE BUDGET MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2024/25

	<i>Budget</i>			<i>Expenditure</i>			<i>(Under)/ Over Spend £000</i>
	Original	Approved	Amended	Expenditure	Projected	Total	
	Budget	Adjustments	Budget	to June	Spend	Projection	
<i>Services Group</i>	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Group Director of Services	184	0	184	59	125	184	0
Capital Projects, Transport & Highways							
Planning							
AD Transport & Capital Projects	111	0	111	44	67	111	0
Building Design Services	63	0	63	112	(50)	62	(1)
Capital Projects	374	66	440	146	294	440	0
Car Parking R&M	612	0	612	499	113	612	0
Concessionary Fares	2247	50	2,297	(1)	2,625	2,624	327
Flood & Water Act	89	202	291	(261)	552	291	0
Highways	4237	224	4,461	(361)	4,902	4,541	80
Highways - DLO	-437	0	(437)	1,022	(1,459)	(437)	0
Investment & Funding	89	405	494	39	455	494	0
Sustainable Transport	96	98	194	(349)	542	193	(1)
	7,481	1,045	8,526	890	8,041	8,931	405
Community Services							
AD Community Services	99	0	99	28	61	89	(10)
Allotments	19	0	19	(1)	20	19	0
Building Cleaning - DLO	33	14	47	(504)	551	47	0
Cemeteries & Crematorium	(821)	0	(821)	(222)	(489)	(711)	110
Dolphin Centre	973	39	1,012	266	761	1,027	15
Eastbourne Complex	36	0	36	90	(34)	56	20
Emergency Planning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hippodrome	222	46	268	(1,202)	1,479	277	9
Hopetown Darlington	369	11	380	580	(200)	380	0
Indoor Bowling Centre	19	12	31	4	19	23	(8)
Libraries	946	0	946	341	645	986	40
Move More	31	0	31	(181)	212	31	0
Outdoor Events	522	0	522	32	490	522	0
School Meals - DLO	82	0	82	33	38	71	(11)
Culture and Heritage Fund	122	2	124	13	111	124	0
Street Scene	6,282	146	6,428	1,052	5,379	6,431	3
Transport Unit - Fleet Management	57	0	57	112	(55)	57	0
Waste Management	4,109	8	4,117	387	3,731	4,117	0
Winter Maintenance	618	0	618	152	467	618	0
	13,718	278	13,996	980	13,186	14,164	168

REVENUE BUDGET MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2024/25

	<i>Budget</i>			<i>Expenditure</i>			<i>(Under)/ Over Spend £000</i>
	<i>Original Budget £000</i>	<i>Approved Adjustments £000</i>	<i>Amended Approved Budget £000</i>	<i>Expenditure to June £000</i>	<i>Projected Spend £000</i>	<i>Total Projection £000</i>	
<u>Services Group</u>							
<u>Community Safety</u>							
CCTV	284	0	284	(169)	453	284	0
Community Safety	781	110	891	(60)	945	885	(6)
General Licensing	0	0	0	(8)	8	0	0
Parking	(2,049)	0	(2,049)	(722)	(1,427)	(2,149)	(100)
Parking Enforcement	17	0	17	(52)	69	17	0
Private Sector Housing	112	27	139	(275)	394	119	(20)
Stray Dogs	53	0	53	15	44	59	6
Taxi Licensing	28	8	36	(34)	70	36	0
Trading Standards	260	0	260	90	160	250	(10)
	(514)	145	(369)	(1,215)	716	(499)	(130)
<u>Building Services</u>							
Construction - DLO	(366)	0	(366)	(6,044)	5,678	(366)	0
Other - DLO	0	0	0	1,152	(1,152)	0	0
	(366)	0	(366)	(4,892)	4,526	(366)	0
<u>Corporate Landlord</u>							
Corporate Landlord	4,534	307	4,841	1,735	2,926	4,661	(180)
<u>General Support Services</u>							
Works Property & Other	76	0	76	0	76	76	0
<u>Joint Levies & Boards</u>							
Environment Agency Levy	129	0	129	126	0	126	(3)
In Year Over/(Under) Spend	25,242	1,775	27,017	(2,317)	29,596	27,277	260

REVENUE BUDGET MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2024/25

	<i>Budget</i>			<i>Expenditure</i>			(Under)/ Over Spend £000
	Original Budget £000	Approved Adjustments £000	Amended Approved Budget £000	Expenditure to June £000	Projected Spend £000	Total Projection £000	
<u>Operations Group</u>							
Group Director of Operations	136	0	136	33	103	136	0
<u>Resources</u>							
AD Resources	120	0	120	30	92	122	2
Financial Services	1,598	65	1,663	(50)	1,712	1,662	(1)
Financial Assessments & Protection	301	35	336	74	262	336	0
Xentrall (D&S Partnership)	1,968	60	2,028	210	1,818	2,028	0
Human Resources	680	129	809	153	651	804	(5)
Health & Safety	200	0	200	50	150	200	0
	4,867	289	5,156	467	4,685	5,152	(4)
<u>Head of Strategy Performance & Communications</u>							
Communications & Engagement	1,045	132	1,177	223	943	1,166	(11)
Systems	1,132	149	1,281	508	773	1,281	0
	2,177	281	2,458	731	1,716	2,447	(11)
<u>Law & Governance</u>							
AD Law & Governance	136	0	136	33	103	136	0
Complaints & FOI	330	50	380	81	319	400	20
Democratic Services	1,381	0	1,381	298	1,083	1,381	0
Registrars	(26)	0	(26)	(104)	78	(26)	0
Administration	550	0	550	156	400	556	6
Legal Services	1,768	0	1,768	449	1,679	2,128	360
Procurement	195	0	195	43	154	197	2
Coroners	321	0	321	0	331	331	10
	4,655	50	4,705	956	4,147	5,103	398
<u>Xentrall Shared Services</u>							
ICT	811	0	811	(10)	821	811	0
	811	0	811	(10)	821	811	0
<u>Building Services</u>							
Maintenance - DLO	(684)	0	(684)	3,539	(4,223)	(684)	0
	(684)	0	(684)	3,539	(4,223)	(684)	0
<u>Housing & Revenues</u>							
Local Taxation	473	0	473	242	150	392	(81)
Rent Rebates / Rent Allowances / Council Tax	(132)	0	(132)	4,569	(3,525)	1,044	1,176
Housing Benefits Administration	451	155	606	261	336	597	(9)
Customer Services	324	0	324	102	172	274	(50)
Homelessness	347	0	347	(928)	1,278	350	3
Service, Strategy & Regulation and General	155	0	155	(2,099)	2,255	156	1
	1,618	155	1,773	2,147	666	2,813	1,040
In Year Over/(Under) Spend	13,580	775	14,355	7,863	7,915	15,778	1,423

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REVENUE BUDGET MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2024/25

	Budget			Expenditure			(Under)/ Over Spend £000
	Original Budget £000	Approved Adjustments £000	Amended Approved Budget £000	Expenditure to June £000	Projected Spend £000	Total Projection £000	
<i>Chief Executive & Economy</i>							
<i>Chief Executive</i>							
Chief Executive	216	0	216	69	147	216	0
Darlington Partnership	85	16	101	31	70	101	0
	301	16	317	100	217	317	0
<i>Economic Growth</i>							
AD - Economic Growth	155	0	155	48	105	153	(2)
Emergency Planning	105	0	105	9	85	94	(11)
Building Control	192	0	192	42	140	182	(10)
Consolidated Budgets	46	148	194	(100)	294	194	0
Development Management	52	0	52	151	11	162	110
Economy	259	58	317	(83)	400	317	0
Environmental Health	351	0	351	118	186	304	(47)
Place Strategy	603	121	724	(87)	771	684	(40)
Property Management & Estates	(487)	60	(427)	(671)	244	(427)	0
	1,276	387	1,663	(573)	2,236	1,663	0
In Year Over/(Under) Spend	1,577	403	1,980	(473)	2,453	1,980	0

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BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2024/25

SCHOOLS PROJECTED BALANCES 2024/25					
School Name	Opening Balance at 1st April 2024	Formula Budget Allocation*	Total Available	Closing Balance at 31st March 2025	Projected Closing Balance as proportion of Formula Budget Allocation
	£000	£000	£000	£000	%
Primary					
Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools	34	1,131	948	(70)	(6%)
Harrowgate Hill Primary	43	2,687	2,730	24	1%
Red Hall Primary	239	1,588	1,827	169	11%
Rise Carr College, Clifton House & Eldon House	305	2,005	2,310	289	14%
Whinfield Primary					
Primary Total	621	7,411	7,815	412	

*Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools/Rise Carr College original budget. Actual allocation based on attendance.

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HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2024/25

	Budget			Total Projection £000	(Under)/ Over Spend £000
	Original Budget £000	Approved Adjustments £000	Amended Approved Budget £000		
<u>Housing Revenue Account</u>					
<u>Income</u>					
Rents Of Dwellings (Gross)	(23,640)	0	(23,640)	(23,343)	297
Sundry Rents (Including Garages & Shops)	(497)	0	(497)	(507)	(10)
Charges For Services & Facilities	(3,377)	0	(3,377)	(3,384)	(7)
Contribution towards expenditure	(887)	(205)	(1,092)	(1,231)	(139)
Interest Receivable	(6)	0	(6)	(450)	(444)
Total Income	(28,407)	(205)	(28,612)	(28,915)	(303)
<u>Expenditure</u>					
Operational	4,859	205	5,064	5,454	390
Service Charges	3,377	0	3,377	3,384	7
Maintenance	6,179	0	6,179	6,257	78
Capital Financing Costs	3,911	0	3,911	3,911	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	13,455	0	13,455	13,455	0
Increase in Bad Debt Provision	250	0	250	250	0
In year contribution to/(from) balances	(3,624)	0	(3,624)	(3,796)	(172)
Total Expenditure	28,407	205	28,612	28,915	303
(Surplus)/Deficit	0	0	0	0	0

HRA Balances	£000
Opening balance 01/04/2024	25,947
Contribution to/(from) balances	(3,796)
Closing balance	22,151

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**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 SEPTEMBER 2024**

INVESTMENT FUND - UPDATE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider progress against the agreed investments being funded through the Investment Fund.

Summary

2. Attached at **Annex 1** is a report of the Group Director of Operations which is being considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 10 September 2024 in relation to progress against the agreed investments being funded through the Investment Fund

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that Members consider the attached report and forward any views to Cabinet for consideration.

**Brett Nielsen
Assistant Director Resources**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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**CABINET
10 SEPTEMBER 2024**

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE INVESTMENT FUND

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet on progress against the agreed investments being funded through the Investment Fund.

Summary

2. In November 2016 the Council established an Investment Fund to be used for innovative investment opportunities beyond the traditional Treasury Management Strategy in order to achieve greater returns given the low returns on investment.
3. The fund provision of £50m is being utilised as envisaged in the original reports to Council to include Joint Venture (JV) vehicles and economic regeneration initiatives. Returns on JV's are anticipated to be over £7.5m and three of the JV schemes have completed with the investment fully repaid and recycled back into the fund.
4. The Investment Fund is currently funding 10 schemes as detailed in the report.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Cabinet note the use of the Investment Fund and the returns achieved through the joint venture vehicles.

Reasons

6. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons:-
 - (a) To keep Cabinet informed of progress made on opportunities undertaken and investment returns.
 - (b) To increase development opportunities and income for the Council.

**Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations**

Background Papers

- (i) Council report – 24 November 2016 – Investment opportunities
- (ii) Council report – 29 November 2018 – Investment opportunities update and request to increase the fund.

Brett Nielsen : Extension 5403

Council Plan	The use of the Investment Fund contributes to economic development, regeneration and activity therefore contributing to the Council Plan priority. ECONOMY - building a strong sustainable economy and highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all.
Addressing inequalities	This report is providing an update on the financing of schemes therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
Tackling Climate Change	This report is providing an update on the financing of schemes therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The utilisation of the Investment Fund is likely to increase Council income in this and future years.
Health and Wellbeing	This report is providing an update on the financing of schemes therefore there is no impact as a result of this report.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Wards Affected	No anticipated impact on an individual area as a result of this report
Groups Affected	No anticipated impact on specific groups as a result of this report
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Background

7. In November 2016 Council agreed to the establishment of an Investment Fund and following the successful implementation agreed to increase the fund to £50m on 29 November 2018.
8. It has been agreed the fund is recyclable, so as the life of an investment comes to an end and repayment is made, it will be recycled back into the Investment Fund for further utilisation. Any future scheme would still require a full detailed business case report to Cabinet for approval.
9. The Economic Growth and Finance Teams continue to look for new opportunities to provide development and financial returns to the Council using the Investment Fund.
10. Since the establishment of the fund, Cabinet have agreed to 16 uses, 6 of which have completed with the investment recycled back into the fund. At the end of the first quarter 2024/25 there are 10 remaining schemes as summarised below:

Investment	Cabinet Agreement Date	Agreed Amount £m's	Repaid	Balance £m's
Markets (MAMDL Ltd)	20/09/17	1.80	0	1.80
Neasham Road – Relocation of Cattle Mart	06/03/18	3.14	0.64	2.50
JV - West Park	03/04/18	12.00	12.00	0.00
JV - ESH/DBC North East	03/12/19	9.50	0	9.50
Land Acquisition – Faverdale	03/03/20	1.30	0	1.30
JV - Neasham Road – Elder Brook Park	15/09/20	8.50	3.75	4.75
Burtree Lane Garden Village	05/10/21	0.73	0	0.73
Feethams House	11/01/22	1.71	1.04	0.67
JV – Neasham Road – Hurworth Gardens	03/07/23	6.70	0	6.70
JV – Blackwell Grange	09/01/24	8.48	0	8.48
TOTAL		53.86	17.43	36.43

11. The 8 JV schemes approved to date are projected to provide a pre-tax return on investment of over £7.5m once all houses have been completed and sold. Receipts from the three schemes that have already completed have provided post tax dividends of £1.575m.

Investment update

12. The following paragraphs provide an update on the individual schemes committed against the Investment Fund since the last report to Cabinet in September 2023.

Market Asset Management

13. In 2017 the Council entered into a lease with Market Asset Management Ltd (MAM) for the management and refurbishment of the Victorian Indoor Market and the management and improvement of Darlington's outdoor market.
14. The first phase of development included the construction of six street food stalls, new toilets, enhanced entrance areas, a new bar facility, full mechanical and electrical improvements, the installation of a bio-mass boiler and repairs to the market roof.
15. Additional works to the market funded from outside of the Investment Fund include phase two of the redevelopment which commenced in August 2022 and includes additional new toilets, improvements to the entrance area to the traditional trading area, general enhancement of the market, two new hospitality venues and a new bar facility in the vaults area of the market. These works were completed in March 2023. A further phase which included a full refurbishment of the retail area was completed in August 2024. This now provides an additional 10 stalls of which four are currently occupied by new traders and heads of terms have been agreed for three more traders.
16. With the completion of Phase 3, detailed discussions with MAM on the terms for the repayment of the loan facility have commenced and will be reported back to members when complete.

Neasham Road: Linked to Relocation of Cattle Mart

17. In March 2018 Cabinet agreed to purchase the land at Neasham Road from the Darlington Farmers Auction Mart and others to help facilitate the move out of the town centre. The acquisition of the land at Neasham Road not only assisted with this priority but enables the Council to bring forward a significant additional development of new houses for sale and social housing to meet an identified need within the borough.
18. £3.14m was allocated from the investment fund being the balance of funding required for the move. The funding will be repaid from Section 106 receipts from affordable housing along with any capital receipts received from the Cattle Mart and Neasham Road sites. To date £0.64m has been repaid. This scheme is progressing with the construction underway at Elder Brook Park and Hurworth Gardens sites. (see below).

JV West Park

19. The Council entered a JV company with our framework partners to build and sell houses at West Park and agreed funding of £12m to facilitate this, to date £6.42m of funding has been drawn down against this allocation and all of this has been repaid. As this scheme is now in the later phases it is not expected that any further draw down of funding will be required and therefore the balance outstanding on the Investment Fund is shown as fully repaid.
20. The current projection is that this scheme will provide a higher return than the originally anticipated pre-tax profit of £2.1m, once the scheme is completed. To date £1.0m of post-tax dividend has been received.

21. The site continues to see high levels of interest and at the time of writing 26 of the 32 properties available for sale in 2024 have been sold or reserved.

JV Esh/DBC North East

22. Cabinet approved the establishment of a JV company in December 2019 to provide the infrastructure, build and sell homes under an investment programme within the North East under the company name Esh/DBC JV Limited.
23. This company takes a longer-term view and is not site specific which enables funds to be reinvested over a longer term. A number of sites are under consideration and two have commenced construction at Gateshead and Trimdon.
24. Good progress with sales is being made at the Gateshead site, with 9 of the 13 properties made available in 2024 either sold or reserved.
25. The new site at Trimdon (Bluebell Gardens) has recently commenced construction with one of the four properties available in 2024 sold to date.

Land Purchase – Land at Faverdale

26. The Council acquired 74 acres of land for employment use to the east of Faverdale East Business Park following approval in March 2020. Cabinet agreed in October 2021 to seek expressions of interest for a preferred developer of the site. The site was marketed through informal tender but due to changes in the economic climate in late 2022 the submitted expressions of interest did not reflect best value for the Council to proceed.
27. Developer interest remains in the site and the Council is continuing to explore development uses for the site.

JV Neasham Road – Elder Brook Park

28. The Council entered into a JV company with our framework partners to build and sell houses at Neasham Road and agreed funding of £8.50m to facilitate this, to date £3.75m of this has been repaid to the Council.
29. Pre-tax profits from the site are anticipated at £1.1m.
30. The site continues to provide high levels of interest, with all of the 32 properties initially made available in 2024 either sold or reserved.

Burtree Lane Garden Village

31. The Council have engaged the services of Homes by Esh the Council's JV partner to help facilitate an early planning application for Council owned land at Faverdale. This forms part of Phase 1 of the Burtree Garden Village site, which subject to planning will provide approximately 188 new homes and provide a capital receipt to the Council as the site is developed. This receipt will be used to repay the Investment Fund.

32. Work has progressed with the sale of the site, however planning and infrastructure tendering delays have pushed back the anticipated sale completion date to the first quarter of 2025.

Feethams House

33. Cabinet agreed to the repayment of £1.7m of European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) to the Government, received for the construction of Feethams House, to facilitate the use of the building by the Treasury and other government departments. This repayment was required as the change in use no longer met the ERDF funding criteria to provide high quality office accommodation to small and medium enterprises.
34. The grant is to be repaid over a three-year term and will be reimbursed through rental income received from the Darlington Economic Campus occupants. To date £1.04m has been repaid to the Investment Fund.

JV Neasham Road - Hurworth Gardens

35. Cabinet approved the establishment of the Joint Venture Company between the Council and Esh Homes to acquire the land, deliver infrastructure and build and sell new homes at Neasham Cell C in July 2023 and agreed funding of £6.7m to facilitate this.
36. The estimated pre-tax profit share for the Council is £0.694m on completion of the scheme.
37. Sales at the site are progressing very well with 17 of the 26 properties made available in 2024 either sold or reserved.

JV Blackwell Grange

38. Cabinet approved the creation of a new Joint Venture Company between the Council and Esh Homes to acquire land and undertake associated works to deliver housing and landscape restoration works to parkland at Blackwell in January 2024. Funding of £8.48m was agreed to facilitate the works, with an expected pre-tax profit share of £0.871m for the Council once works and all properties are sold.

Summary

39. The Investment Fund has been used for 16 schemes to date, six of which have been recycled back into the fund.
40. The agreed Investment Fund of £50m has a commitment against it of £36.43, leaving a balance of £13.57m uncommitted.
41. The JV schemes are anticipated to generate over £7.5m in pre-tax profit dividend to assist the Medium Term Financial Plan, along with a further surplus on loan repayments.
42. The Investment Fund is being utilised as envisaged facilitating wide economic benefits as well as a direct positive impact on the Councils financial position.

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**PROJECT POSITION STATEMENT & CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING
QUARTER 1 2023/24**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Q1 2023/24 report.

Summary

2. Attached at **Annex 1** is the Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Q1 2023/24 report which is due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 September 2023.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that Members consider and discuss the Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring 2023/24 Q1 2023/24 report.

**Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations
Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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CABINET
10 SEPTEMBER 2024

PROJECT POSITION STATEMENT & CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING
QUARTER 1 2024/25

Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio

Responsible Director -
Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides:
 - (a) A summary of the latest Capital resource and commitment position, to inform monitoring of the affordability and funding of the Council's capital programme.
 - (b) An update on the current status of all construction projects currently being undertaken by the Council.
2. It also seeks approval for changes to the programme.

Summary

3. The projected outturn of the current Capital Programme is £330.867m against an approved programme of £331.530m. The investment is delivering a wide range of improvements to the Council's assets and more critically, to Council services. Refurbishment of council homes, improved learning environments in schools, better traffic flows and opportunities for sustainable travel have been achieved and are detailed within the report. The programme, including commitments, remains affordable within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2024/25 – 2027/28.
4. The Council has a substantial annual construction programme of work. The current project position statement (PPS) shows there are 26 live projects currently being managed by the Council with an overall projected outturn value of £157.308m. The majority of projects are running to time, cost and quality expectations but are being monitored given the current pressures on resources in the construction sector nationally.
5. The projects are managed either by the Council's in-house management team, a Framework Partner or by Consultants sourced via an open/OJEU tender process.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet:
- (a) Note the attached status position on construction projects.
 - (b) Note projected capital expenditure and resources.
 - (c) Approve the adjustments to resources as detailed in paragraph 21.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
- (a) To inform Cabinet of the current status of construction projects.
 - (b) To make Cabinet aware of the latest financial position of the Council.
 - (c) To maintain effective management of resources.

Dave Winstanley
Group Director of Services

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

- (i) Capital Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 – 2027/28
- (ii) Project Position Statement and Capital Monitoring Outturn 2024/25

Brian Robson : Extension 6608
Steve Wake : Extension 5424

Council Plan	The Capital Programme referred to in the report supports delivery of the Council plan.
Addressing inequalities	There are no specific implications for Addressing Inequalities.
Tackling Climate Change	Tackling Climate Change issues are assessed and reported in individual projects.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The recommendations support the effective and efficient use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no issues relating to Health and Wellbeing which the report needs to address.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected.
Groups Affected	The proposals do not affect any particular groups within the community.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	The report does not represent a key decision.
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

2024/25 Capital Spend and Resources

8. **Appendix 1** is for information and lists all live construction projects and provides details on numbers, type and details of the key individuals responsible for the delivery of the projects. It also provides a statement on the current status position on each project, details of actions being taken, where required and any current issues.
9. **Appendix 2** summarises the Council's capital commitments which are yet to be financed and also shows how it is intended for them to be financed. The total value of commitments, including available resources brought forward from previous years and 2024-25 schemes previously released by Cabinet, is £142.800m.

10. **Appendix 3** shows the Council’s projected capital receipts and how they are going to be utilised to help finance the capital programme over the life of the MTFP.

Project Position Statement

11. Project management procedures require the production by project managers of a Project Position Statement (PPS) for all projects over £75,000. This report brings together the pertinent data from the current PPS with financial information from the Financial Management System (FMS) and approvals by Cabinet.
12. The Project Position Statement (Appendix 1) details the current live construction projects, up to the end of June 2024, by delivery area, and provides details on numbers, type and details of the key individuals responsible for the delivery of the projects. It also provides a statement on the current status position on each project, details of actions being taken, where required and any current issues. The statement excludes any completed projects or those on hold.
13. The overview of live construction projects is as follows:

	Projects	Current Approved Budget £ / p	Projected Outturn £ / p	Variance %	Variance (Value) £ / p
Chief Executive & Economic Growth	14	53,543,342	53,433,533	(0.2)	(109,809)
Operations	4	38,601,739	38,167,833	(1.1)	(433,906)
People	0	0	0	0.0	0
Services	8	65,343,484	65,706,649	0.6	363,165
TOTAL	26	157,488,565	157,308,015		(180,550)

14. The table shown above includes a column for current approved budget. In certain cases this budget figure may be different from the original approved budget. This could be as a result of variances identified during construction or other variables not known at the initiation stage. The original budget and all subsequent changes have been reported to and approved by Cabinet.

15. The live projects are at the following stages:

Department	Brief	CP1	CP2	CP3	CP4	CP5	Total
Chief Executive & Economic Growth	0	0	3	3	6	2	14
Operations	0	1	0	3	0	0	4
People	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services	0	1	0	3	1	3	8
TOTAL	0	2	3	9	7	5	26

Control Point 1 (CP1) – Start Up: is used to define the position of a project at its conception stage.

- (a) **Control Point 2 (CP2) – Initiate:** defines a project at feasibility stage and will likely include a desktop assessment of a project and the use of informed estimates.
- (b) **Control Point 3 (CP3) – Define:** the point that the project is progressed to RIBA Stage F, i.e. detailed design.
- (c) **Control Point 4 (CP4) – Construction Phase:** is the stage at which work begins on the project, i.e. for a construction project on site through to build completion.
- (d) **Control Point 5 (CP5) – Evaluate:** is the stage post completion of the project at which time the project is reviewed and lessons learned are discussed in order that they can be taken to the next or similar projects.

16. The status on live projects is as follows:

Department	Red	Blue	Green
Chief Executive & Economic Growth	0	13	1
Operations	0	3	1
People	0	0	0
Services	2	6	0
TOTAL	2	22	2

- (a) Colours (Green better Red worse than) are used to identify projects that have variances which are:
 - (i) More than £5,000, if the variance is also more than 5% of the approved budget for the project, or
 - (ii) More than £50,000 regardless of the percentage variance
- (b) Projects that are within these margins are symbolised with the colour Blue.

- (c) In addition to cost, the same colours are used to indicate similar levels of variances in time and quality/outputs/outcomes.

17. Current projects with the Red colour are as follows:

Project	Reason for Variance	Action
Skinnergate Re-development Housing	A delay was encountered following the production of a revised design to satisfy concerns raised by English Heritage at the planning application stage. It has also been impacted by Nutrient Neutrality further delaying the start on site date.	Phase 1 demolition is now underway.
Hopetown	As previously reported, remaining risk and disputed sums remain. Depending on the outcome the current forecast is between £603k under budget and £363k over budget. The PPS is reporting the worst case scenario at this stage.	Remaining risk is being managed by the project team as the project approaches completion.

Reconciliation of Project Position Statement to Capital Programme

18. The table shown below reconciles the differences between the Capital Programme (CP) and the Project Position Statement (PPS). Differences occur because the Project Position Statement includes all construction projects over £75,000 in value funded from Capital and Revenue sources. Spending within the Capital Programme is not always of a construction nature, can be of any value and excludes Revenue funded schemes.

	Value £m
Live Projects from Project Position	157.308
Schemes closed or on hold within CP but awaiting PPS post project review.	13.693
Annualised Schemes excluded from PPS - Housing Repairs & Maintenance	41.277
Annualised Schemes excluded from PPS - Highways Maintenance	13.366
Annualised Schemes excluded from PPS - Childrens Services School Maintenance	0.207
Non construction excluded from PPS	12.164
Capital Investment fund excluded from PPS	42.995
Projects under 75k excluded from PPS	2.288
Capital Schemes not yet integrated into PPS reporting	26.532
Included in PPS & CMR	0.000
Funding not yet allocated	21.037
Capital Programme	330.867

19. The table below shows the split of the approved capital programme of £331.530m, between the different service areas and also the various categories of spend. When compared to the table above it shows that there is a projected £0.663m underspend on the approved capital programme.

Area	Construction				Non construction	Capital investment fund	Housing New Build - not yet allocated	Total
	Live Schemes 75k & Over	Annualised Schemes	Completed Schemes awaiting review	Live Schemes under 75k				
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Housing	43.842	41.264	0.000	0.033	1.705	0.000	15.673	102.517
Economic Growth	49.532	0.080	0.440	0.274	6.966	40.181	3.476	100.949
Highways/Transport	65.911	13.219	10.083	1.392	1.741	1.877	1.512	95.735
Leisure & Culture	25.040	0.104	2.545	0.274	0.000	0.551	0.000	28.514
Education	0.000	0.207	0.000	0.273	0.079	1.124	0.290	1.973
Adult Social Care	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.071
Other	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.771	0.000	0.000	1.771
Total	184.325	54.874	13.068	2.246	12.333	43.733	20.951	331.530

Capital Programme

20. Paragraph 21 shows the movements in the Capital Programme since the approval of the 2024/25 Capital MTFP, some of which have not yet been approved by Members.

21. Adjustment to resources requested by departments:

Adjustments needing approval release

Department	Scheme	Value £	Reason for adjustment	Resource type adjusted
Operations	Sherbourne Close Phase 2	£325,000	Additional Homes England Grant for new build scheme	Release
Operations	Sherbourne Close Phase 2	£1,533,399	Release of HRA funding for new build scheme	Release
TOTAL		£1,858,399		

Outcome of Consultation

22. There has been no consultation in the preparation of this report.

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Project	CP1 Start Up	CP2 Initiate	CP3 Design	CP4 Delivery	CP5 Review	Status Symbol	Status	Client Dept	Delivery Dept	Internal Project Sponsor	Internal Project Manager	Cost Centre	Feasibility Budget	Original Approved Budget	Increase To Initial Approved Budget	Current Approved Budget	Project Expected Out Turn Cost	Variance (%)	Variance (value)	Original Planned Project Completion Date	Revised Approved Project Completion Date	Anticipated Project Completion Date	Schedule Variation (Days)	CDM Notifiable Project	Principal Designer	Previous Plan Progress	Plan Progress	Budget Progress Report	Issue Status Report
Yards Phase 2							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Mark Ladyman	Mike Bowton	R0180	£0	£800,000	£739,000	£1,539,000	£1,548,311	1%	£9,311	31-Mar-23	29-Mar-25	29-Mar-25	0	Y	Lee Davril	Additional properties identified and listed within the action tracker still need initial designs approved by the business, however some of the businesses are proving difficult to contact. Some of the businesses are requesting works that are deemed to be maintenance rather than improvements and these are proving challenging as the funding is for improvement works only.	Work is progressing on the properties on the Yards and Skinnergate project through the balancing of resources with this project and Victoria Road. Certain key high profile properties are being prioritised to meet owner programme. Designs are being detailed for the remaining properties on the project and these will be programmed in as resources allow from Building Services and availability of the businesses.	May Valuation is currently being processed	Procurement of subcontractors and obtaining estimates and quotes from other suppliers continues to be challenging on this project. As this issue has a time impact on the delivery of the project, the Project Manager, Contract Administrator and Client are looking at the scope of works which may enable a smoother process through the sole use of Darlington Building Services.
Skinnergate Re-development Housing							Live	Services	Services	Anthony Sandys	Brian Robson	H6748	£0	£4,950,000	£1,515,000	£6,465,000	£6,465,000	0%	£0	30-May-25		30-May-25	0	Y	Andrew Bumfrey	A temporary works design to support the method statement for the partial demolition works required to No. 12 has been finalised and issued. Phase 1 demolition works are due to commence in May. Discussions are still ongoing to seek an agreement	Phase 1 demolition works have now commenced.		Initial surveys undertaken, which reveal major loss of structure to heritage building and adjacent property. 2. Historic England opposition to designs are now addressed but significant delays have ensued.
Sherborne Close Phase 2							Live	Operations	Operations	Anthony Sandys	Ben Waldie	H6749	£0	£2,375,962	£2,232,456	£4,608,418	£4,608,418	0%	£0	08/03/2023	19/08/2025	19/08/2025	0	Y	Neil Wennington	Awaiting re-tender notice to assess against estimated figure £3,622,733.01	Revised tender approved at the pre-start meeting with Housing Services and works commenced on-site on 25 June 2024	Project cost includes updated build cost of £3.6m and also additional legacy costs incurred prior to the scheme being frozen due to national planning policy change	Contractor held open evening with residents and provided letter drop communicating works planned and contact details for any queries. Works commenced 25/6/24
Hopetown Darlington							Live	Services	Services	Ian Thompson	Brian Robson	R0155	£210,000	£20,000,000	£17,088,350	£37,088,350	£37,451,516	1%	£363,165	30-Sep-24		30-Sep-24	0	Y	Space Architects	Works on the Carriage works, Goods Shed and Head of Steam are ongoing. The new entrance works from McNay Street are nearly complete and the car park construction is ongoing. The play area installation has commenced and is progressing well	Works on the Carriage works, Goods Shed and Head of Steam are nearing completion as is the car park and new pedestrian crossing. The site is due to open on 16th July. Works to VR pod will continue in to August		
Nesham Rd							Live	Operations	Operations	Anthony Sandys	Ben Waldie	H6745	£0	£31,069,000	£1,008,203	£32,077,203	£31,643,297	-1%	£433,906	02-May-25		02-May-25	0	Y	Lee Davril	Awaiting revised Master programme to be submitted for client approval to close out revised phasing dates and handover delay.	Revised master programme submitted to Housing Board for approval. Phase 1A properties scheduled for handover July 2024.	Project still within approved budget. BS valuations now up to date.	Trust Green appointed to maintain site following completion of landscaping amenity area.
Chestnut Street Housing Development							Live	Operations	Operations	Anthony Sandys	Ben Waldie	H6759	£116,118	£116,118	0	£116,118	£116,118	0%	£0	TBA		TBA	0	Y	Neil Wennington	CP2 drafted for client approval, outlining design budget, design programme and initial specification for development.	Design commissioned for traditional build to apartment blocks. RIBA Stage 2 due Q3 2024.	CP2 budget of £116,118.00 covers all design costs. External consultant input, PM fees & planning charge. Construction cost forecast to be reviewed following Stage 2 report.	Public RoW and brownfield site provide significant constraints on design. Existing drainage culvert appears to be within DBC adoption, site investigations underway to confirm Decision due summer 24 on Homes England Brownfield site funding - if successful works to be underway prior to Apr 25.
Innovation Central							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Anthony Hewitt	Joanne Wood	R0157	£50,000	£500,000	£8,287,854	£8,787,854	£8,787,854	0%	£0	31-Dec-21	31-Aug-22	31-Aug-22	0	Y	Napper Architects	The mast is now operational. The Deed of Covenant and BREEM certificate are awaited. The project closure will be undertaken in July 2024, subject to these issues being resolved.	The mast is now operational. The Deed of Covenant and BREEM certificate are awaited. The project closure will be undertaken in July 2024, subject to these issues being resolved.		
Ingenium Parc Masterplan + Infrastructure							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Anthony Hewitt	Joanne Wood	R0144	£0	£611,500	£4,265,593	£4,877,093	£4,877,093	0%	£0	31-Aug-18	23-Dec-22	31-Jul-24	577	Y	Y	Closure of the project will be undertaken from July 2024 with the responsibility for the site falling to Estates for the development land and StreetScene for the surrounding managed habitats.	Closure of the project will be undertaken from July 2024 with the responsibility for the site falling to Estates for the development land and StreetScene for the surrounding managed habitats.		End of the drainage defect is due 24th July 2024 and the project closure can commence after this date.
Eastbrook Sports Pitches Drainage							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Ian Thompson	Rebecca Robson	L0154	£0	£1,610,000	£941,843	£2,551,843	£2,551,843	0%	£0	31-Jul-23	31-Aug-23	07-Jun-24	241	Y	SPACE	The items listed below are still outstanding as of the 26/05/24. 1. Swale regrading and landscaping as per the design - works arranged for 03/06/24. 2. CCTV pad, column and camera installation / connection - works arranged for 03/06/24. 3. Issuing of electrical certificates to Building Control for sign off. 4. Handing over of the O&M's / H&S files to the end user. 5. Electricity switch form temporary supply to mains.	The items listed below are still outstanding as of the 26/05/24. 1. Issuing of electrical certificates to Building Control for sign off. 2. Handing over of the O&M's / H&S files to the end user. 3. Electricity switch form temporary supply to mains.	Final account to be agreed.	Lesson learnt and CP5 to be done once all works have been completed, final account agreed and files received.
Darlington Station Relatubishment + Infrastructure							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Dave Westastley	Julia McCabe	R0165	£1,322,940	£0	£1,322,940	£1,322,940	0%	£0	01-Mar-23		01-Apr-24	365	Y	A & N Consultants	GATEWAY WEST: Pensbury/Victoria road: Pre-construction information provided to TVCA, TVCA will be commissioning the demolition. 1-4 Park Lane & 1 Waverley Terrace (single property). Site Property 1. Compensation amount agreed with claimant and funds transferred, completing all outstanding action. Property 2. Still awaiting evidence from former owner's surveyor, Sanderson Weatherall continue to chase.	GATEWAY WEST: Pensbury/Victoria road: Pre-construction information provided to TVCA, TVCA will be commissioning the demolition. 1-4 Park Lane & 1 Waverley Terrace (single property). Property 1. Compensation amount agreed with claimant and funds transferred, completing all outstanding action. Property 2. Still awaiting evidence from former owner's surveyor, Sanderson Weatherall continue to chase.		The Council continues to negotiate with the interest who are yet to agree a compensation amount. This process could continue until c. 2027.	
Darlington Station CPO & Acquisitions							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Dave Westastley	Julia McCabe	R0170	£0	£8,077,282	£855,650	£7,421,612	£7,421,612	0%	£0	21-Sep-22		21-Sep-22	0	N	NA				
Central Park Mound Removal & Transformation							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Dave Westastley	Michael Bowton	R0172	£2,350,000	£2,650,000	£250,000	£2,900,000	£2,900,000	0%	£0	31-Mar-22	30-Apr-24	30-Apr-24	0	Y	WDC	Handover of site to estates is being arranged	Final Confirmation of Road Adoptions and remedial works following the removal of the old ET mast is ongoing (outside the original project) Handover to Estates will then take place.		Mast removal commencing w/c 1st July 2024
Civic Theatre Relatubishment + Theatre Hullabaloo							Live	Services	Services	Ian Thompson	Brian Robson	L0115	£50,000	£50,000	£16,019,000	£16,069,000	£16,069,000	0%	£0	01-Aug-13	06-Nov-17	06-Nov-17	0	Y	Todd Milburn	Works Complete. Following some remedial works on the Parkgate Elevation Demolition works now complete, perimeter fencing to be installed defects certificate has now been issued.	Works Complete. Following some remedial works on the Parkgate Elevation Demolition works now complete, perimeter fencing to be installed defects certificate has now been issued.		
156 Northgate							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Mark Ladyman	Joanne Wood	R0186	£0	£1,000,000	£0	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	0%	£0	31/08/2024	31/03/2026	31/03/2026	0	Y	Y	Tender documentation is largely collated and it is expected that it will be issued for tender in July 2024, subject to accurate the full agreement of the client department.	The client has revisited the design and now would like to amend the accessible entrance from a platform lift to a ramp. This will now require planning and building control approval so will delay the tender documentation being issued and will delay the	Once the design is fully agreed the costs will be updated.	
Coniscliffe Road							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Mark Ladyman	Michael Bowton	R0193	£0	£500,000	£0	£500,000	£500,000	0%	£0	01/03/2024	01/03/2025	01/03/2025	0	Yes	Noel Walenci	Planning documentation was submitted on 24th May 2024. CP3 is currently being finalised for signoff and procurement of the works are being looked at whilst Planning is in.	As the project has been considerably reduced since the first iteration The Control Point 2(CP2) document reflects the current agreed available budget of circa £500k plus the identified abated costs.		Vehicle mitigation measures are being costed up for the project however the additional cost is expected to be minimal and this will be looked at when known.
Dolphin Centre - Pool Repairs							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Ian Thompson	Ben Waldie	D0191	£0	£220,000	£1,635,000	£1,855,000	£1,855,000	0%	£0	14/09/2023	16/08/2024	09/08/2024	-7	Y	Michael Johnson	Toddler Pool drainage improvement and tiling underway.	Pool tiling underway. Barr & Wray commenced work on platform supply pipe alterations.	Budget updated to £1.85m covering all 3 phases of essential works.	Barr & Wray confirmed July 24 install for new supply pump and pipework. Hopo advised on 10 week lead time to supply replacement main pool step treads.
Fedthams House							Live	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Chief Exec's & Economic Growth	Ian Williams	Jenny Dixon & Jane Scaffelle Project Richard Storey PkL building delivery	D0161	£246,000	£8,500,000	£0	£8,500,000	£8,460,880	0%	£39,120	30/07/2019	31/05/2020	15/05/2020	-16	Yes	Tim Rainford (Nappers)	The CP5 is to be drafted and the full project closure process is anticipated to be completed by May 2025	The CP5 is to be drafted and the full project closure process completed.	currently 39k underspend.	
Dolphin Centre M and E Refurb							Live	Services	Services	Lisa Soderman	Ben Waldie	D0197	£230,000	£2,200,000	£500,000	£2,700,000	£2,700,000	0%	£0	01/10/2025	01/12/2025	01/12/2025	0	Y	A & N Consultants Andrea Nicholls	Pre Construction Services Agreement to be prepared to employee Wilmot Dixon to develop investment opportunities to Outline Business Case and essential M&E refurbishment design.	Wilmot Dixon submitted PCSA fee to develop design and conduct site surveys. Procurement Hub assisting with contract preparation	Scheme approved budget £2,220,000.00 + £500,000.00 Sport England investment to fund - photovoltaic cells to flat roof footprint & replacement Combined Heat/Power boiler.	Fire Engineering consultant appointed to assist design team develop compliant scheme.

Northern Echo Building							Live	Chief Execs & Economic Growth	Chief Execs & Economic Growth	Mark Ladyman	Ian Stewart / Rebecca Robson	R0179	£0	£11,400,000	£0	£11,400,000	£11,400,000	0%	£0	31/03/2026	31/12/2026	31/12/2026	0	Y	Mark Black-Adavo	The design build and operators' contract has now been signed by Adavo Workspace and sealed on 24/05/24. Key Dates : Still awaiting closure report. Head of Capital Projects to chase	The design build and operator's contract has now been signed by Adavo Workspace and sealed on 24/05/24. Key Dates : Still awaiting closure report. Head of Capital Projects to chase	PO raised to Adavo for £8.9m construction works.	PM - to draft CP3 for signing.				
Houghton Road - Tornado Way							Live	Services	Services	Andy Casey	Noel Walecki	TP722	£0	£1,539,433	£0	£1,539,433	£1,539,433	0%	£0	31/03/2020		31/07/2021	487	N	Noel Walecki	Still awaiting closure report. Head of Capital Projects to chase	Still awaiting closure report. Head of Capital Projects to chase	Budget comprises £1,367,433 NPF + £172,000 LTP match funding.					
Home Upgrade Grant							Live	Operations	Operations	Graham Hall	Christine Booth	H6755 supported by 16063	£0	£6,210,000	£4,410,000.00	£1,800,000	£1,800,000	0%	£0	31/05/2025		31/05/2025	0	Y	TBA	Contracts completed 30.04.24 ESH Construction NEPO framework contract value up to £1,530,000. Storm Tempert for Retrofit Co-ordination, Assessment and Design. Direct Award for works up to £175,000 value. Classic Plumbing and Heating (Retrofit Coordinators) for Retrofit Co-ordination, Assessment and Design. Direct Award for works up to £175,000 value.	£1 of the initial 100 properties signed up for works to process. Variations agreed to include design works for Storm Tempert and Classic Plumbing and Heating. Batch submissions for properties involved in the scheme commenced June 2024.	£1,117,800 upfront funding received for 2023-24 for HUG2. £531,800 being capital funding. The remainder will be drawn down on approval during the project during batch submissions. MOU for 2024-25 to return with revisions for reduced funding.	Project delivery reduced from 300 to 100 properties following mid-term review - Project value changed to £1,800,000 as of 01.04.24. Informal Change request submitted 18.06.24 to revert to 120 properties £2,160,000 capital funding.				
Victoria Road Façade Improvements							Live	Chief Execs & Economic Growth	Chief Execs & Economic Growth	Mark Ladyman	Mike Bowron	R0188	£30,000	£588,000	£0	£588,000	£588,000	0%	£0	31/03/2024	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	0	Y	Lee Darvil	Following a re tender exercise, limited responses were received for the proposed works. This has prevented progress as those responses not received are necessary to allow other trades to continue. Close liaison is being maintained with the main contractor to look to expedite the process.	Initial tender prices have been returned exceptionally higher than expected. A detailed Value Engineering exercise is currently being carried out to minimise the impact of the works whilst reducing the reliance of sub contractors where the costs are high	£60,968.00 spent so far.	Resources from Building Service continue to pose a challenge for the Victoria Façade project. Ongoing fortnightly meetings are taking place to explore the more cost-effective way to progress within the scope of the resources whilst maximising the visual impact and deliverability of the project.				
Rowan East Extension							Live	Services	Services	Guy Metcalfe	Julia McCabe	D0192	£10,000	£10,000	£0	£10,000	£10,000	0%	£0	TBC	TBC	TBC		Yes	TBC	An agreement to proceed with site investigations has been made with the DBC client and site manager and these are currently being planned.	Site investigations and surveys ongoing w/c 01/07/2024.						
Victoria Road Access to Station							Live	Services	Services	Andy Casey	Noel Walecki	TP818	£0	£1,146,701	£0	£1,146,701	£1,146,701	0%	£0	31/03/2020	31/07/2022	31/07/2022	0	Y	Noel Walecki	Still awaiting closure report before cost centre can be closed and removed from PPS. Head of Capital Projects to chase. No further progress.	Still awaiting closure report before cost centre can be closed and removed from PPS. Head of Capital Projects to chase. No further progress.	Funding is £675,000 LGF + £300,000 LTP. Additional LTP funding of £171,701 supplied to cover increased costs.					
Demolition Sports Direct Building							Live	Chief Execs & Economic Growth	Chief Execs & Economic Growth	Guy Metcalfe	Brian Robson	R0177	£0	£300,000	£0	£300,000	£220,000	-27%	£-80,000	30-Jun-22	30-Jun-22	30-Jun-22	0	Y	A & N Consultants	Perimeter fencing work now complete	Perimeter fencing work now complete						
Walking Cycling Route MSG Yarn Road Mill Lane							Live	Services	Services	Andy Casey	Noel Walecki	TP241	£0	£325,000	£0	£325,000	£325,000	0%	£0	31/03/2022	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	0	Y	Noel Walecki	Jacobs (structural engineer for the bridge) are engaged to write the construction management plan, which considers ecological constraints highlighted by the EA. Ecologists have been reengaged to complete the BNG assessment. Still looking at April 2025 for construction to commence.	Jacobs have completed the construction management plan, updated to accommodate comments from the Environment Agency. Ecologists are ongoing with the BONG assessment. Start of construction delayed until April 2025 to reduce risk of inclement weather delays.	LTP (£180,000) plus Section 106 developer contributions (£155,000)					
Total													Sum of Feasibility Project Budget	Sum of Original Approved Budget	Sum of Increase to Original Approved Budget	Sum of Current Approved Budget	Sum of Project Expected Outturn Cost		Sum of Variance Value														
													£4,615,058	£108,071,916	£49,416,649	£157,488,565	£157,308,015		£-180,550														

2024/25 Capital Resources Summary					
Row Ref.		Approved Commitments £M	Virement of Resources £M	Variance £M	Total £M
1	Capital Commitments				
2	Brought forward from 2023/24	120.642			
3	2024/25 Capital Programme (released by Cabinet)	22.158			142.800
4	Projected (Under)/Over Spend				
5	Total Commitments	142.800	0.000	0.000	142.800
	To Be Funded By:				
	External and Departmental Resources				
6	External Funding and Departmental Supported Borrowing	11.173	-	-	11.173
7	Departmental Unsupported Borrowing	0.000	-	-	0.000
8	Capital Grants	57.790	-	-	57.790
9	Capital Contributions	0.050	-	-	0.050
10	Revenue Contributions	29.952	-	-	29.952
11	Capital Receipts - HRA	0.303	-	-	0.303
	Total	99.268	0.000	0.000	99.268
	Corporate Resources				
12	Capital Receipts (General Fund)/ Prudential Borrowing	43.532	-	-	43.532
	Total	43.532	0.000	0.000	43.532
13	Total Resources	142.800	0.000	0.000	142.800

Corporate Resources Analysis		
		£M
14	Required Resources to fund 2024/25 expenditure (see above)	43.532
15	Total Planned Use of Corporate Resources	43.532
16	Less: Total Projected net Capital Receipts 24/25 (as per Appendix 3)	(8.789)
17	Add: projects already released and included in the capital commitments above	7.201
18	Corporate Resources required to fund capital programme	41.944

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Capital Receipts Utilisation - latest projection

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£m	£m	£m
Projected Opening Balance as at 1 April	5.287	0.571	4.966
Projected net Capital Receipts	3.502	5.295	5.315
Total projected Capital Receipts	8.789	5.866	10.281
<u>Less (as per approved capital programme)</u>			
Capitalisation utilisation as per MTFP	(1.400)	0.000	0.000
Council funded schemes	(0.400)	(0.400)	(0.250)
Economic Growth Investment Fund	(0.500)	(0.500)	0.000
Earmarked receipts	(0.223)	0.000	0.000
Slippage from previous years	(5.695)	0.000	0.000
Projected available Capital Receipts as at 31 March	0.571	4.966	10.031

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**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**COMPLAINTS MADE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN
AND THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update of the outcome of cases which have been determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) since the preparation of the previous report to Cabinet on 5 December 2023.
2. To provide Members with the Annual Review Letter of the LGSCO (**Appendix 1**).

Summary

3. This report sets out in abbreviated form the decisions reached by the LGSCO and the HOS between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 and outlines actions taken as a result.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Members consider and discuss the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman

**Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations**

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**CABINET
10 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**COMPLAINTS MADE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN
AND THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE**

**Responsible Cabinet Member –
Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

**Responsible Director -
Chief Officers Executive**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update of the outcome of cases which have been determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) since the preparation of the previous report to Cabinet on 5 December 2023.
2. To provide Members with the Annual Review Letter of the LGSCO (**Appendix 1**).
3. To agree a change to the frequency information is provided to Members.

Summary

4. This report sets out in abbreviated form the decisions reached by the LGSCO and the HOS between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 and outlines actions taken as a result. It seeks to identify trends and any further organisational learning to improve services provision.
5. This report also provides Members with a copy of the Annual Letter of the LGSCO, which contains information on the Council's performance in relation to complaints.
6. It is proposed this report be considered annually by Members, in conjunction with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Letter and annual complaints reports. It is also proposed that upheld decisions are circulated to the relevant portfolio holder at the point the decision is received by the Council.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) The contents of the report be noted.
 - (b) The revised frequency be agreed.

Reasons

8. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) It is important that Members are aware of the outcome of complaints made to the LGSCO and the HOS in respect of the Council's activities.
- (b) The revised frequency will both enable Members to retain proper oversight of the outcome of complaints made to the LGSCO and the HOS at a strategic level, while providing more timely information about issues affecting services within their portfolio.

Chief Officers Executive

Background Papers

Correspondence with the LGSCO and HOS is treated as confidential to preserve anonymity of complainants.

Lee Downey : Extension 5451

Council Plan	Learning from complaints enables the Council to improve the services it provides. This will help in progressing the delivery of the priorities that are set out in the Council Plan for the economy, homes, living well, children and young people communities and the local environment
Addressing inequalities	Complaint investigations have identified the need to complete an equality impact assessment, to ensure the Council has given due regard to protected characteristics when providing services. Regular information is also provided to the Equalities Advisors Group and the Chief Officer's Board.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no specific recommendations contained within the attached reports concerning Carbon Reduction.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report has no impact on the Council's Efficiency Programme.
Health and Wellbeing	Learning from complaints enables the Council to improve the services it provides in relation to Public Health, Leisure and Adult Services, including commissioned services.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report is for information to members and requires no decision. Therefore there are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder
Wards Affected	This report affects all wards equally.
Groups Affected	This report is for information to members and requires no decision. Therefore there is no impact on any particular group.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend any changes to the Budget or Policy Framework.
Key Decision	This is not a Key Decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an Urgent Decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Background

9. The opportunity is normally taken to analyse the areas of the Council's functions where complaints have arisen. It is appropriate to do that in order to establish whether there is any pattern to complaints received or whether there is a particular Directorate affected or a type of complaint which is prevalent. If there were a significant number of cases in any one particular area, that might indicate a problem which the Council would seek to address.
10. The LGSCO encourages officers to share the annual letter with colleagues and elected members as the information can provide valuable insights into service areas, early warning signs of problems and is a key source of information for governance, audit, risk and scrutiny functions.
11. The current timetable means the six monthly report is considered at December's Cabinet, just two months after the annual report. We are proposing moving to annual reporting of LGSCO and HOS decisions, to bring this report in line with the reporting of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review letter and the Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports for Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Corporate, Housing and Public Health complaints which are considered at September's Cabinet each year. We are also proposing providing copies of upheld decisions to the relevant portfolio holder in real time. We believe this approach will both enable Members to retain proper oversight of the outcome of complaints made to the LGSCO and the HOS at a strategic level, while providing more timely information about issues affecting services within their portfolio.

Information and Analysis

12. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the LGSCO notified the Council it had determined 26 complaints.
13. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the HOS notified the Council it had determined two complaints.
14. The LGSCO has updated the decisions they use. As a result it is not possible to make a direct comparison with previous years. However, the new decisions in ***bold/italics*** in the table below are broadly comparable to those previous decisions in *italics* in the table below.

15. The outcome of cases on which the LGSCO reached a decision is shown in the table below.

LGSCO Findings	No. of cases 2023/24	No. of cases 2022/23	No. of cases 2021/22	No. of cases 2020/21
Closed after initial enquiries: no further action	11	9	9	4
Closed after initial enquiries: out of jurisdiction	5	4	1	1
Not upheld: no fault	0	1	N/A	N/A
Not upheld: No further action	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Not upheld: no maladministration</i>	0	1	1	2
Premature	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Upheld: fault and injustice	3	4	N/A	N/A
<i>Upheld: Maladministration and Injustice</i>	0	0	4	2
Upheld: Maladministration, No Injustice	0	0	0	1
Upheld: fault and injustice – no further action, organisation already remedied	2	1	N/A	N/A
<i>Upheld: maladministration and injustice - no further action, satisfactory remedy provided by the org</i>	0	0	1	0
Upheld: no further action, organisation already remedied	3	1	N/A	N/A
<i>Upheld: not investigated - injustice remedied during Body in Jurisdiction's complaint process</i>	0	0	0	1

16. The outcome of cases on which the HOS reached a decision is shown in the table below.

HOS Findings	No. of cases 2023/24	No. of cases 2022/23	No. of cases 2021/22	No. of cases 2020/21
Maladministration	2	0	0	0
No Maladministration	0	0	0	0
Service Failure	0	0	2	1

17. A summary of the findings in relation to those cases which were upheld is provided below.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Upheld: fault and injustice

18. Mrs X complained about how the Council dealt with her adult child's, Mr Y, financial assessment and its consideration of his disability related expenditure request. She also complained about the Council's poor communication with her and how it dealt with her

complaint. Mrs X says the Council's failings caused injustice to her and Mr Y. There were faults by the Council which caused Mr Y and Mrs X injustice. The Council agreed to apologise in writing; pay Mrs X an additional £100 to acknowledge the distress, frustration and uncertainty caused to her by the Council's delay in dealing with and making a decision about Mr Y's disability related expenditure request and the delay in dealing with her complaint; pay Mr Y £150 to acknowledge the uncertainty caused to him by the Council's delay and its failure to properly consider his DRE request; review Mr Y's DRE request for the cost of the support worker hotel accommodation and the top up cost for his Day Care provision or consider if these should be met by an increase to Mr Y's direct payments and ensure the assessment includes a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind any decision taken; review and provide clear information about Mr Y's direct payments in his support plan and clearly set out the agreed direct payment for his Day Care provision. The Council also agreed by training or other means to remind relevant staff of the importance of properly considering disability related expenditure requests in line with statutory guidance and legislation; remind staff of the importance of adhering to its Customer Standards when communicating with service users or those who support them; and by training or other means remind staff of the importance of adhering to the Council's complaints handling process.

19. Ms M complains the Council refused to provide school transport for her son, B, for the 2021/2022 school year. The LGSCO concluded the third appeal panel to consider her request did not appear to have considered Ms M's appeal properly. To remedy the complaint the Council agreed to reconsider Ms M's application for transport for 2021/2022, paying particular attention to its power to provide transport in those cases that do not meet the criteria in legislation, government guidance and its policy. If the Council decided not to provide transport for 2021/2022, to offer Ms M a fresh appeal. The Council, and any appeal panel, agreed to give reasons for their decision to explain how the Council applied its policy and how it exercised its discretion. The Council also agreed to consider whether it was necessary to produce guidance for transport officers and appeal panels to explain the concept of 'discretion' and to ensure future decisions are sound and properly recorded. In a previous complaint, the Council agreed to make a substantial payment to acknowledge Ms M's time and trouble in pursuing her complaint and the avoidable uncertainty, anxiety and distress she had suffered. The LGSCO recognised the Council was quick to arrange the last appeal, however, recommend the Council make a further payment of £250 to recognise Ms M's time and trouble pursuing another complaint after once again receiving an inadequate decision.
20. Miss B says the Council delayed providing her son with school transport, failed to reimburse her for transport costs; delayed issuing her son's education; health and care plan; failed to commission the necessary reports; failed to offer her a personal budget; failed to ensure her son's special educational needs provision was implemented; failed to provide alternative education when her son was out of school; and delayed responding to her complaint. The LGSCO found there were delays in the transport and education; health and care plan processes; delays dealing with the complaint; failure to provide alternative education; and failure to discuss personal budgets at reviews. To resolve the complaint the Council agreed to apologise; provide Miss B with mileage forms to complete to claim back her transport costs for taking her son to and from school between September and November 2021 and for the two weeks the passenger assistant was absent; complete a risk assessment for the school transport for Miss B's son to make sure it is suitable; pay Miss B £1,000 to reflect the missing provision from her son's EHCP as a result of the delay issuing a

final plan in February 2022; provide a refund of the complainant's costs in educating her son between mid-June 2022 and the end of term in July 2022; pay Miss B £500 to reflect her distress and time and trouble; send a reminder to officers dealing with reviews of EHCPs to remind them of the need to discuss the option of a personal budget at the review meeting; and send a reminder to complaints officers of the need to adhere to the timescales set out in the Council's complaints procedure and to keep those who have complained up-to-date when delays occur.

Upheld: fault and injustice – no further action, organisation already remedied

21. Ms X complained about an invoice she has received for care for her father Mr Y. The LGSCO concluded their investigation having made a finding of fault by the Council. Although Mr Y was liable for the care fees, the LGSCO found the Council failed in its duty to appropriately inform Ms X about the liability. The Council had already made a satisfactory award to Ms X to acknowledge the impact this had on her, and had made service improvements to prevent similar occurrences. The LGSCO therefore did not make any further recommendations to the Council.
22. Miss X complained the Council failed to properly reply to her children services complaint. The Council agreed to investigate the complaint at Stage 2 of the Children Act statutory complaints procedure and provide a response within 65 working days of the date of the LGSCO's final decision. The LGSCO upheld the complaint, as the Council had agreed to resolve the complaint early by providing a proportionate remedy for the injustice caused to Miss X.

Upheld: no further action, organisation already remedied

23. The LGSCO decided they would not investigate this complaint about poor care provided to Mr X's mother by her care home. This is because the Council agreed to resolve the complaint early by providing a proportionate remedy for the injustice caused. The Council had already found there was fault in relation to care provided to Mrs A following a fall. It also found there was poor record keeping and a failure by the care home to notify Mrs A's family of the fall immediately. While that was the case, the LGSCO considered there still remained a significant injustice to Mrs A's family which had not been remedied. This was because the situation with Mrs A's fall and inadequate care provided following the fall would undoubtedly have caused them distress. The LGSCO therefore asked the Council to consider remedying the injustice, by making a symbolic financial payment of £300. The Council agreed and the LGSCO concluded, to its credit, the Council had agreed to resolve the complaint by providing a proportionate remedy for the injustice caused.
24. They LGSCO concluded they would not investigate a complaint regarding the Council sharing incorrect information with another Local Authority. The Council had already accepted fault, apologised, offered Mr X £250 for the distress caused by its actions and £250 for any delay in responding to Mr X's complaints. It also reviewed how it shares information with other areas. The LGSCO concluded, further investigation would not lead to a different outcome.
25. In determining this complaint, the LGSCO said they would not investigate the matter of the Council charging Mrs X's friend for the care and support services she received. The friend said the Council did not provide clear information about the services being chargeable. The

Council had already upheld the complaint and offered to waive some of the charges, which amounted to just over £400. The LGSCO said the Council's remedy was in line with their guidance and an investigation by them would not lead to a different outcome.

Housing Ombudsman Services (HOS)

Maladministration

26. In relation to a complaint about the landlord's handling of an application for help with water rates, including its communication and the associated complaint, the HOS concluded, in accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration in the landlord's handling of the application to the water company for help with water rates and service failure in the landlord's handling of the resident's associated complaint. The HOS concluded the landlord should pay the resident £150 for the distress and inconvenience caused by the landlord's handling of the application for assistance, including poor communication and £100 for the time and trouble caused to the resident in pursuing this complaint and the landlord's failures in complaint handling.
27. This complaint concerned the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of anti-social behaviour and harassment; the landlord's handling of repairs in readiness for, and after, letting; and the landlord's associated complaint handling. The HOS concluded that in accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration in the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of anti-social behaviour and harassment and the way it handled the complaint. The HOS also concluded that in accordance with paragraph 53(b) of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, the landlord had already offered redress to the resident prior to investigation which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, resolved satisfactorily the complaint about its handling of repairs in readiness for, and after, letting. The HOS ordered the Council to apologise, pay the resident £1,050 compensation and carry out a review of its handling of the resident's anti-social behaviour and harassment reports to determine what action it should take to prevent a reoccurrence of the failings identified. The HOS also recommended the Council pay the resident the compensation it offered through its complaints process related to the property condition aspects of this complaint, if it had not done so already; review the internal training it delivers on its obligations in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure staff are clear about their responsibilities to vulnerable residents; review any potential Equality Act 2010 considerations as a matter of standard procedure when considering a resident's complaint; and assess its internal recording procedures against the recommendations of the HOS's Spotlight report on Knowledge and Information Management.

Analysis

28. During 2023/24 the Council received three Upheld: Fault and Injustice decisions, compared to four Upheld: Fault and Injustice decisions in 2022/23.
29. No trends have been identified that would lead the Council to implement additional measures to those identified by the Ombudsman, and the organisational learning identified as a result of these complaints should be sufficient to assist in ensuring there is not a re-occurrence.

30. The LGSCO upheld more complaints about the Council (89%), than they did on average about similar organisations (79%).
31. The LGSCO were satisfied the Council had successfully implemented 100% of their recommendations.
32. The LGSCO also found the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy in more upheld cases (38%) than similar organisations (13%), before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

Outcome of Consultation

33. The issues contained within this report do not require formal consultation.

17 July 2024

By email

Mr Williams
Chief Executive
Darlington Borough Council

Dear Mr Williams

Annual Review letter 2023-24

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 2024. 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. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Leader of your Council and Chair of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, to ensure effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer valuable opportunities to learn and improve. In addition, this year, we have encouraged Monitoring Officers to register to receive the letter directly, supporting their role to report the decisions we uphold to their council.

For most of the reporting year, Paul Najsarek steered the organisation during his tenure as interim Ombudsman, and I was delighted to take up the role of Ombudsman in February 2024. I look forward to working with you and colleagues across the local government sector to ensure we continue to harness the value of individual complaints and drive and promote systemic change and improvement across the local government landscape.

While I know this ambition will align with your own, I am aware of the difficult financial circumstances and service demands that make continuous improvement a challenging focus for the sector. However, we will continue to hold organisations to account through our investigations and recommend proportionate actions to remedy injustice. Despite the challenges, I have great confidence that you recognise the valuable contribution and insight complaints, and their swift resolution, offer to improve services for the public.

Complaint statistics

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic. This year, we also provide the number of upheld complaints per 100,000 population.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and give credit to organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your organisation with similar authorities to provide an average marker of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data, and a copy of this letter, will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), on 24 July 2024. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. 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.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February, following a period of consultation, we launched the [Complaint Handling Code](#) for councils, setting out a clear process for responding to complaints effectively and fairly. It is aligned with the Code issued to housing authorities and landlords by the Housing Ombudsman Service and we encourage you to adopt the Code without undue delay. Twenty councils have volunteered to take part in an implementation pilot over the next two years that will develop further guidance and best practice.

The Code is issued to councils under our powers to provide guidance about good administrative practice. We expect councils to carefully consider the Code when developing policies and procedures and will begin considering it as part of our processes from April 2026 at the earliest.

The Code is considered good practice for all organisations we investigate (except where there are statutory complaint handling processes in place), and we may decide to issue it as guidance to other organisations in future.

Our successful complaint handling training programme continues to develop with new modules in Adult Social Care and Children's Services complaint handling available soon. All our courses include practical interactive workshops that help participants develop their complaint handling skills. We delivered 126 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,700 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training or get in touch at training@lgo.org.uk.

We were pleased to deliver two online complaint handling courses to your staff during the year. I welcome your Council's investment in good complaint handling training and trust the courses were useful to you.

Returning to the theme of continuous improvement, we recognise the importance of reflecting on our own performance. With that in mind I encourage you to share your view of our organisation via this survey: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ombudsman/>. Your responses will help us to assess our impact

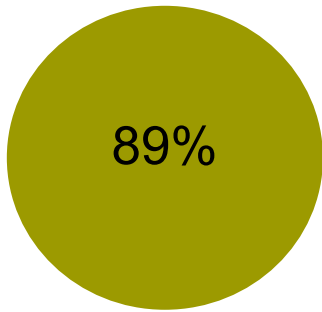
and improve our offer to you. We want to gather a range of views and welcome multiple responses from organisations, so please do share the link with relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amerdeep Somal', followed by a horizontal line.

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

Complaints upheld



89% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **79%** in similar organisations.

8

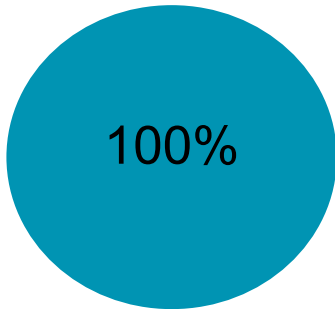
upheld decisions

This is 7.3 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

The average for authorities of this type is 4.6 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

Statistics are based on a total of **9** investigations for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



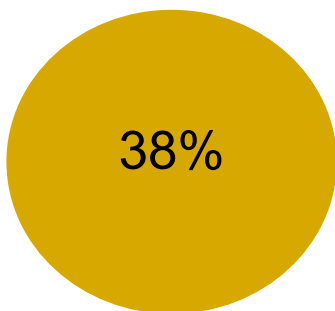
In **100%** of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.

This compares to an average of **100%** in similar organisations.

Statistics are based on a total of **5** compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

- Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An organisation with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation



In **38%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **13%** in similar organisations.

3

satisfactory remedy decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **8** upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 SEPTEMBER 2024**

COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS ANNUAL REPORTS 2023 2024

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with the 2023/24 Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports for:
 - (a) Adult Social Care (**Appendix 2**);
 - (b) Children's Social Care (**Appendix 3**);
 - (c) Corporate (**Appendix 4**);
 - (d) Housing (**Appendix 5**); and
 - (e) Public Health (**Appendix 6**).

Summary

2. It is important that the Council's complaints, compliments and comments procedures are accessible so people can tell us what they think about the services we provide. The Council constantly strives to ensure an organisational culture in which complaints are accepted, owned and resolved as quickly as possible and one in which learning from complaints is used to improve services.
3. The Council received a total of 746 complaints during 2023/24, an increase from 709 in 2022/23, 739 complaints in 2021/22 and 629 in 2020/21. While complaint numbers have risen post-pandemic, they remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, with the Council receiving 838 complaints in 2019/20.
4. The Council received a total of 231 compliments during 2023/24, an increase from 202 in 2022/23, 217 in 2021/22, although a decrease from 309 in 2020/21 and 292 in 2019/20.
5. The Council received a total of 77 comments during 2023/24, a decrease from 112 in 2022/23, 127 in 2021/22, 178 in 2020/21 and 168 in 2019/20.
6. A summary table is provided at **Appendix 1**.
7. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.
8. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a

requirement of the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

9. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that Members consider and discuss the 2023/24 Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports.

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

CABINET
10 SEPTEMBER 2024

COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS ANNUAL REPORTS 2023/24

**Responsible Cabinet Member –
Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

**Responsible Director -
Chief Officers Executive**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with the 2023/24 Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports for:
 - (a) Adult Social Care (**Appendix 2**).
 - (b) Children’s Social Care (**Appendix 3**).
 - (c) Corporate (**Appendix 4**).
 - (d) Housing (**Appendix 5**); and
 - (e) Public Health (**Appendix 6**).

Summary

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10. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the new Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, which became statutory on 1 April 2024.
11. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, which the Ombudsman issued as 'advice and guidance' for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974.

Recommendations

12. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) Cabinet notes the content of the attached reports.
 - (b) Cabinet endorses the further recommendations made in the Corporate, Children's and Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports.

Reasons

13. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
 - (a) To make Cabinet aware of the number and nature of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council and the resulting organisational learning.
 - (b) To ensure the Council is:
 - (i) Complying with the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
 - (ii) Complying with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
 - (iii) Complying with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

- (iv) Complying with the Council's Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures; and
- (v) To improve satisfaction with complaints handling.

Chief Officers Executive

Background Papers

- (i) 2023/24 Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports for:
 - (1) Adult Social Care (Appendix 2).
 - (2) Children's Social Care (Appendix 3).
 - (3) Corporate (Appendix 4).
 - (4) Housing (Appendix 5); and
 - (5) Public Health (Appendix 6).
- (ii) The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.
- (iii) The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- (iv) The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.
- (v) The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- (vi) The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

Lee Downey : Extension 5451

Council Plan	Learning from complaints enables the Council to improve the services it provides. This will help in progressing the delivery of the priorities that are set out in the Council Plan for the economy, homes, living well, children and young people communities and the local environment
Addressing inequalities	Complaint investigations have identified the need to complete an equality impact assessment, to ensure the Council has given due regard to protected characteristics when providing services. Regular information is also provided to the Equalities Advisors Group and the Chief Officer's Board.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no specific recommendations contained within the attached reports concerning Carbon Reduction.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report has no impact on the Council's Efficiency Programme.
Health and Wellbeing	Learning from complaints enables the Council to improve the services it provides in relation to Public Health, Leisure and Adult Services, including commissioned services.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no specific impact on Crime and Disorder
Wards Affected	All wards are affected.
Groups Affected	The proposals do not affect any particular groups within the community
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not have a direct impact on the Budget and Policy Framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The purpose of the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report is, in part, to improve the service we provide to Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

14. Our aim is to put people first and provide them with the best possible service. To make this aim a reality it is important people have the opportunity to tell us what they think about the services we provide. The Council's Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures are one way they can do this. They can tell us when we get things wrong so we can put them right. They can also tell us when we get things right, make comments about the things we do and suggest new ways of doing things.
15. We understand that sometimes it is difficult to complain and work hard to ensure an organisational culture in which complaints are seen as a positive means of engagement and an opportunity for the Council to learn and improve services. If people do need to complain we always take their concerns seriously, treat them fairly and with respect and assure them they will not receive a poorer service as a result.
16. There was an increase in the overall number of representations made under the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2023/24. While there was an increase in the number of complaints received, complaint numbers remained slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels. There was an increase in the number of compliments received, while no comments were received. Full details are attached at Appendix 2. There was an increase in the overall number of representations made under the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2023/24. There was an increase in the number of complaints received at Stage 1 of the procedure, higher than pre-pandemic levels, however there was a decrease in the number of complaints received at Stage 2 with an increase of 2 in the number of complaints received at Stage 3. There was a decrease in the number of compliments received, while no comments were received. Full details are attached at Appendix 3.
18. There was a decrease in the overall number of representations made under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2023/24. While there was a decrease in the number of complaints received, and Stage 1 complaint numbers remained significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels, there was an increase in the number of complaints received at Stage 2. The number of compliments received was the same as in 2022/23 and there was a decrease in the number of comments received. Both compliments and comment remained lower than pre-pandemic levels. Full details are attached at Appendix 4.
19. There was an increase in the number of representations made under the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2023/24. There was an increase in the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received, which were higher than pre-pandemic levels. There was also an increase in the number of compliments received, which surpassed pre-pandemic levels. No comments were received. Full details are attached at Appendix 5.
20. The number of representations made under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2023/24 remained low. The Council received the same number of complaints as in 2022/23. There was a slight increase in the number of

compliments received, while no comments were received. Full details are attached at Appendix 6.

21. Some examples of organisational learning resulting from complaints have been extracted from the appended reports and are provided below:

Adult Social Care Complaints:

- (a) The Council agreed to ensure that written advice and guidance outlining the implications of the cost of care is always provided to service users at the time of undertaking a care and support needs assessment, and that a written record is made that the information has been provided.
- (b) It was also recommended that the Council considers what action is necessary to remedy the delay in financial assessments as a priority, as this is causing worry and distress to people at an already difficult time.
- (c) The Council agreed to consider conducting regular audits and inspections to assess compliance with regulatory standards in a care home, including record-keeping practices, falls protocol adherence, and communication procedures to address any identified deficiencies promptly and implement corrective actions to ensure ongoing quality improvement. The Council also considered reviewing the care home's training requirements, to ensure staff feel confident in their approach to end-of-life planning.
- (d) The Council agreed that, in conjunction with another care home it would review existing safeguarding protocols to ensure that incidents are promptly reported and addressed.
- (e) The Council also agreed to consider how it could implement focused medication audits with a home care provider, similar to those undertaken by the NHS in care homes, to allow for a more effective, informed deep dive of the repeated issues resulting in medication errors and to satisfy itself the issues are not more prevalent across the provision.

Children's Social Care Complaints:

- (a) The Council agreed to review its process for responding, when other local authorities make requests for information.
- (b) The Council agreed to reinforce to social workers the importance of accurate record keeping.
- (c) The Council reminded staff of importance of ensuring core group meetings are held every 20 days in Child Protection Cases and that all those with parental responsibility are kept up to date.
- (d) The Council agreed to ensure that all those with parental responsibility are updated regarding any changes to planned meetings, and that communication is recorded accurately. Also that Child in Need (CIN) meetings are held within the statutory

timeframe, and appropriately recorded, either by the allocated worker, or a duty worker.

- (e) Strengths based case recording training was also delivered. Learning was also taken forward to ensure recording is balanced and made in line with our policies. The need for cultural diversity training was also identified.

Corporate Complaints:

- (a) Following a complaint for Development Management, the Council made explicit reference to the factors which can impact on the timeliness of planning enforcement matters in section 3 of A Charter for Development Management.
- (b) Following another complaint for Development Management, learning from the complaint was shared with officers to ensure any future applications for works to trees are properly considered in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- (c) Following a complaint for the Complaints and Information Governance Team about the Council's response to a Subject Access Request (SAR), Children's Services were reminded of the importance of undertaking thorough searches to ensure all information held is provided and of the importance of providing records in a timely manner.
- (d) Following a complaint for Housing Options, officers were advised that during investigations around someone's suitability for a tenancy or when issues are raised about unacceptable behaviours, they should update the applicant/tenant every 20 working days with progress, and they should inform an applicant/tenant in writing of any decision made within 5 working days, including setting out clearly what procedures have been considered, how and why the decision was reached, any actions the applicant/tenant can consider and next steps.
- (e) Following a further complaint for Housing Options, training was provided to ensure the team advise people applying for housing they will be carrying out a home visit to anyone who is awarded a priority banding.
- (f) Following a complaint for Lifeline, it was agreed Lifeline would review the telecare agreement and include that there are limitations to care provided when personal equipment (such as hoists) are required.
- (g) Following a complaint for SEND, officers were reminded of the need to keep accurate records in relation to the discharge of the Council's statutory duties.
- (h) Following a complaint for School Admissions and Transport the team decided to review how sensitive information is shared with personal assistants, how sharing is documented/measured and if the use of IT equipment would improve service delivery.
- (i) Following a complaint for Early Help, the Building Stronger Families Service agreed to review their response process when concerns are raised and investigated further.

Officers were also reminded of the importance of adhering to the timescales in the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

- (j) Following a complaint for Arboriculture, officers were made aware of the fact cancer is a disability as defined by the Equalities Act 2010.

Housing Complaints:

- (a) Staff were reminded to ensure they adhering to the Councils Customer Service Standards. They were also reminded to follow the follow liquid disposal guidance.
 - (b) It was agreed that an equality and diversity course would be arranged for all Tenancy Management staff.
 - (c) An issue with the Council's IT system, which allowed appointments to be booked on bank holidays, was identified and fixed.
 - (d) Staff were reminded to show their ID when attending a property to undertake repairs and the information on the Council's website regarding who to contact in relation to an Emergency Repair was updated.
 - (e) In response to a complaint, the process for alternative heating sources when someone's heating is broken was reviewed.
22. The further recommendations set out in the Children's, Corporate and Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports are.

Children's Social Care Complaints

- (a) While there has been an improvement in performance against the Stage 1 and Stage 2 timescales, Children's Services and the Complaints & Information Governance Team should continue to work to improve performance.

Corporate Complaints

- (a) Stage 1 Responding Officers should familiarise themselves with the new Stage 1 timescales in the complaints procedure (introduced by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code on 1 April 2024), and ensure they are complying with them prior to the Council's performance against them being monitored by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman from 1 April 2026.
- (b) The Complaints & Information Governance Team should ensure they are complying with the new Stage 2 timescales (introduced by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code on 1 April 2024), prior to the Council's performance against them being monitored by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman from 1 April 2026.

Housing Complaints

- (a) Housing Services and the Complaints & Information Governance Team should establish why there has been an increase in the number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 and work to reduce this in during 2024/25.
- (b) The Complaints & Information Governance Team experienced issues in terms of the resource available to investigate Stage 2 complaints during 2023/24. Housing Services and the Complaints & Information Governance Team should continue working to improve performance against the Stage 2 response target during 2024/25.

Consultation

- 23. The Housing Services Tenants Panel were consulted in preparing this report.

Total Representations by Year

Type of representation	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Complaints					
Corporate					
Stage 1 complaints	463	478	532	457	632
Direct to Stage 2 complaints	14	21	17	24	15
Direct to Ombudsman	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Total complaints</i>	<i>477</i>	<i>499</i>	<i>549</i>	<i>483</i>	<i>647</i>
Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	70	49	53	26	44
<i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>59</i>
Adult Social Care					
Children's Social Care					
Stage 1 complaints	65	56	49	37	57
Direct to Stage 2 complaints	1	0	4	0	0
<i>Total complaints</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>57</i>
Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	14	20	8	7	10
<i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>10</i>
Stage 3 complaints	4	2	1	2	3
Housing					
Stage 1 complaints	140	98	88	60	65
Direct to Stage 2 complaints	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Total complaints</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>66</i>
Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	30	17	16	12	6
<i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>7</i>
Public Health	2	2	1	2	1
Total Complaints	746	709	739	629	838
Compliments					
Corporate	130	130	154	209	170
Adult Social Care	39	31	33	38	62
Children's Social Care	6	8	8	15	7
Housing	55	33	21	47	49
Public Health	1	0	1	0	4
Total Compliments	231	202	217	309	292
Comments					
Corporate	77	110	123	171	166
Adult Social Care	0	0	2	1	0
Children's Social Care	0	0	1	0	0
Housing	0	2	1	4	2
Public Health	0	0	0	2	0
Total Comments	77	112	127	178	168



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Adult Social Care
Complaints, Compliments and Comment
Annual Report
2023/24

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Introduction

1. The purpose of this annual report is to inform service users, carers, the public, Council Members and staff of the effectiveness of the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the procedure).
2. On 1 April 2009 the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 (the regulations) came into force following the consultation 'Making Experiences Count' by the Department of Health. The consultation found that the complaints processes for people receiving both health and social care services were overly complex and inflexible.
3. As a result, the legislation introduced altered the way in which complaints are handled introducing a single joint complaints process for both social care and health services, with one stage as opposed to the previous three stage process used in relation to adult social care services. The regulations also introduced a duty for health and social care services to cooperate.
4. The Council implemented a new procedure on the 1 April 2010 providing a local framework to ensure complaints are handled effectively and in line with the regulations. This procedure was reviewed on 1 April 2024.
5. The procedure aims to:
 - (a) Make it as easy and accessible as possible for service users and their carers to raise complaints;
 - (b) Foster an organisational culture in which complaints are accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently as possible;
 - (c) Ensure high levels of customer satisfaction with complaints handling;
 - (d) Resolve individual issues when they arise and reduce the number of complaints referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman; and
 - (e) Enable the Council to identify topics and trends in relation to adult social care complaints and improve services as a result.
6. The Assistant Director Adult Services is the responsible person for ensuring that the Council complies with the arrangements made under the regulations. They act as the 'Adjudicating Officer', which means they make decisions on complaints and decide what action should be taken in light of the outcome of a complaint.
7. The Complaints and Information Governance Manager (Complaints Manager) is the responsible person for managing the procedure for handling and considering complaints in accordance with the agreements made under the regulations.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (Health Services Ombudsman)

8. Although complainants can refer their complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) from the outset, the LGSCO will not normally investigate until the Council has conducted its own investigation and provided a response. Where it has not been possible for the complaint to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant they may refer the matter to the LGSCO (and the Health Services Ombudsman for some joint complaints).

Information and Accessibility

9. We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services, including the complaints procedure. To help make sure the Council's complaints procedures are easily accessible we have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services, to reflect the single point of access for complainants within the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.
10. Information is available on the Council's website. There is also an electronic form which people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, by email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.
11. The Complaints Manager can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

Advocacy

12. During 2023/24 the Council commissioned an advocacy service which provides RPRs (Relevant Persons Representatives), IMCAs (Independent Mental Capacity Advocates), IMHAs (Independent Mental Health Act Advocates), Care Act Advocates, Representative Deprivation of Liberty authorised by the Court of Protection (COP10DOLS), general advocacy and advocacy for people with a hearing impairment. This was provided by Darlington association on Disability (DAD).

Summary

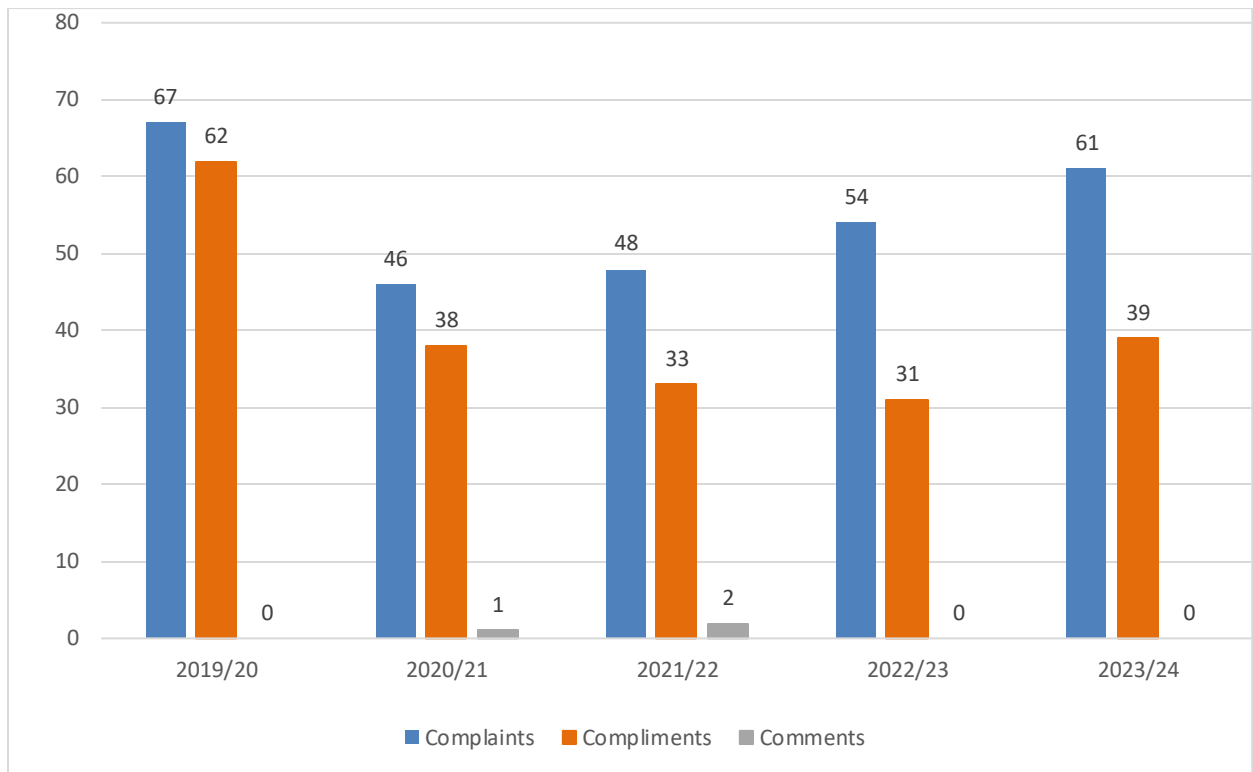
13. There has been an increase in overall feedback, 101 representations in 2023/24, compared to 86 in 2022/23, 83 representations in 2021/22 and 85 in 2020/21. While the overall number of representations continued to rise, they remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, with the Council receiving 134 representations in 2019/20.
14. The Council received 61 complaints during 2023/24, an increase from 54 in 2022/23 and 48 in 2021/22 and 46 in 2020/21. While complaint number have continued to rise, they remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, with the Council receiving 67 complaints in 2019/20.
15. The Council received 39 compliments under the procedure during 2023/24, an increase from 31 in 2022/23, 33 in 2021/22 and 38 in 2020/21 and 62 in 2019/20. Similarly compliment number remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, with the Council receiving 62 compliments in 2019/20.
16. The Council did not receive any comments under the procedure during 2023/24, 2022/23, a decrease from two in 2021/22, one in 2020/21. The Council did not receive any comments 2019/20.
17. The Council received one complaint which did not qualify for investigation under the procedure during 2023/24, the same as in 2022/23, an increase from zero in 2021/22, a decrease from six in 2020/21 and five in 2019/20.
18. 10 adult social care complaints were progressed to the LGSCO during 2023/24, an increase from nine in 2022/23, three in 2021/22, six in 2020/21 and two in 2019/2020.
19. The LGSCO reached a decision on nine complaints during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23, an increase from four in 2021/22 and 2020/21 and three in 2019/20.

Review of the Year

Breakdown of all Representations

20. A total of 101 representations (including one non-qualifying complaint) were handled under the procedure during 2023/24. This does not include those representations responded to directly by social care providers i.e. care homes and home (domiciliary) care providers.

Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments Received

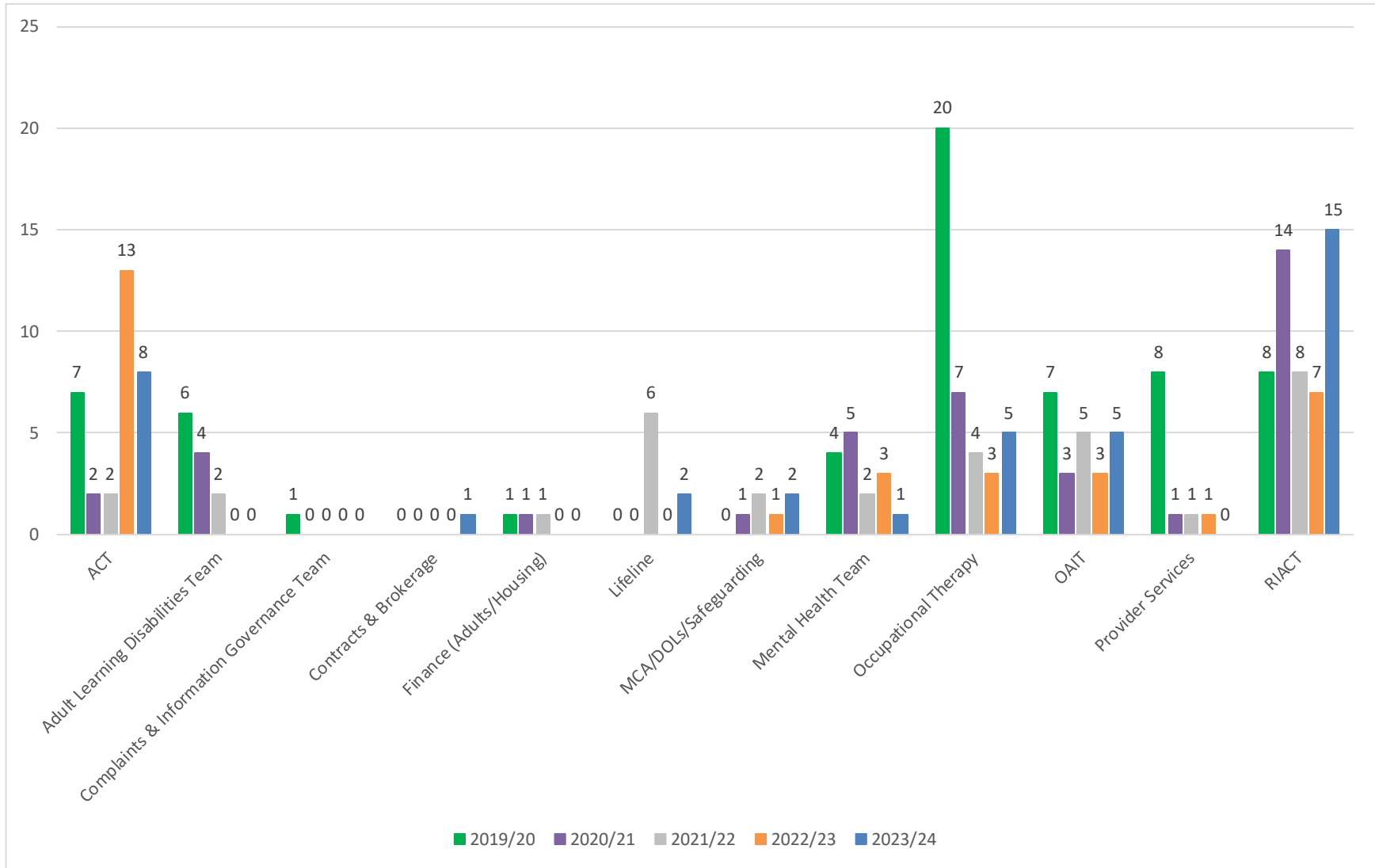


21. There was an increase in the number of complaints investigated, 61 compared to 54 in 2022/23, 48 in 2021/22 and 46 in 2020/21. Complaints remain lower than in 2019/20.

22. There was an increase in the number of compliments received, 39 compared to 31 in 2022/23, 33 in 2021/22 and 38 in 2020/21. Compliments remain significantly lower than in 2019/20.

23. No comments were received in 2023/24 or 2022/23, a decrease from two 2021/22 and one in 2020/21. The number of comments received has historically remained low. The Council did not receive any comments in 2019/20.

Breakdown of Compliments Received by Service Area/Team

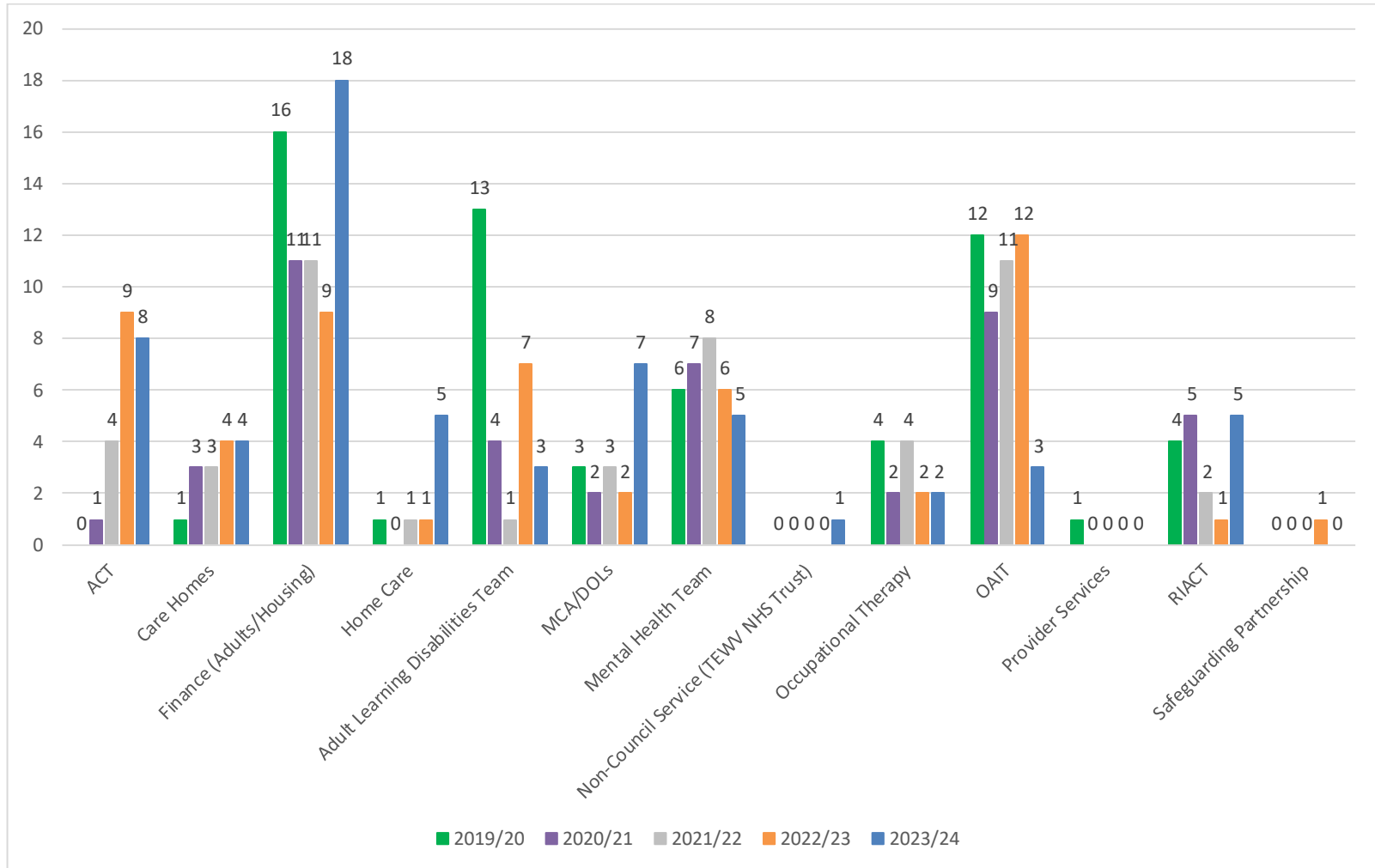


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*ACT = Adult Contact Team, MCA/DOLS = Mental Capacity Act/Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, OAIT = Ongoing Assessment and Intervention Team, RIACT = Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team, STAR = Short Term Assessment and Review

N.B. Those teams that do not appear in the graph did not receive any compliments

Breakdown of Complaints Received by Service Area/Team



*ACT = Adult Contact Team, MCA/DOLS = Mental Capacity Act/Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, OAIT = Ongoing Assessment and Intervention Team, RIACT = Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team.

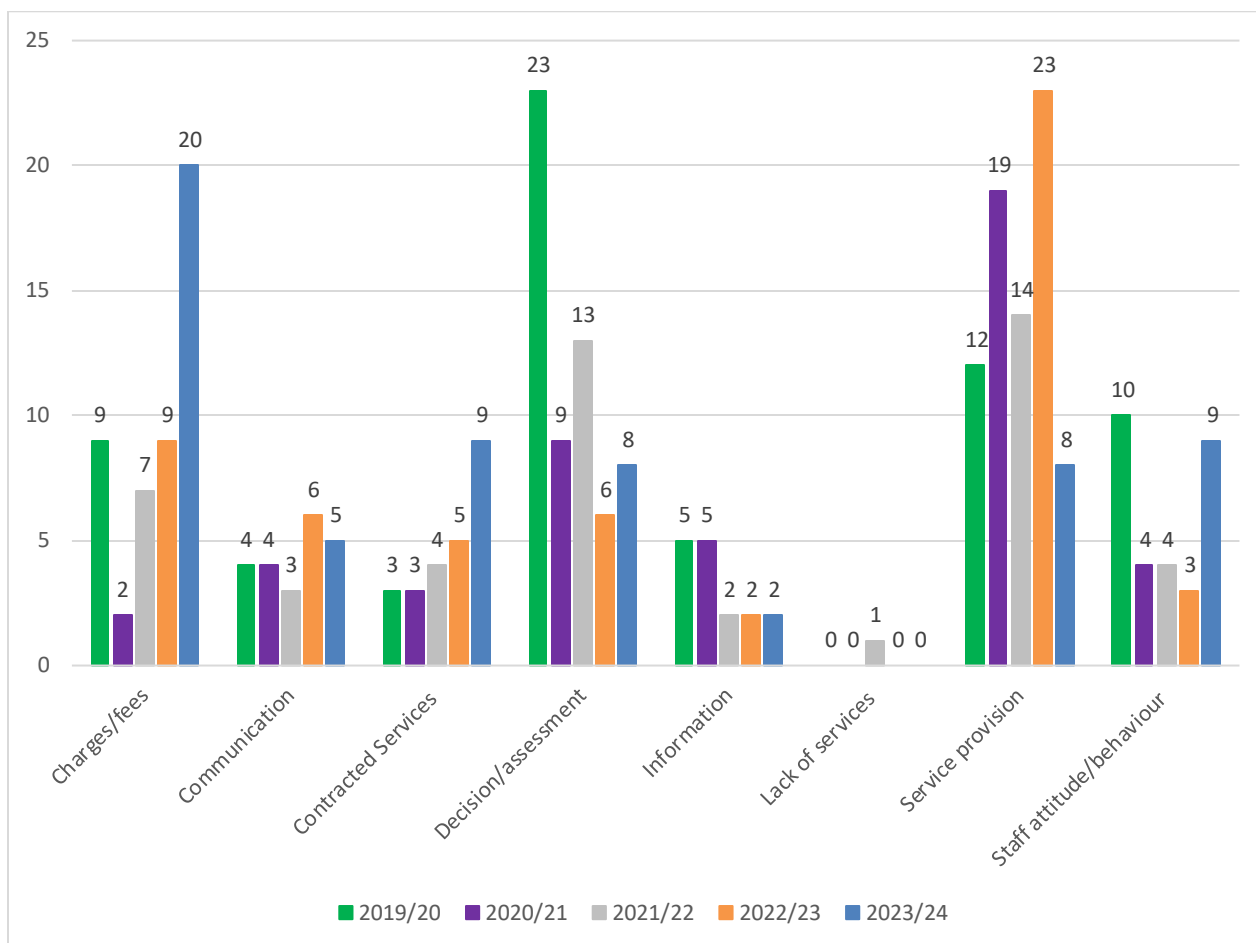
N.B. Those teams that are not listed did not receive any complaints.

24. The Council investigated eight complaints about ACT, a decrease from nine in 2022/23, an increase from four in 2021/22, one in 2020/21 and zero in 2019/20. The identifiable themes arising from these complaints were communication and issues surrounding care charges.
25. The Council investigated four complaints about care homes (contracted service), the same number as in 2022/23, an increase from three in 2021/22 and 2020/21 and one in 2019/20. These complaints primarily concerned the standard of care provided. Communication was also an issue.
26. The Council investigated 18 complaints about Finance (Adults/Housing), an increase from nine in 2022/23, 11 in 2021/22 and 2020/21 and 16 in 2019/20. Complaints concerned delays, poor communication, inaccurate information and dissatisfaction with decisions.
27. The Council investigated five complaints about a home (domiciliary) care provider (contracted service), an increase from one in 2022/23 and 2021/22, zero in 2020/21 and one in 2019/20. The most common theme was dissatisfaction with the standard of care provided.
28. The Council investigated three complaints about the Adult Learning Disabilities Team, a decrease from seven in 2022/23, an increase from one in 2021/22, a decrease from four in 2020/21 and a decrease from 13 in 2019/20. Two complaints concerned care charges and one the outcome of an assessment.
29. The Council investigated seven complaints about MCA/DOLS (Mental Capacity Act/Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards), an increase from two in 2022/23, three in 2021/22, two in 2020/21 and three in 2019/20. Six complaints related to the handling of safeguarding investigations, while one concerned a DoLS decision and capacity assessment.
30. The Council investigated five complaints about the Mental Health Team, a reduction from six in 2022/23, eight in 2021/22, seven 2020/21 six in 2019/20. Complaints primarily concerned the outcome of decisions/assessments.
31. Occupational Therapy received two complaints, the same number as in 2022/23, a decrease from four in 2021/22, the same number as in 2020/21 and a decrease from four in 2019/20. Both complaints concerned the attitude of the Occupational Therapist.
32. Ongoing Assessment & Intervention Team (OAIT) received three complaints, a significant decrease from 12 in 202/23, 11 in 2021/22 and nine in 2020/21 and 2019/20. There were no identifiable themes.
33. Provider Services did not receive any complaints in 2023/24, 2022/23, 2021/22 or 2020/21, a decrease from one in 2019/20.
34. Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team (RIACT) received five complaints, an increase from one in 2022/23, two in 2021/22, the same number as in 2020/21 and an increase from four in 2019/20. Three complaints concerned care charges.

Breakdown of Comments Received by Service Area/Team

35. Adult Services did not receive any comments, as was the case in 2022/23. This was a decrease from two in 2021/22 and one in 2020/21. Adult Services did not receive any comments in 2019/20.

Breakdown of Complaints Received by Issue



36. The most common cause of complaint was charges/fees, overtaking service provision. The Council received 20 complaints about this issue, an increase from nine in 2022/23, seven in 2021/22, two in 2020/21 and nine in 2019/20.
37. The joint second most common cause of complaints were contracted services and staff attitude/behaviour, both also overtaking service provision. Contracted services received nine complaints, an increase from five in 2022/23, four in 2021/22 and three in 2020/21 and 2019/20. Staff attitude/behaviour also received nine complaints, an increase from three in 2022,23, four in 2021/22 and 2020/21, although a decrease from nine in 2019/20.
38. The joint third most common cause of complaints were dissatisfaction with the outcome of a decision/assessment and service provision. The Council received eight complaints about dissatisfaction with the outcome of a decision/assessment, an increase from six in 2022/23, a decrease from 13 in 2021/22, nine in 2020/21 and a significant decrease from 23 in 2019/20. The Council also received eight complaints about service provision, a significant decrease from 23 in 2022/23, 14 in 2021/22, 19 in 2020/21 and 12 in 2019/20.
39. Adult Services received five complaints about communication, a decrease from six in 2022/23, an increase from three in 2021/22 and four in 2020/21 and 2019/20.

40. Information was again the least complained about issue. The Council received two complaints about this issue during 2023/24, as was the case in 2022/23 and 2021/22. This was a decrease from five in both 2020/21 and 2019/20.

Complaint Outcomes

41. 56 complaint investigations were concluded during 2023/24. The outcomes of these complaints are detailed in the chart below.

Service Area/Team	Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	Inconclusive	Withdrawn	Total
Adult Contact Team (ACT)	3	3	1	0	3	10
Adult Learning Disabilities Team	1	2	0	0	0	3
Care Homes (contracted service)	2	4	0	0	0	6
Finance (Adults)	4	8	2	0	0	14
Home Care (contracted service)	0	4	1	0	0	5
MCA/DOLS	1	1	1	0	0	3
Mental Health	0	1	4	0	0	5
Non-Council Service	0	0	0	0	1	1
Occupational Therapy	0	0	1	0	0	1
Ongoing Assessment & Intervention Team (OAIT)	0	2	2	0	1	5
Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team (RIACT)	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total	11	27	13	0	5	56

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaints Received 2023/24

42. 10 adult social care complaints were progressed to the LGSCO during 2023/24, an increase from nine in 2022/23, three in 2021/22 and five in 2020/21 and 2019/20.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaint Outcomes 2023/24

43. Nine adult social care complaints were determined by the LGSCO during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23, an increase from four 2021/22 and 2020/21 and five in 2019/20.

44. Full details of those complaints determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are included in the Cabinet reports of 5 December 2023 and 10 September 2024 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).

Organisational Learning

45. All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints, a number of service improvements were made following complaint investigations during 2023/24, some of which are detailed below.

Adult Contact Team (ACT)

46. ACT ensured the level of knowledge around DoLS within the team was adequate to ensure that service users are provided with the correct advice at the point of contact.
47. Social workers were reminded that assessments should be shared with the service user at the point of completion of the assessment
48. ACT agreed to undertake a review of communications and record keeping within the team.
49. Social workers were given additional training in hospital discharge procedures.

Adult Learning Disabilities 18+

50. Consideration was given to reviewing the process to ensure service users are advised at the earliest opportunity of changes in cost to their care package. These costs do not have to be an accurate or precise calculation but should be offered in line with Care Act expectations that financial costs are calculated and communicated with service users in an open and clear way.
51. The Council agreed to ensure that where a service user has assessed needs requiring support of a PA to assist with finances and correspondence, that any kind of financial assessment is only undertaken with the required support in place.
52. The Council agreed to consider making appropriate literature available in a variety of formats, in relation to financial assessments and contributions.
53. It was recommended a social worker attend direct payment training and update their knowledge of Darlington Borough Council charging policies.

Care homes (Contracted Services)

54. The Council agreed to consider conducting regular audits and inspections to assess compliance with regulatory standards in a care home, including record-keeping practices, falls protocol adherence, and communication procedures in order to address any

identified deficiencies promptly and implement corrective actions to ensure ongoing quality improvement.

55. The Council also considered reviewing the care home's training requirements, to ensure staff feel confident in their approach to end-of-life planning.
56. The Council agreed to remind social workers that support plans should be specific to the individual's needs.
57. The Council agreed that, in conjunction with another care home it would review existing safeguarding protocols to ensure that incidents are promptly reported and addressed.
58. The Council also agreed to consider partnering with the home to thoroughly review their medication management protocols, to identify the root causes of the repeated missed medication incidents and promptly take remedial actions to address any systemic issues contributing to medication lapses.
59. Furthermore, the Council agreed to consider working with the home to ensure the continuous availability of prescribed medications, by working with reliable suppliers, maintaining an adequate inventory of essential drugs and ensuring a robust system for monitoring medication stock levels was in place.

Finance

60. The Financial Assessment Team were reminded of the importance of answering telephone calls and responding in a timely manner to emails.
61. It was recommended the contracts section should review the wording of the contract around the backdating of the actuals when the contract is to be retendered.
62. The Council agreed to review the Direct Payments system to ensure there is a robust process and prevents young adults, parents and their carers accruing large levels of debt in unpaid financial contributions.
63. The Council agreed to make explicit reference to Disability Related Expenditure as a potential allowance within any annual financial assessment process.
64. The Council agreed to look to improve people's experience of the use of Direct Payments by Survey/Feedback/User groups to receive feedback, understand peoples experience and actions to improve/learn.
65. The Council agreed to providing basic written details of the potential costs linked to proposed residential care and have service users sign to confirm they understand, to support individuals to make informed decisions about the type of support they receive, who might provide this support, what the costs may be and how that support might be delivered.
66. The Council agreed to ensure the residential and non residential charging policies and the deferred payment policy are reviewed annually or sooner where necessary.

Home Care (Contracted Service)

67. The Council agreed to ensure that written advice and guidance outlining the implications of the cost of care is always provided to service users at the time of undertaking a care and support needs assessment and that a written record is made that the information has been provided.
68. The Council agreed to ensure there is a process in place, which ensures that service users are informed of the contractual requirements of any care package i.e. 24 hours' notice to cancel a care call as part of their pre-service assessment/service agreement.
69. The Council agreed to consider how it could implement focused medication audits with a home care provider, similar to those undertaken by the NHS in care homes, to allow for a more effective, informed deep dive of the repeated issues resulting in medication errors and to satisfy itself the issues are not more prevalent across the provision.

MCA/DOLS/Safeguarding

70. It was recommended that all written correspondence shared with CQC, is shared via the central e-mail address, not directly to an inspector in isolation.
71. The Council considered developing processes to ensure that any future audits and dip sampling of Safeguarding Strategy Meetings outcomes/progress are used to inform annual contracts monitoring and quality assurance arrangements pertaining to specific nursing homes.

Occupational Therapy

72. It was recommended occupational therapists discuss the expectations of a home visit in their pre-visit phone call.
73. It was also recommended the Council consider how adult occupational therapy assessments are recorded and give consideration to when and how they should be shared with individuals.

Ongoing Assessment & Intervention Team (OAIT)

74. It was agreed the Council would ensure steps are taken to assess team capacity at the earliest opportunity, particularly at handover between teams, to avoid delays.

Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team (RIACT)

75. It was recommended the Brokerage team email the allocated worker to advise when a care plan has been sent out, and that the allocated worker record this information on the electronic record for clarity.

76. It was recommended all service users be given the financial leaflet and link to the online predictive financial tool verbally and in writing at the first visit by the RIACT and Community Teams.
77. It was also recommended that the Council considers what action is necessary to remedy the delay in financial assessments as a priority, as this is causing worry and distress to people at an already difficult time.
78. Furthermore, it was recommended the information as stated in the Care Act 2014 below is added to the care and support needs assessments as this is provided to the service users. *'That only people with assets of less than £23,250 and low incomes receive any help from the State with their care and support costs. To decide what a person can afford to pay, a local authority will carry out a financial assessment. The local authority will consider the person's income and any assets they own, like a house or other investments. The local authority will then calculate how much the person can afford to pay towards their care and support costs'.*

Performance against the Procedure

79. The target for acknowledging receipt of complaints under the procedure is 3 working days.
80. 80% of complaints received during 2023/24 were acknowledged within the 3 working day timescale, a decrease from 81.13% in 2022/23.
81. There are no longer any statutory timescales for complaint responses, except that complainants should receive a response within the 'relevant period' i.e. six months or longer where an extension is agreed in advance. Where the Local Authority is unable to respond within the relevant period it must write to the complainant explaining why and respond as soon as reasonably practicable after the relevant period. The procedure sets out a 30 working days timescale for dealing with complaints solely about the Council's services, although there are circumstances in which the investigator may agree an extension with the complainant up to a maximum of six months. It also states that for joint health and social care complaints, the complaints managers from the different organisations will work together to decide a reasonable timescale and agree this with the complainant. This is to ensure investigations are completed in a timely manner and within the maximum time allowed in the regulations.
82. 7.14% of complaints were responded to within 30 working days, a decrease from 8.2% in 2022/23.
83. 10.7% of complaints exceeded the maximum six month time limit set in the procedure, a decrease from 12.9% in 2022/23.

Performance Indicator for 2023/24

84. In relation to Adult Social Care complaints the Council's key performance indicator is the number of upheld decisions received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Adult Services received four upheld decisions during 2023/24, an increase

from two in 2022/23, the same number as in 2021/22, an increase from one in 2020/21 and a decrease from five in 2019/20.

85. Full details of those complaints determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are included in the Cabinet reports of 5 December 2023 and 10 September 2024 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2023/24

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Introduction

1. Darlington Children's Social Care welcomes complaints, compliments and comments as a way of improving service delivery to children, young people and their families. The purpose of this report is to inform the service users, carers, the public, Council Members and Children's Social Care staff of the effectiveness of the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the Procedure). The report identifies topics and trends in relation to complaints information, makes suggestions for service improvements, where appropriate and identifies areas of organisational learning that have taken place in relation to people, policy and process.

The Law

2. The Council is required by law to have management arrangements in place for considering children's social care representations, including complaints, under the Children Act 1989. National legislative procedures for social care were amended in September 2006 with the introduction of the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (the Regulations). It is a requirement of the Regulations that the Council publishes an annual report. In addition to the Regulations the Department for Education and Skills produced some comprehensive guidance for local authorities on managing complaints, called 'Getting the Best from Complaints'.
3. Key features of the Regulations include:
 - (a) A requirement for local authorities to appoint a Complaints Manager;
 - (b) A requirement for review panels to be retained by local authorities but with more robust arrangements for constituting and running them; and
 - (c) A 12 month time limit to make complaints.

Complaints and Information Governance Team

4. The Complaints and Information Governance Manager is appointed as the 'Complaints Manager' in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations. The Complaints and Information Governance (CIG) Team is independent of Children's Social Care operational line management. This ensures a high level of independence in the way children's social care complaints are managed within the Council.

Public Information

5. We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services, including the Procedure. To help make the Procedure easily accessible we have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services to reflect the single point of access for complainants within the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.

6. Information is available on the Council's website. There is also an electronic form which people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish.
7. This can be in writing, by email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.
8. The Complaints Manager can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

Children's Services Social Care Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Local Resolution

9. This initial stage allows children's social care managers the opportunity to try and resolve complaints locally, usually within the team being complained about.

Stage 2 – Investigation

10. Stage 2 involves a full and formal investigation. An 'Independent Person' must also be appointed to oversee the investigation and report independently to Children's Social Care Services. Both the Investigating Officer and Independent Person produce reports, which are submitted to a senior manager who writes the final response to the complainant.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

11. A review panel is convened when the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response. The panel consists of an independent chairperson and two individuals who are independent of the Council.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

12. Although complainants can refer complaints at any stage to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) they will not normally investigate until the Council has conducted its own investigation and provided a response.

External Support to the Complaints Process

Advocacy

13. The Council commissions an advocacy service for children and young people who make a complaint. This is an independent service provided by NYAS.

Investigating Officers

14. While the Regulations do not require investigating officers to be independent of the Council, we have signed up to a contract for the provision of Independent Investigating Officers.

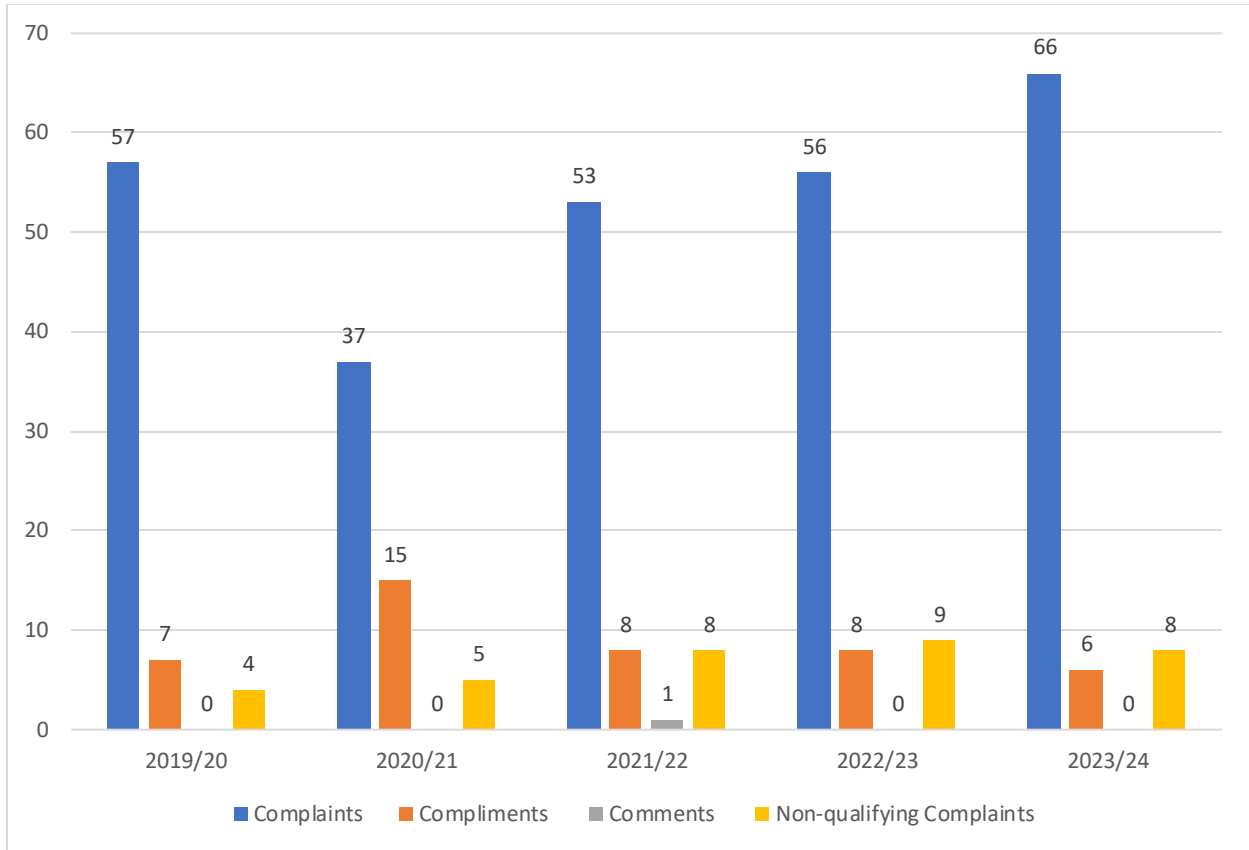
Independent Persons

15. The Council has signed up to a contract for the provision of independent persons.

Review Panels

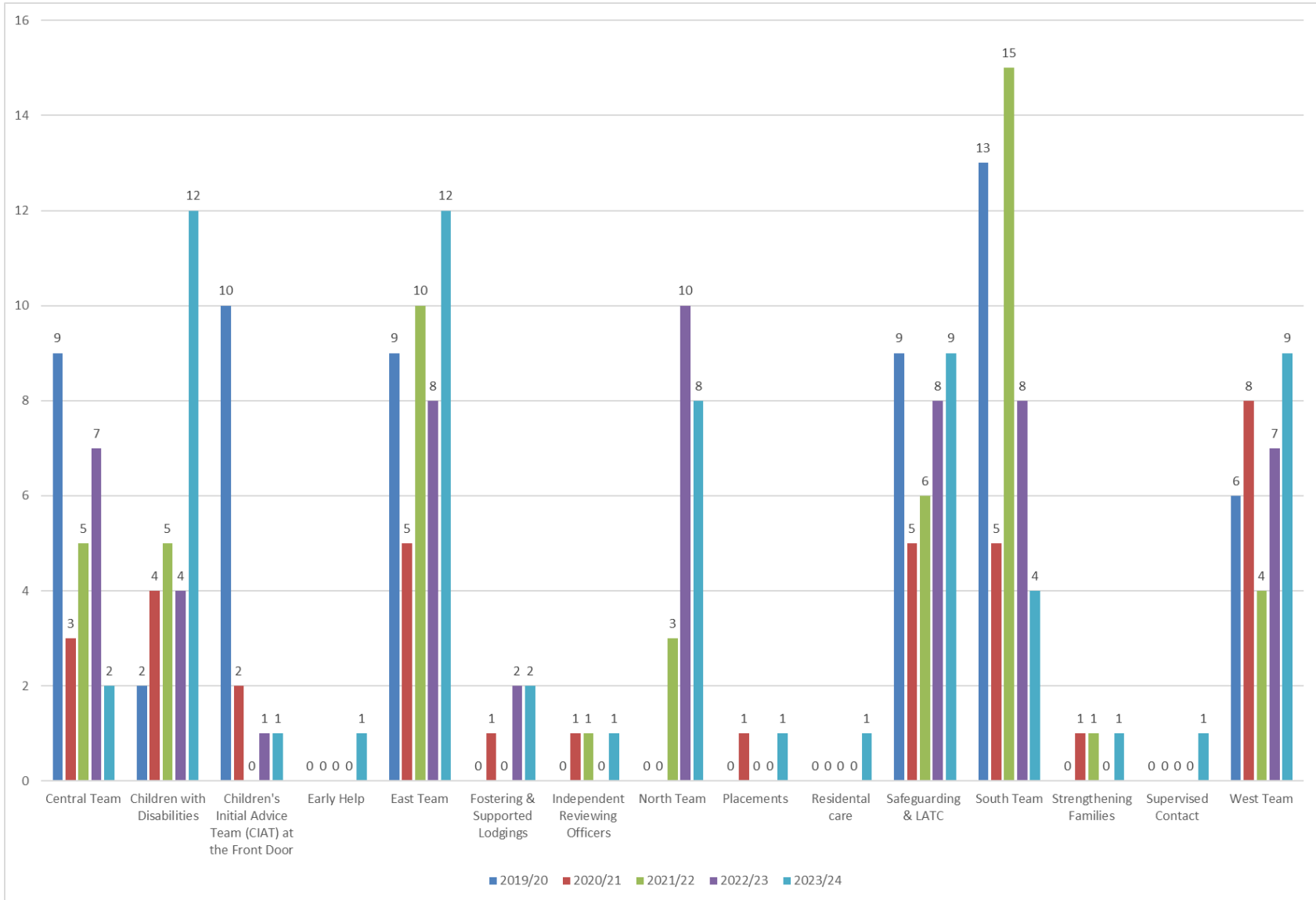
16. The Council has also signed up to a contract for the provision of an independent chair and independent panellist service.

Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments received



17. The Council saw a significant increase in the number of complaints received, investigating 66 complaints, an increase from 56 in 2022/23, 53 in 2021/22, 37 in 2020/21 and 57 in 2019/20. 65 were investigated at Stage 1, while one was escalated directly to Stage 2.
18. The Council received six compliments, a decrease from eight in 2022/23 and 2021/22, 15 in 2020/21 and seven in 2019/20.
19. The Council did not receive any comments in 2023/24 or 2022/23, compared to one in 2021/22, and zero in 2020/21 and 2019/20.
20. The Council received eight non-qualifying complaints, a decrease from nine in 2022/23, the same number as in 2021/22 and an increase from five in 2020/21 and four in 2019/20.

Breakdown of Stage 1 Complaints by Service Area/Team



*N.B. Those teams that are not listed did not receive any complaints during 2023/24.
Direct comparison data may not available for all teams due to changes in the Council's organisational structure.*

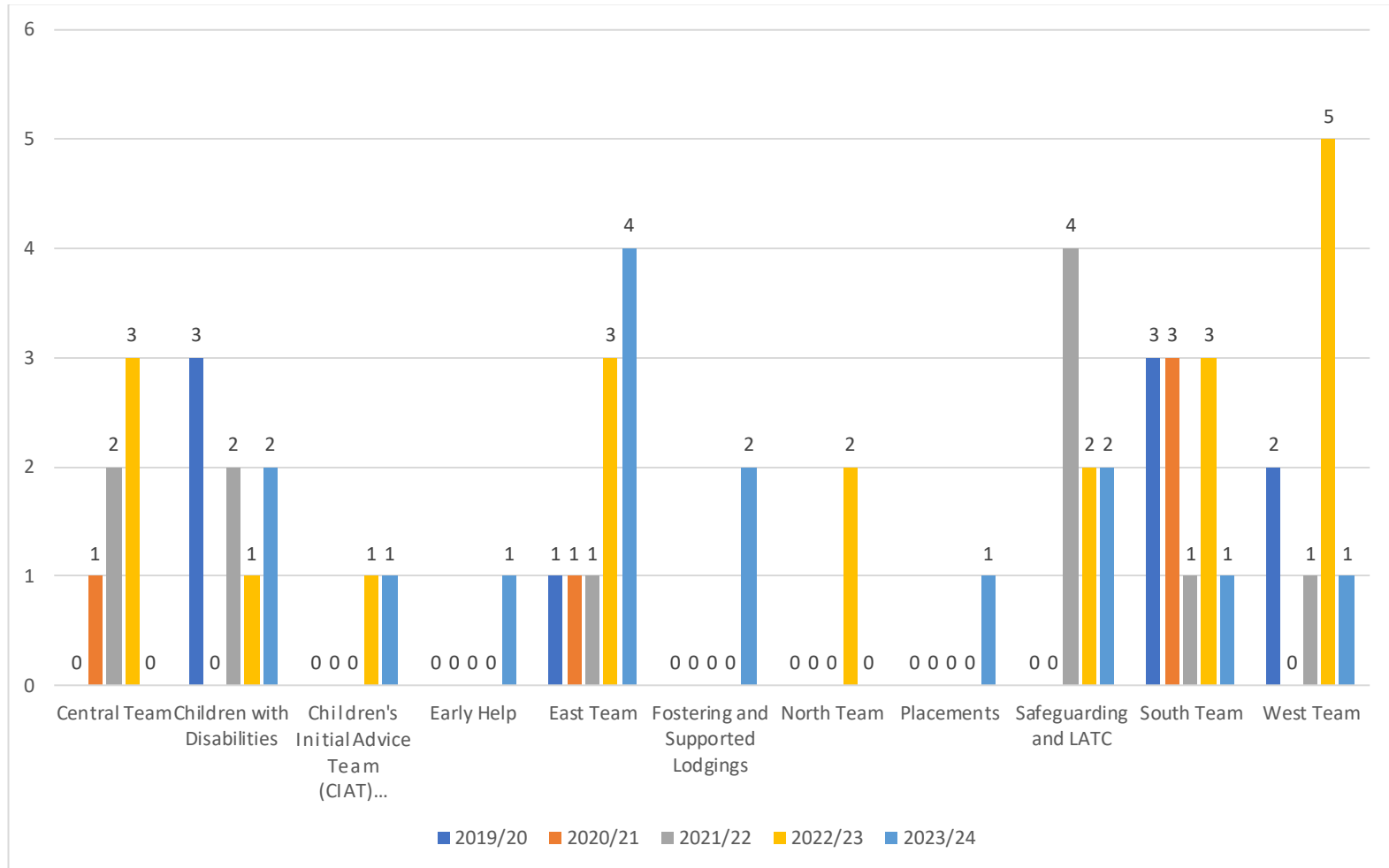
21. Central Team (formerly Team C) received two complaints, a reduction from seven in 2022/23, five in 2021/22, three in 2020/21 and nine 2019/20. There were no identifiable themes.
22. Children with Disabilities (formerly Life Stages 0 -25) received 12 complaints, an increase from four in 2022/23, five in 2021/22, four in 2020/21 and two in 2019/20. Issues with communication was the most common cause of complaint, followed by people's dissatisfaction with the outcome of their assessment and the attitude of their child's social worker.
23. Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) at the Front Door received one complaint, the same as in 2023/23, this was an increase from zero in 2021/22 and a decrease from two in 2020/21 and 10 in 2019/20* (**Children's Access Point (CAP) and First Response Team*).
24. Early Help received one complaint, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.
25. East Team (formerly Team B) received 12 complaints, an increase from eight in 2022/23, 10 complaints in 2021/22, five in 2020/21 and nine in 2019/20. The most common cause of complaint was people's dissatisfaction with the behaviour of, treatment by and their relationship with their child's social worker.
26. Fostering and Supported Lodgings received two complaints, the same number as in 2022/23, an increase from zero in 2021/22, one in 2020/21 and zero in 2019/20. There were no identifiable themes.
27. Independent Reviewing Officers received one complaint, an increase from zero in 2022/23, the same number as in 2021/22 and 2020/21 and an increase from zero in 2019/20.
28. North Team (formerly Team E) received eight complaints, a decrease from 10 in 2022/23, an increase from three complaints during 2021/22 and zero in 2020/21 and 2019/20. The most common cause of complaint was poor communication. Other issues included dissatisfaction with the accuracy of recorded information and contact arrangements.
29. Placements received one complaint, an increase from zero in 2022/23 and 2021/22, the same number as in 2020/21 and an increase from zero in 2019/20.
30. Residential Care received one complaint, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.
31. Safeguarding and LATC (formerly Looked After Through Care (LATC) Team) received nine complaints, an increase from eight in 2022/23, six in 2021/22, five in 2020/21 and the same number as in 2019/20. The most common cause of complaint was dissatisfaction with the attitude/behaviour of the child's social worker.
32. South Team (formerly Team D) received four complaints, a decrease from eight in 2022/23, 15 in 2021/22, five in 2020/21 and 13 in 2019/20. The only identifiable theme was dissatisfaction with the attitude/behaviour of social workers.

33. Strengthening Families received one complaint, an increase from zero in 2022/23, the same number as in 2021/22 and 2020/21 and an increase from zero in 2019/20.
34. Supervised Contact received one complaint, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.
35. West Team (formerly Team A) received nine complaints, an increase from seven in 2022/23, four in 2021/22, eight in 2020/21 and six in 2019/20. The most common theme was general dissatisfaction with the service provided by the social worker, followed by communication issues.

Breakdown of Stage 2 Complaints by Service Area/Team

36. 15 complaints were investigated at Stage 2, a decrease from 20 in 2022/23, an increase from 12 in 2021/22, seven in 2020/21 and 10 in 2019/20. Two were subsequently suspended under Regulation 8, as a result of concurrent court proceedings.

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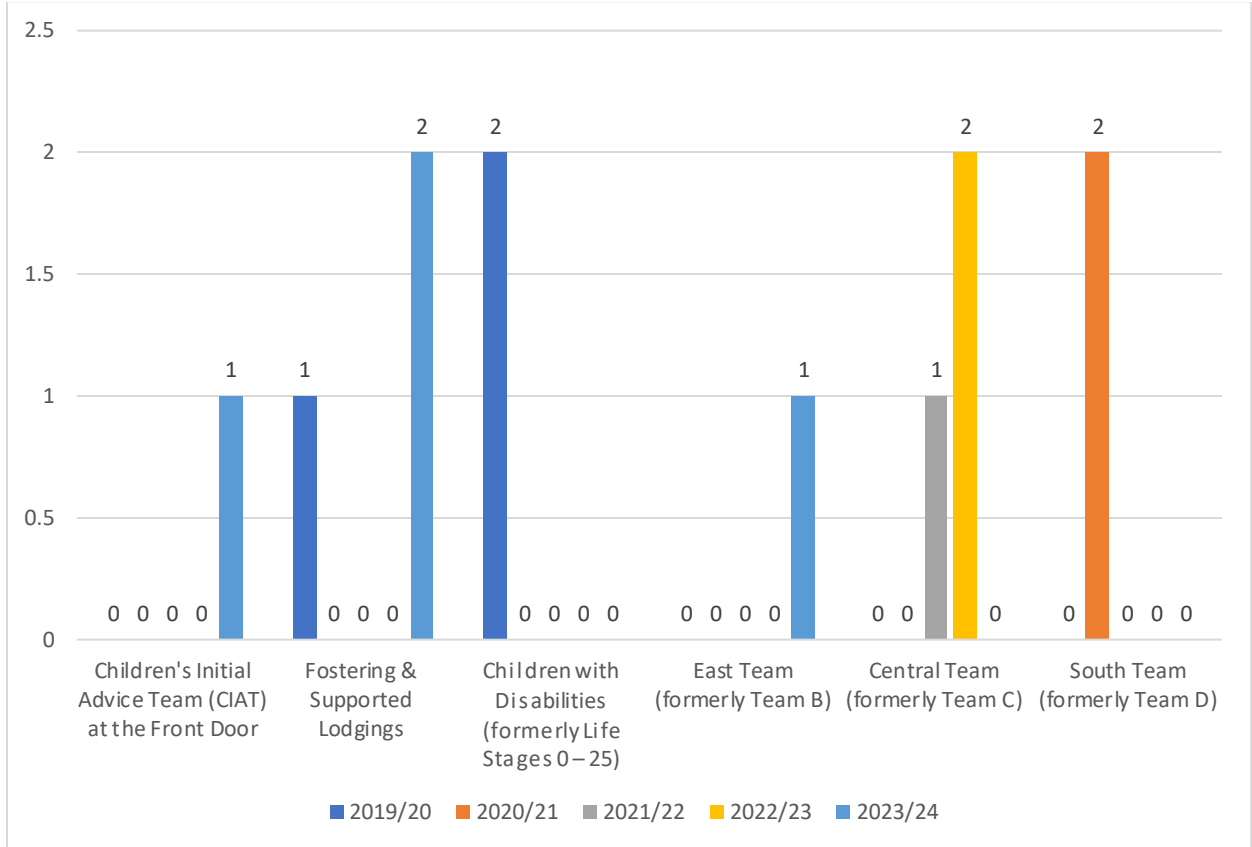


N.B. Those teams that are not listed did not receive any complaints during 2023/24. Direct comparison data is not available for all teams due to changes in the Council's organisational structure.

37. Central Team (formerly Team C) did not receive any stage 2 complaints, a decrease from three in 2022/23, two in 2021/22, one in 2020/21 and the same number as in 2019/20.
38. Children with Disabilities (formerly Life Stages 0 – 25) received two stage 2 complaints, an increase from one in 2022/23, the same number as in 2021/22, an increase from zero in 2020/21 and a decrease from three in 2019/20.
39. Children’s Initial Advice Team (CIAT) at the Front Door received one stage 2 complaint, the same number as in 2022/23, an increase from zero in 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.
40. Early Help received one stage 2 complaint, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.
41. East Team (formerly Team B) received four stage 2 complaints, an increase from three in 2022/23, one in 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20. Two complaints concerned dissatisfaction with contact arrangements.
42. Fostering and Supported Lodgings received two stage 2 complaints, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.
43. North Team (formerly Team E) did not receive any stage 2 complaints, a decrease from two in 2022/23 and the same number as in 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.
44. Placements received one stage 2 complaint, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.
45. Safeguarding and LATC (formerly Looked After Through Care (LATC) Team) received two stage 2 complaints, the same number as in 2022/23, a decrease from four in 2021/22 and an increase from zero in 2020/21 and 2019/20.
46. South Team (formerly Team D) received one stage 2 complaint, a decrease from three in 2022/23, the same number as in 2021/22 and a decrease from three in 2020/21 and 2019/20.
47. West Team (formerly Team A) received one stage 2 complaint, a decrease from five in 2022/23, the same number as in 2021/22, an increase from zero in 2020/21 and a decrease from two in 2019/20.

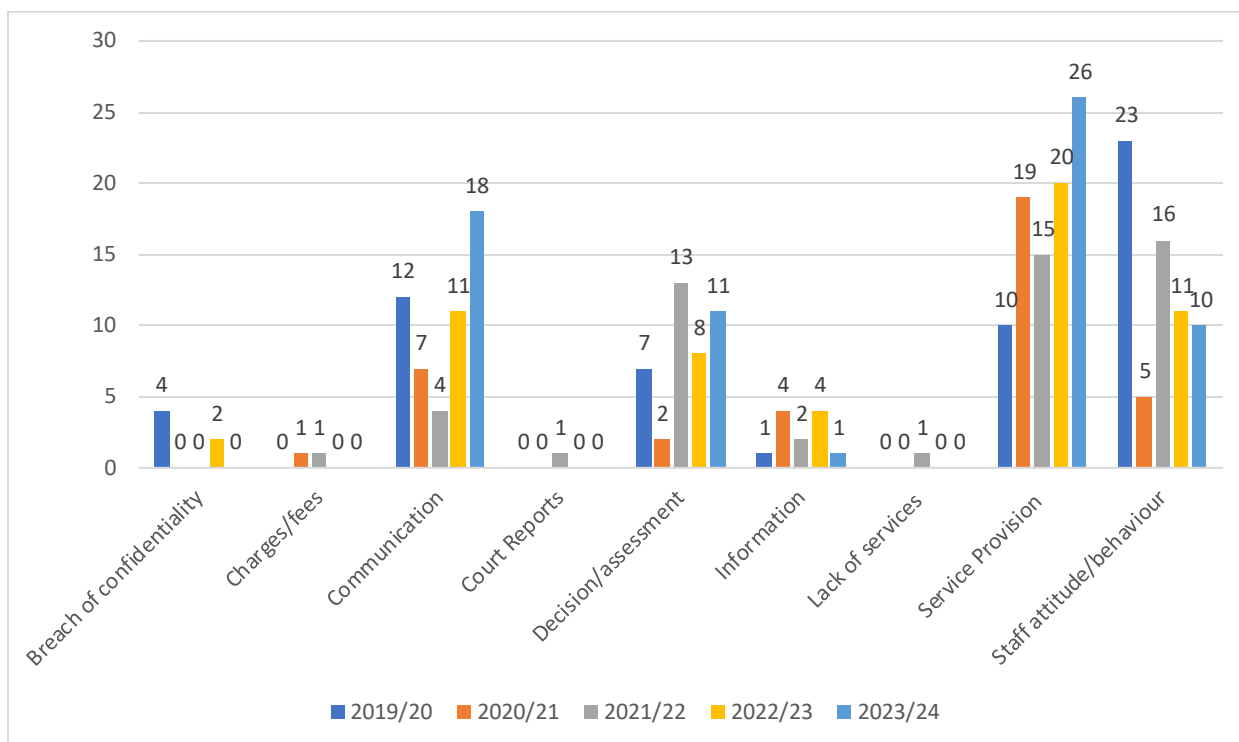
Breakdown of Stage 3 complaints by Service Area/Team

48. Four complaints were escalated to Stage 3, an increase from two in 2022/23, one in 2021/22, two in 2020/21 and three in 2019/20. One was subsequently suspended under Regulation 8, as a result of concurrent Court proceedings, and ultimately did not progress to a Stage 3 Panel hearing.



N.B. Those teams that are not listed did not receive any complaints during 2023/24. Direct comparison data is not available for all teams due to changes in the Council's organisational structure.

Breakdown of complaints by Issue



49. Service/provision was the most commonly complained about issue in 2023/24. The Council received 26 complaints about this issue, an increase from 20 in 2022/23, 15 in 2021/22, 19 in 2020/21 and 10 in 2019/20.

50. Communication was the second most commonly complained about issue in 2023/24. The Council received 18 complaints about this issue, an increase from 11 in 2022/23, 4 in 2021/22, 7 in 2020/21 and 12 in 2019/20.

51. Decision/assessment was the third most complained about issues in 2023/24. The Council received 11 complaints about this issue, an increase from 8 in 2022/23, a decrease from 13 in 2021/22, and an increase from two 2020/21 and seven in 2019/20.

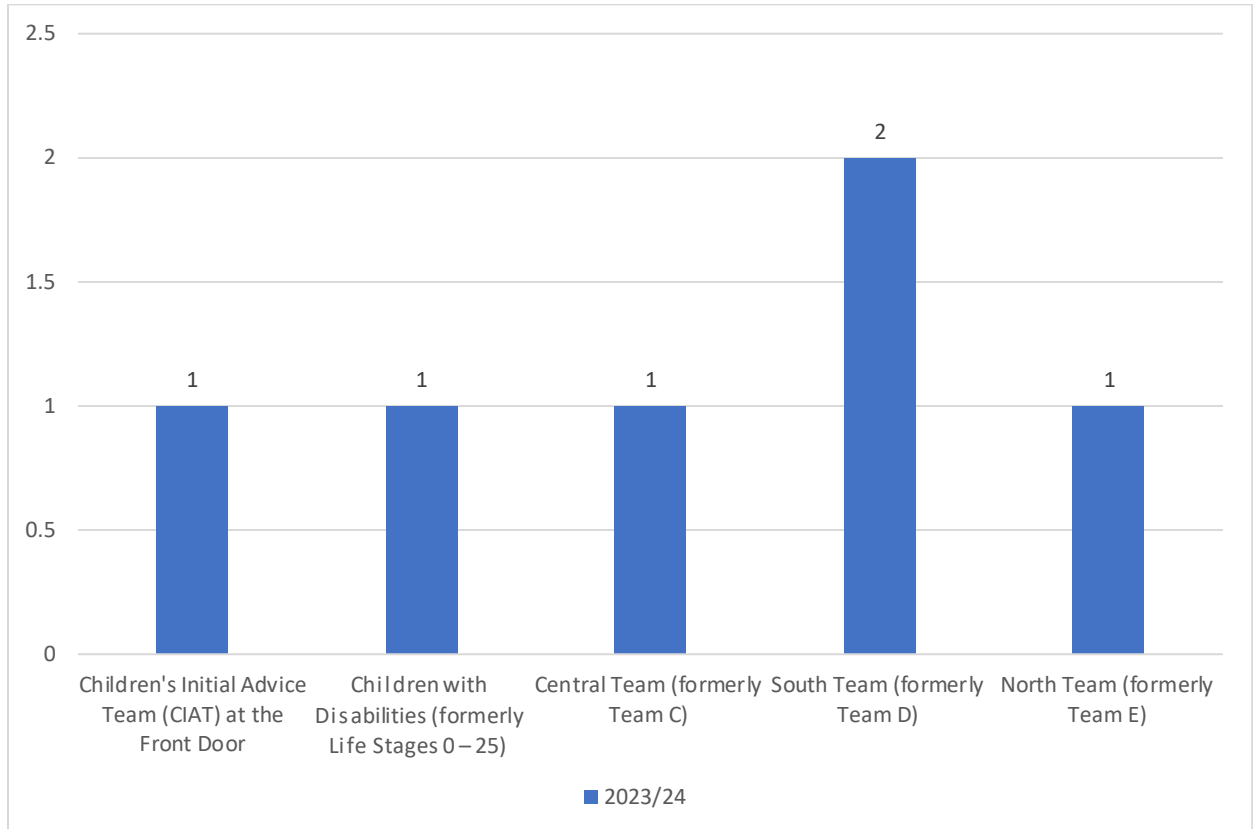
52. Staff attitude/behaviour was the fourth most commonly complaints about issue in 2023/24. The Council received 10 complaints about this issue, a decrease from 11 in 2022/23, 16 in 2021/22, an increase from five 2020/21 and a decrease from 23 in 2019/20.

53. The Council also received one complaint about information, a decrease from four in 2022/23, an increase from two in 2021/22, a decrease from four in 2020/21, and the same number as in 2019/20.

Breakdown of Comments by Service Area/Team

54. The Council did not receive any comments during 2023/24 or 2022/23, a decrease from one during 2021/22, and the same number as in 2020/21 and 2019/20.

Breakdown of Compliments by Service Area/Team



55. The Council received six compliments, a decrease from eight in 2022/23 and 2021/22, 15 in 2020/21, although an increase from the four received in 2019/20.

Complaint Outcomes

Stage 1 - The below table shows the decisions reached on Stage 1 complaints during 2023/24.

Service Area/Team	Escalated to Stage 2 (No S1 Response)	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Central Team (Formerly Team C)	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) at the Front Door	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Children with Disabilities (formerly Life Stages 0 -25)	0	0	4	4	2	0	10
Early Help	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
East Team (formerly Team B)	0	0	3	3	1	1	8
Fostering & Supported Lodgings	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Independent Reviewing Officers	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
North Team (formerly Team E)	0	0	4	2	2	0	8
Placements	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Residential Care	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Safeguarding & LATC (Formerly Looked After Through Care (LATC) Team)	0	0	1	2	2	2	7
South Team (formerly Team D)	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
Strengthening Families	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Supervised Contact	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
West Team (formerly Team A)	0	0	2	1	0	3	6
Totals	1	1	18	18	9	7	54

Stage 2 - The below table shows the decisions reached on Stage 2 complaints during 2023/24.

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) at the Front Door	0	0	2	0	0	2
Children with Disabilities (formerly Life Stages 0 -25)	0	1	1	0	0	2
Early Help	0	0	0	0	1	1
East Team (formerly Team B)	0	1	2	1	0	4
Fostering & Supported Lodgings	0	0	2	0	0	2
South Team (formerly Team D)	0	0	1	0	0	1
West Team (formerly Team A)	0	0	2	0	0	2
Totals	0	2	10	1	1	14

Stage 3 - The below table shows the decisions reached on Stage 3 complaints during 2023/24.

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) at the Front Door	1	0	0	0	0	1
East Team (formerly Team B)	0	0	0	0	1	1
Fostering & Supported Lodgings	0	2	0	0	0	2
Totals	1	2	0	0	1	4

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaints

56. Three complaints were referred to the LGSCO during 2023/24, and increase from one in 2022/23 and 2022/23, two in 2020/21 and one in 2019/20.
57. Four complaints were determined by the LGSCO during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23, one 2021/22, two in 2020/21 and one in 2019/20.

Organisational Learning

58. All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints several service improvements were made following complaint investigations during 2023/24. Some examples of these are detailed below.

Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) at the Front Door

59. The Council agreed to review its process for responding, when other local authorities make requests for information.
60. Following another complaint, the Council agreed to reinforce to social workers the importance of accurate record keeping.

Children with Disabilities

61. It was agreed the Council would review its current procedures regarding parent carer assessments to ensure this is communicated to families, so they understand their rights and support is provided where this is needed. The Council also agreed to review its rationale for not sharing Child in Need Plan (CNP) paperwork with families, to ensure it is complying with the principles of being open and transparent with families as well as sharing updated assessments and plans with them in a timely way.

East Team (formerly Team B)

62. The Council reminded staff of importance of ensuring core group meetings are held every 20 days in Child Protection Cases and that all those with parental responsibility are kept up to date.
63. Following another complaint, the Council agreed to ensure social workers are aware of the procedures around sharing minutes to meetings, specifically where a decision has been made to exclude parents from meetings.
64. As a result of a further complaint, the Council agreed to ensure that all those with parental responsibility are updated regarding any changes to planned meetings, and that communication is recorded accurately. Also that CIN meetings are held within the statutory timeframe, and appropriately recorded, either by the allocated worker, or a duty worker.

Fostering and Supported Lodgings

65. It was agreed a policy would be developed regarding re-allocation/support from a Supervising Social Worker when the usually allocated worker is on sick leave. Staff were also reminded of the need to maintain a professional manner in any written correspondence.
66. Following a further complaint, strengths based case recording training was delivered to the team. Learning was also taken forward to ensure recording is balanced and made in line with our policies. The need for cultural diversity training was also identified.

South Team (formerly Team D)

67. It was agreed the Complaints Team to develop an automated weekly report within their complaints management system to enable team and service managers to track open complaints.

Performance against the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

68. The below performance measures are in relation to those complaints responded to during 2023/24.

Timescales

Stage 1

69. The target for responding to a complaint at Stage 1 is 10 working days, with a possible extension of up to 20 working days if the complaint is complex.

- (a) 50.98% of Stage 1 complaint responses were sent within 10 working days. This was an increase in performance from 26% in 2022/23.
- (b) A further 25.49% of Stage 1 complaint responses were sent within 20 working days.
- (c) In total 76.47% of Stage 1 complaint responses were sent within the maximum 20 working day timescale, an increase in performance from 60% % in 2022/23.

Stage 2

70. The target for responding to a complaint at Stage 2 is 25 working days, extendable up to a maximum of 65 working days.

- (a) 6.25% of Stage 2 complaint responses were sent within 25 working days during 2023/24, an increase from 0% 2022/23.
- (b) 12.50% of Stage 2 complaint responses were sent within the maximum timescale allowed (65 working days), an increase in performance from 7.14% % in 2022/23.
- (c) 87.50% of Stage 2 complaint responses were sent after 65 working days, an increase in performance from 92.86% in 2022/23.

Stage 3

71. At Stage 3 the Review Panel should be held within 30 working days of the request. 100% of Review Panels were held within 30 working days.

72. The Review Panel should write to the Director within 5 working days of the panel. They did so in 100% of cases.

73. The Director should write to the complainant within 15 working days of receiving the Panel's response. The Director wrote to the complainants within 15 working days in 100% of cases, as was the case in 2022/23.

Performance against key performance indicators

74. In relation to children's social care complaints the Council's key performance indicator is the number of upheld decisions received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Children's Services received two upheld decisions during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23 and 2021/22, one in 2020/21 and zero in 2019/20.
75. Full details of those complaints determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are included in the Cabinet reports of 5 December 2023 and 10 September 2024 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).

Further recommendations

76. While there has been an improvement in performance against the Stage 1 and Stage 2 timescales, Children's Services and the Complaints & Information Governance Team should continue to work to improve performance.



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2023/24

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Introduction

1. This report provides an analysis of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during 2023/24 under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the corporate procedure). The purpose of the report is to identify topics and trends in relation to complaints; identify areas of organisational learning that have taken place over the past year as a result of the complaints received and make further recommendations based on trend and performance data to improve services. The report also highlights those areas of good practice within the Council and seeks to identify topics and trends in relation to comments made by members of the public, so the Council can also take action where appropriate to improve services.
2. In addition to the statistical information presented in this report, it is important to recognise the work of the Complaints and Information Governance (CIG) Team that underpins this in terms of promoting an organisational culture in which complaints are recognised, accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently and as close to the point of service delivery as possible.

Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

3. The corporate procedure sets out how the Council will deal with all complaints, compliments and comments received with the exception of those received in relation to adult and children's social care services, public health, some social housing complaints and Members which will be dealt with under separate procedures.
4. The corporate procedure has two stages. Stage 1 is a local resolution stage where we try to resolve those complaints that cannot be resolved immediately as part of our day to day business. Stage 1 complaints are dealt with locally, that is within the service being complained about. We aim to resolve the majority of complaints at Stage 1 of the corporate procedure.
5. Stage 2 is a formal investigation stage where complaints will usually be investigated by the Council's Complaints Investigator, the Complaints and Information Governance Manager or another officer independent of the service being complained about.
6. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following a Stage 2 investigation they may refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Public Information and Accessibility

7. We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services. To help make sure the Council's complaints procedures are easily accessible, information is available on the Council's website which contains an electronic form people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.
8. We have also produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services to reflect the single point of access for complainants within

the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.

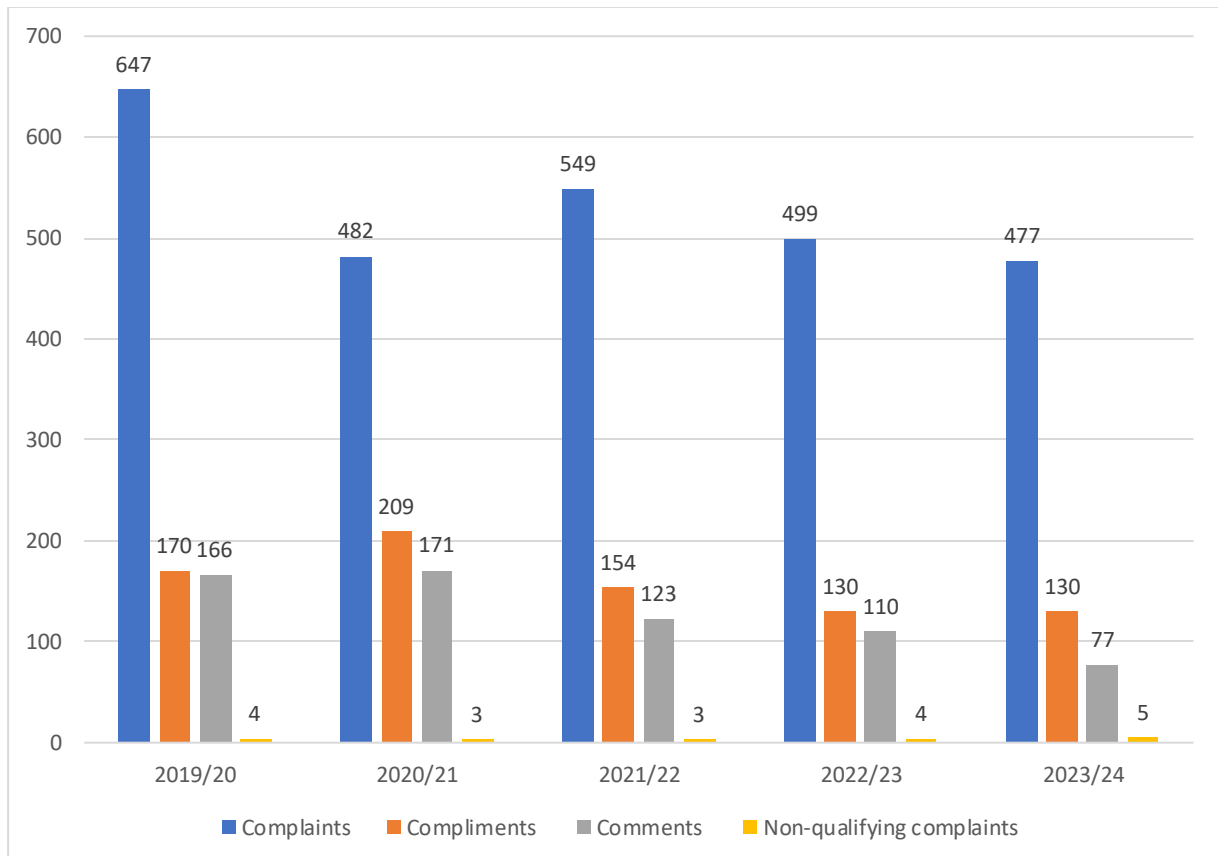
9. The Complaints and Information Governance Manager can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

Complaints Information and Organisational Learning

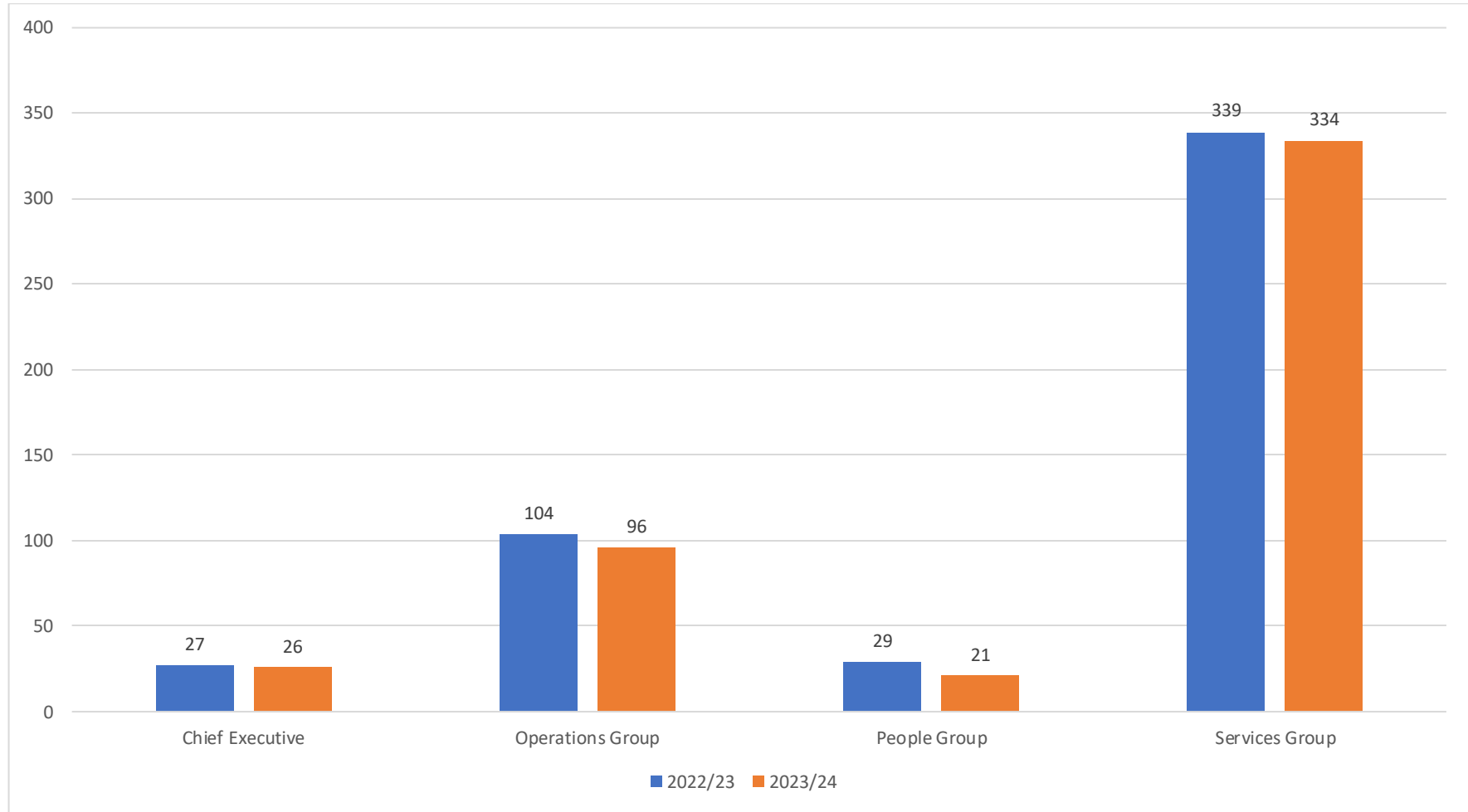
Overview of Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments

10. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 the Council received a total of 689 representations under the corporate procedure, a significant decrease from 743 in 2022/23, 829 in 2021/22, 865 in 2020/21 and 987 in 2019/20.
11. The Council received 477 corporate complaints in 2023/24, which was a decrease from 499 in 2022/23, 549 in 2021/22, 482 in 2020/21 and 647 in 2019/20. 463 complaints were initially dealt with at Stage 1 of the corporate procedure, whilst 14 were escalated directly to Stage 2. 70 Stage 1 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 following a Stage 1 investigation. In total 84 complaints were investigated at Stage 2, a significant increase from 70 in 202/23 and 2021/22, 50 in 2020/21 and 59 in 2019/20.
12. The Council received 130 corporate compliments in 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23, and a significant decrease from 154 in 2021/22, 209 in 2020/21 and 170 in 2019/20.
13. The Council received 77 corporate comments in 2023/24, a significant decrease from 110 in 2022/23, 123 in 2021/22, 171 in 2020/21 and 166 in 2019/20.
14. The Council also received five non-qualifying corporate complaints in 2023/24, an increase from four in 2022/23, three in 2021/22 and 2020/21 and four in 2019/20.

Total Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments

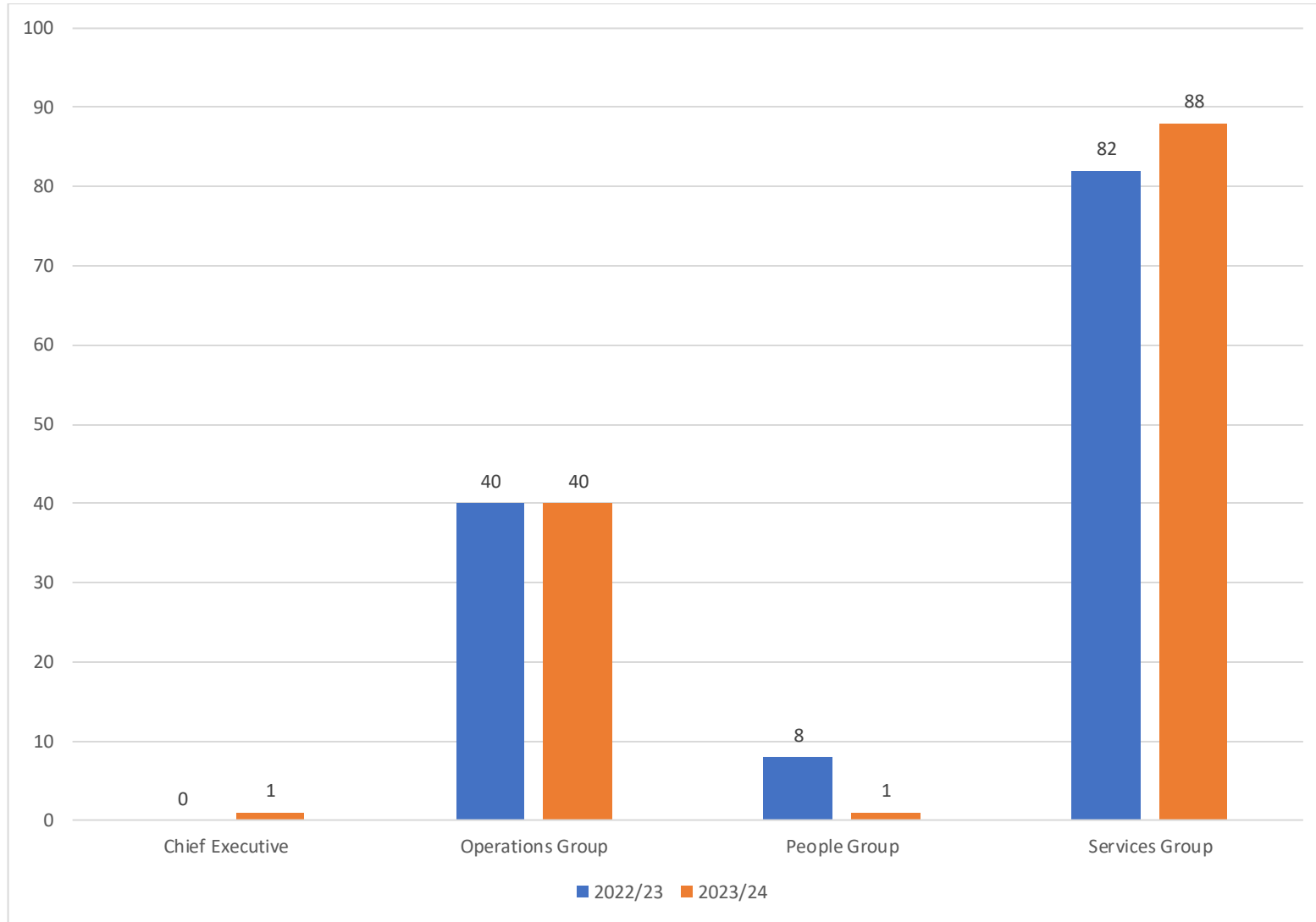


Corporate Complaints by Department



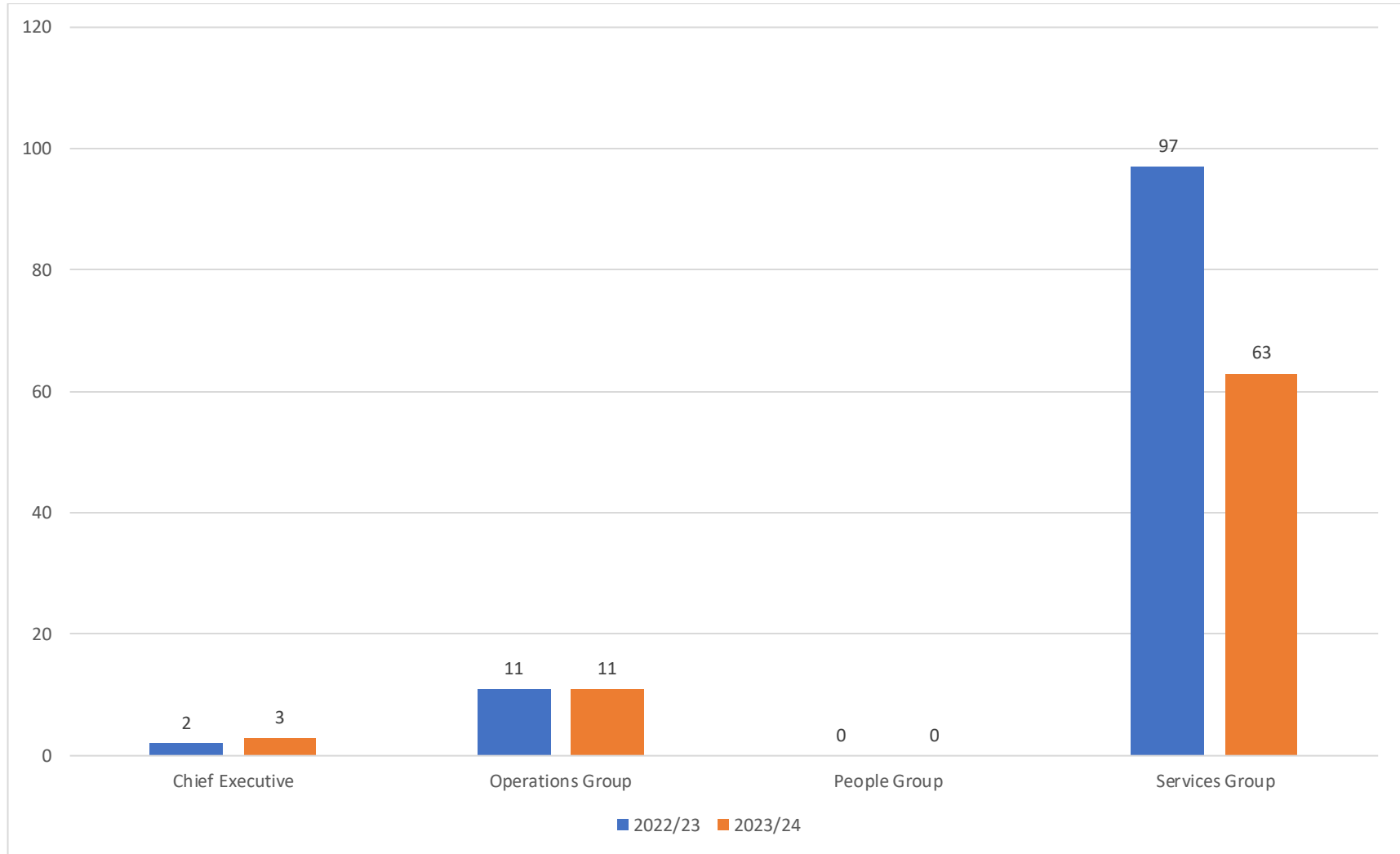
N.B. Direct comparison data is not available prior to 2022/23 due to the change in the Council's organisational structure.

Corporate Compliments by Department



N.B. Direct comparison data is not available prior to 2022/23 due to the change in the Council's organisational structure.

Corporate Comments by Department

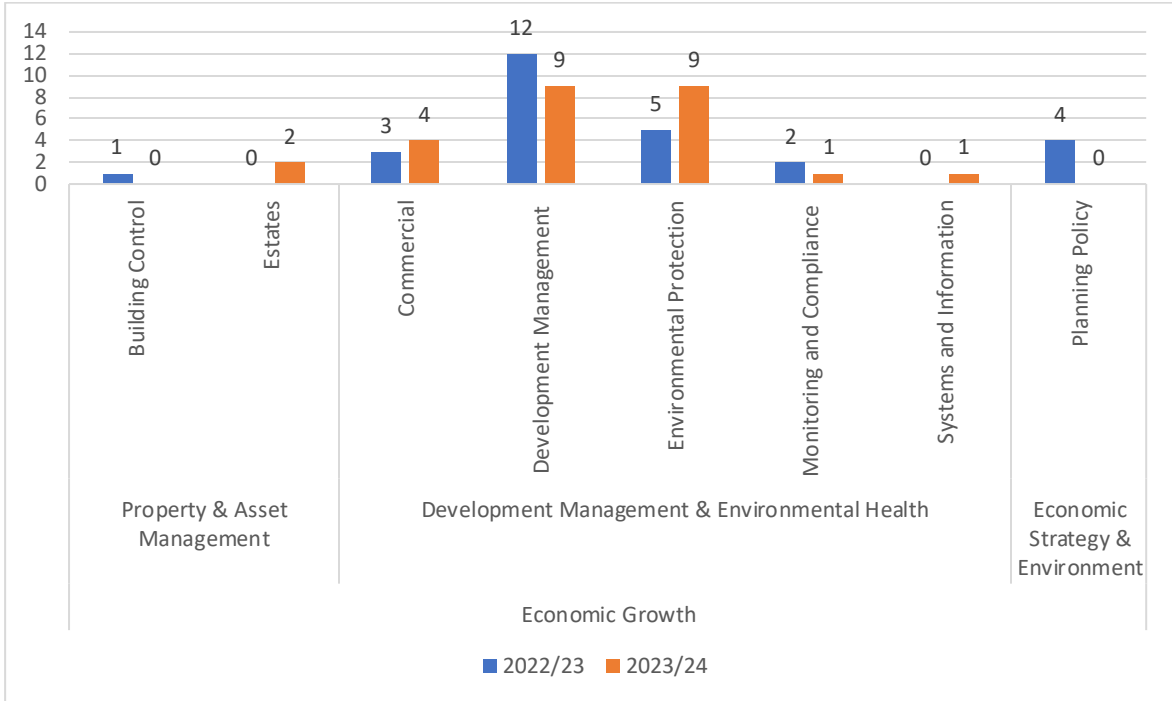


N.B. Direct comparison data is not available prior to 2022/23 due to the change in the Council's organisational structure.

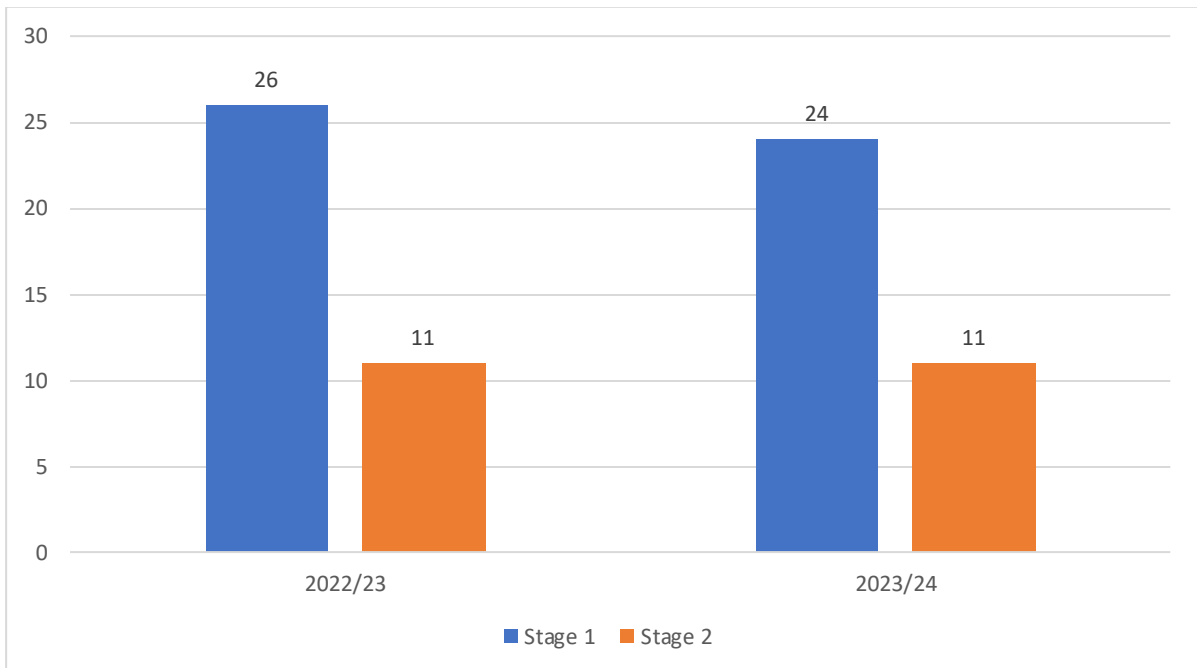
Complaints, Compliments and Comments by Department

Chief Executive Complaints by Service Area/Team

15. Chief Executive received 26 corporate complaints during 2023/24.



Complaints by Stage



N.B. Two complaints were escalated directly to Stage 2

Compliments by Service Area/Team

16. Chief Executive received one compliment for Building Control in 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.

Comments by Service Area/Team

17. Chief Executive received three comments in 2023/24, an increase from two in 2022/23. One for Development Management, one for Environmental Protection and one for Estates.

Complaints by Outcome

18. The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints during 2023/24.

Stage 1 Outcomes

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Planning Policy	0	2	0	0	0	2
Development Management	0	3	1	0	0	4
Commercial	0	1	0	2	0	3
Environmental Protection	0	2	2	2	0	6
Systems and Information	0	0	1	0	0	1
Totals	0	8	4	4	0	16

Stage 2 Outcomes

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Planning Policy	0	1	0	0	0	1
Development Management	0	3	3	0	0	6
Commercial	0	3	0	0	0	3
Environmental Protection	0	1	1	1	1	4
Systems and Information	0	0	0	1	0	1
Monitoring and Compliance	0	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	0	9	4	2	1	16

Organisational Learning

19. All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of corporate complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints, the following organisational learning resulted from the complaint investigations concluded during 2023/24.
20. Following a complaint for Development Management, the Council made explicit reference to the factors which can impact on the timeliness of planning enforcement matters in section 3 of A Charter for Development Management.
21. Following another complaint for Development Management, learning from the complaint was shared with officers to ensure any future applications for works to trees are properly considered in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
22. Following a further complaint for Development Management, officers were reminded of the importance of responding to complaints in accordance with the Council's complaints procedure.

Operations Group

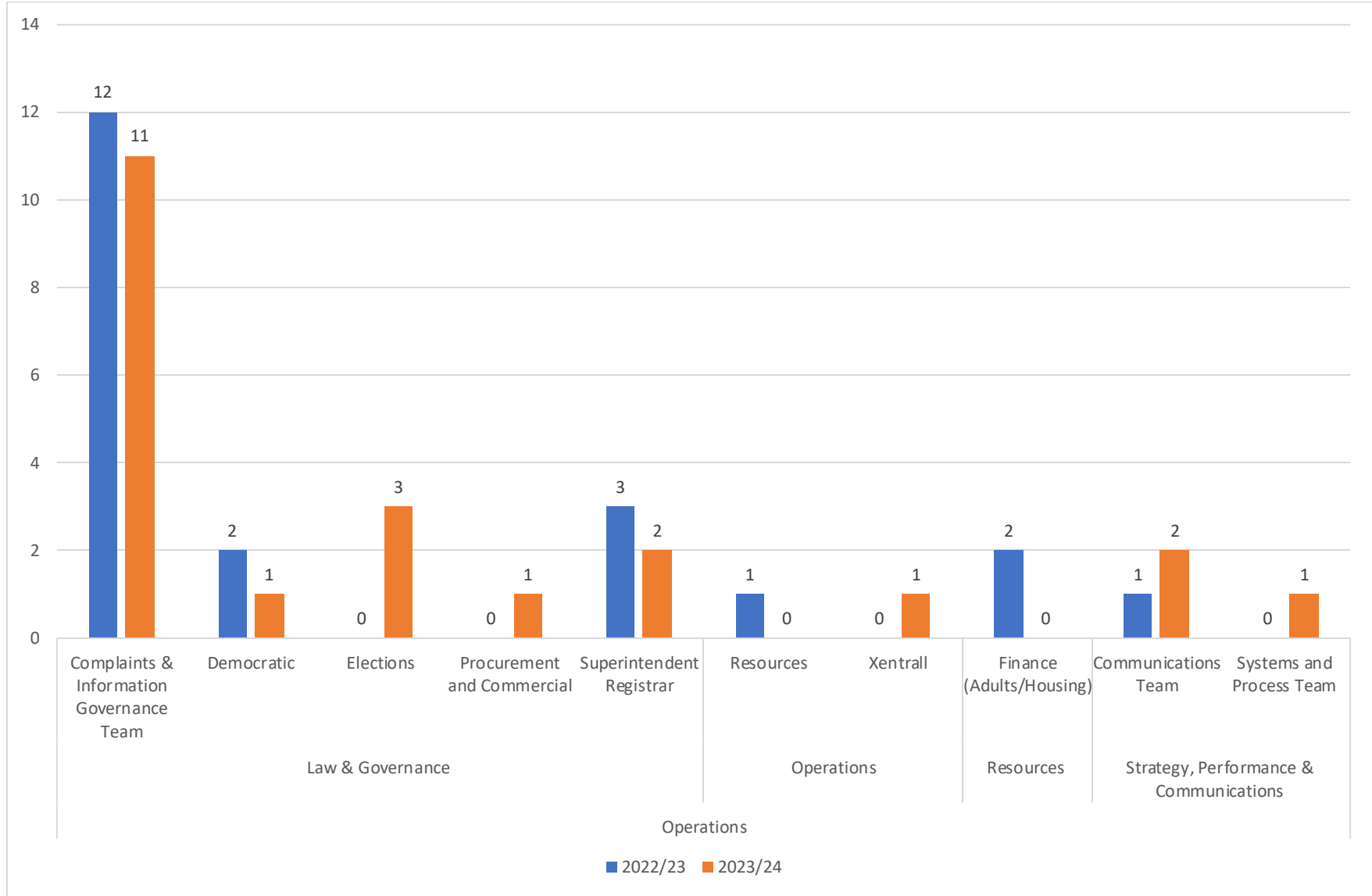
Complaints by Service Area/Team

32. Operations received 96 corporate complaints during 2023/24.



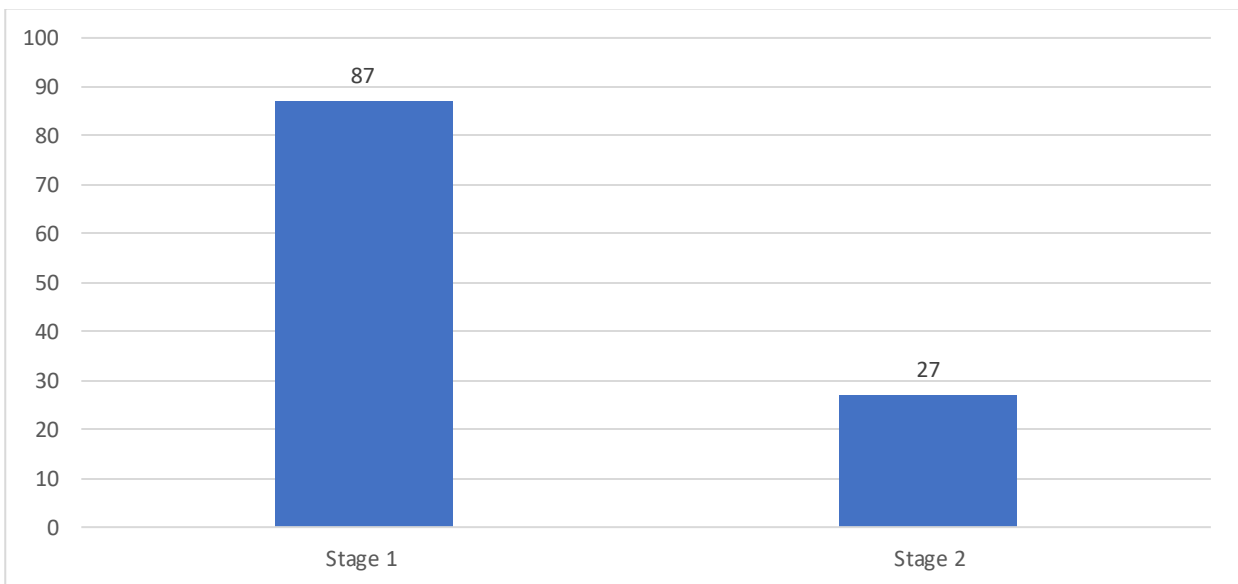
33. Customer Services received nine corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from seven in 2022/23. Seven complaints concerned the application process for Blue Badges.
34. Housing Management received nine corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from seven in 2022/23. Complaints concerned various issues including delays in moving into properties, the service provided by officers, a delay in replacing a fence, and lack of action in relation to an overgrown hedge, lack of action in relation to a neighbour nuisance issue and not being advised the housing application process had changed. There were no identifiable themes.
35. Tenancy Enforcement received three corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from two in 2022/23. Two complaints concerned a lack of action in relation to neighbour nuisance issues.
36. Housing Options received 33 corporate complaints during 2023/24, a significant increase from 19 in 2022/23. The most common cause of complaint was level of support provided in progressing housing applications/finding suitable accommodation and dissatisfaction with the band applicants were placed in.
37. Lifeline receive one corporate complaint during 2023/24, a decrease from three in 2022/23.
38. Building Surveying received two corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
39. General Trades received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
40. Council Tax received 15 corporate complaints during 2023/24, a significant decrease from 33 in 2022/23. The most common theme was communication, followed by dissatisfaction with the administration of Council Tax matters.
41. Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, a decrease from six in 2022/23.

Operations continued...



- 42. Complaints and Information Governance Team received 11 corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from 12 in 2022/23. The most common theme was people’s dissatisfaction with the timeliness and/or content of the response to their Subject Access Request (SAR).
- 43. Democratic received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, a decrease from two in 2022/23.
- 44. Elections received three corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
- 45. Procurement and Commercial received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
- 46. Superintendent Registrar received two corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from three in 2022/23.
- 47. Xentrall received one complaint in 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
- 48. Communications Team received two corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from one in 2022/23.
- 49. Systems and Process Team received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.

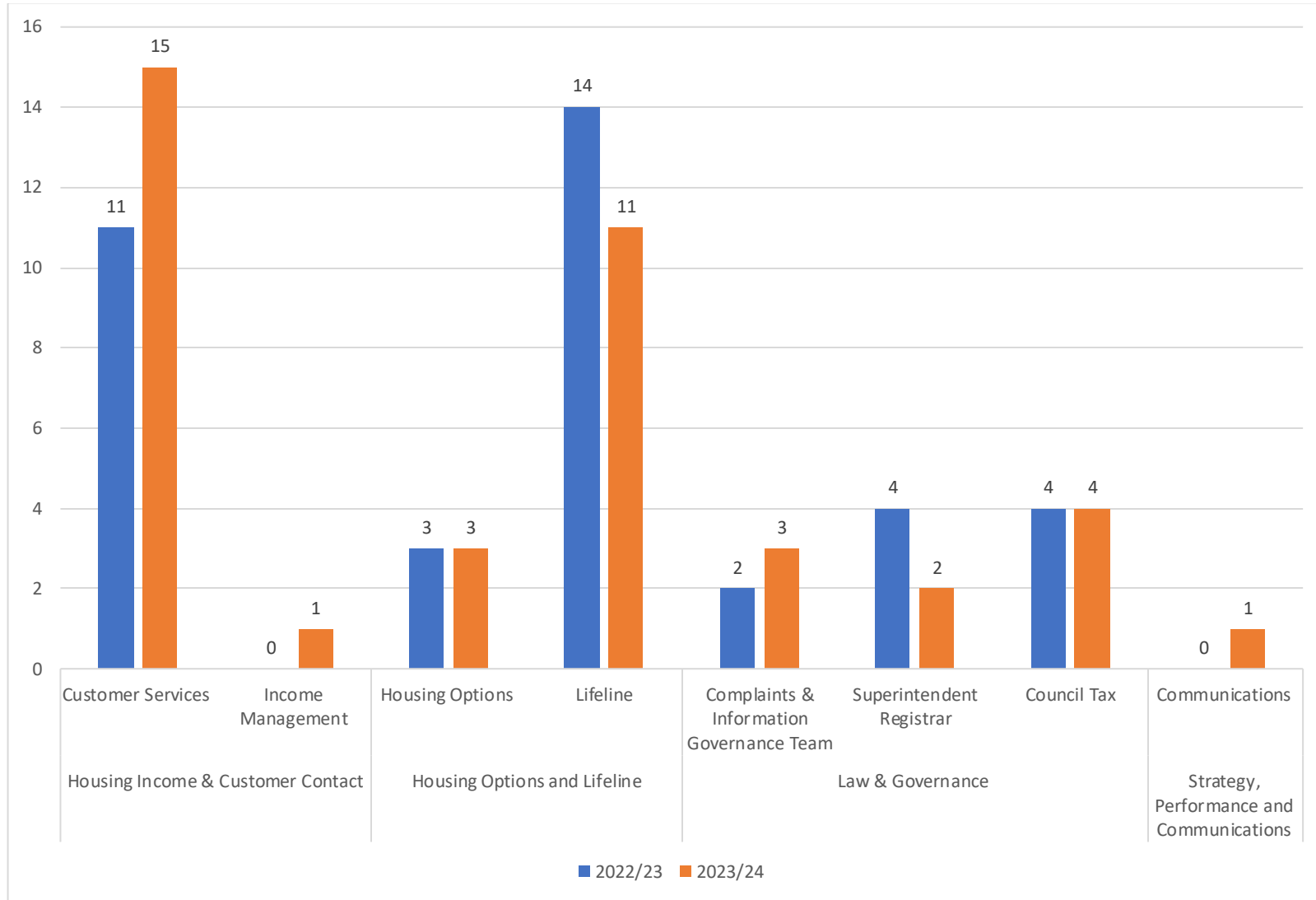
Complaints by Stage



N.B. nine complaints were escalated directly to Stage 2

Compliments by Service Area/Team

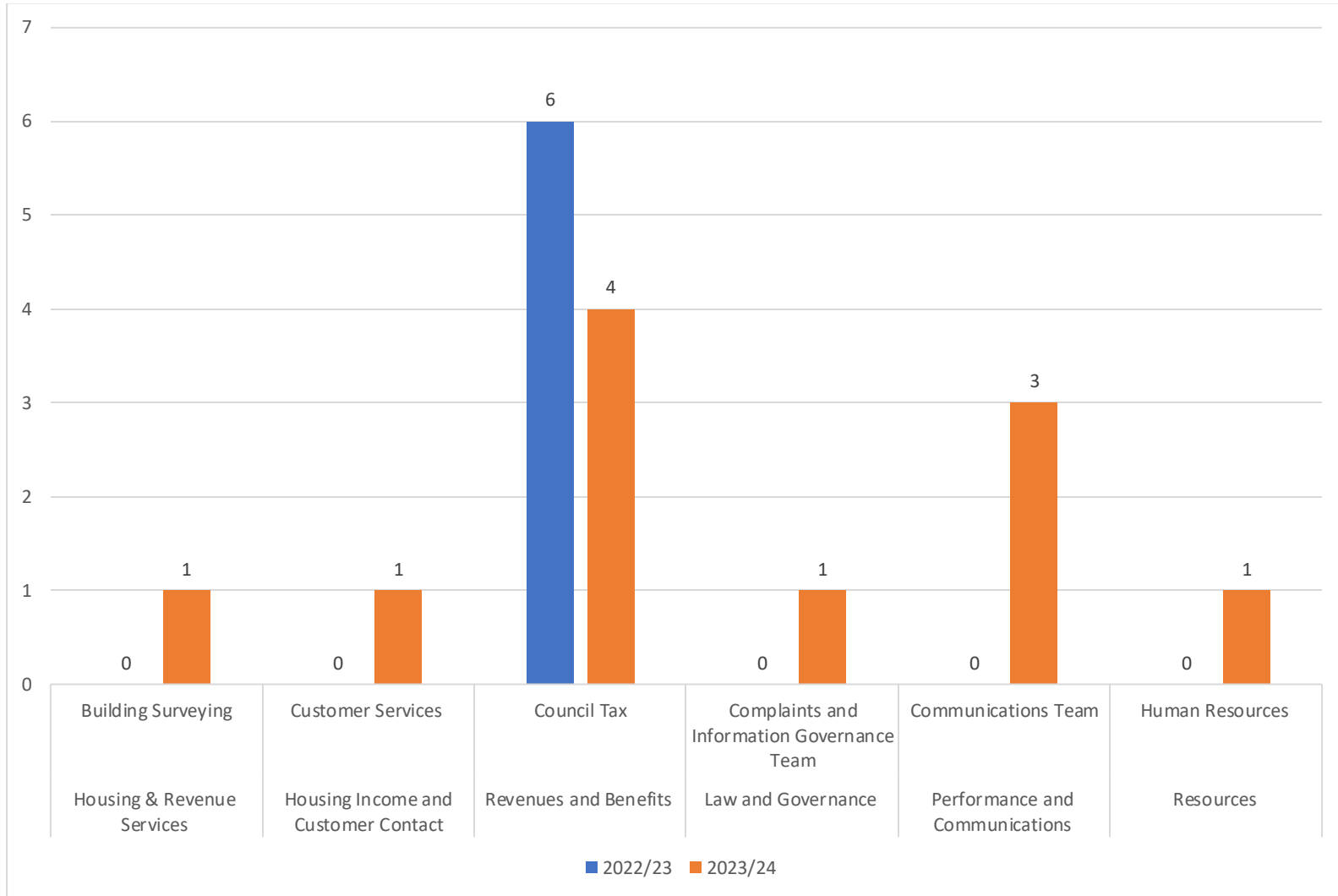
50. Operations received 40 corporate compliments during 2023/24.



51. Customer Services received 15 corporate compliments during 2023/24, an increase from 11 in 2022/23. The main theme was peoples satisfaction with the service provided in relation to a range of issues, including recycling, bulky waste collection and blue badges.
52. Housing Income Management received one corporate compliment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
53. Housing Options received three corporate compliments during 2023/24, the same as in 2022/23.
54. Lifeline received 11 corporate compliments during 2023/24, a decrease from 14 in 2022/23. The main theme was peoples satisfaction with the service provided, particularly in relation to staff responding to falls and other incidents.
55. Complaints and Information Governance Team received three corporate compliments during 2023/24, an increase from two in 2022/23.
56. Superintendent Registrar received two corporate compliments during 2023/24, a decrease from four in 2022/23.
57. Council Tax received four corporate compliments in 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23.
58. Communications received one corporate compliment in 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.

Comments by Service Area/Team

59. Operations received 11 corporate comments during 2023/24.



60. Building Surveying received one corporate comment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
61. Customer Services received one corporate comment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
62. Council Tax received four corporate comments during 2023/24, a decrease from six in 2022/23. There were no identifiable themes.
63. Complaint and Information Governance Team received one corporate comment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
64. Communications Team received three corporate comments during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23. They all related to dissatisfaction with an article in the One Darlington magazine.
65. Human Resources received one corporate comment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.

Complaints by Outcome

66. The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints during 2023/24.

Stage 1 Outcomes

Service Area/Team	Escalated to Stage 2 no Stage 1 Response	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Systems and Process Team	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Complaints and Information Governance Team	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Democratic	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Elections	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
Superintendent Registrar	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Finance (Adults/Housing)	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Xentrall	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Customer Services	0	0	1	1	0	6	8
Housing Management	0	0	3	4	0	2	9
Tenancy Enforcement	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
Housing Options	0	0	23	4	0	5	32
Lifeline	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Council Tax	0	0	5	2	5	5	17
General trades	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Building Surveying	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Totals	0	0	37	18	10	18	83

Stage 2 Outcomes

Service Area/Team	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Complaints and Information Governance Team	2	0	8	0	10
Housing Management	2	0	0	0	2
Tenancy Enforcement	1	0	0	0	1
Housing Options	4	3	1	1	9
Lifeline	0	1	0	0	1
Business Rates	1	0	0	0	1
Council Tax	4	0	0	0	4
Totals	14	4	9	1	28

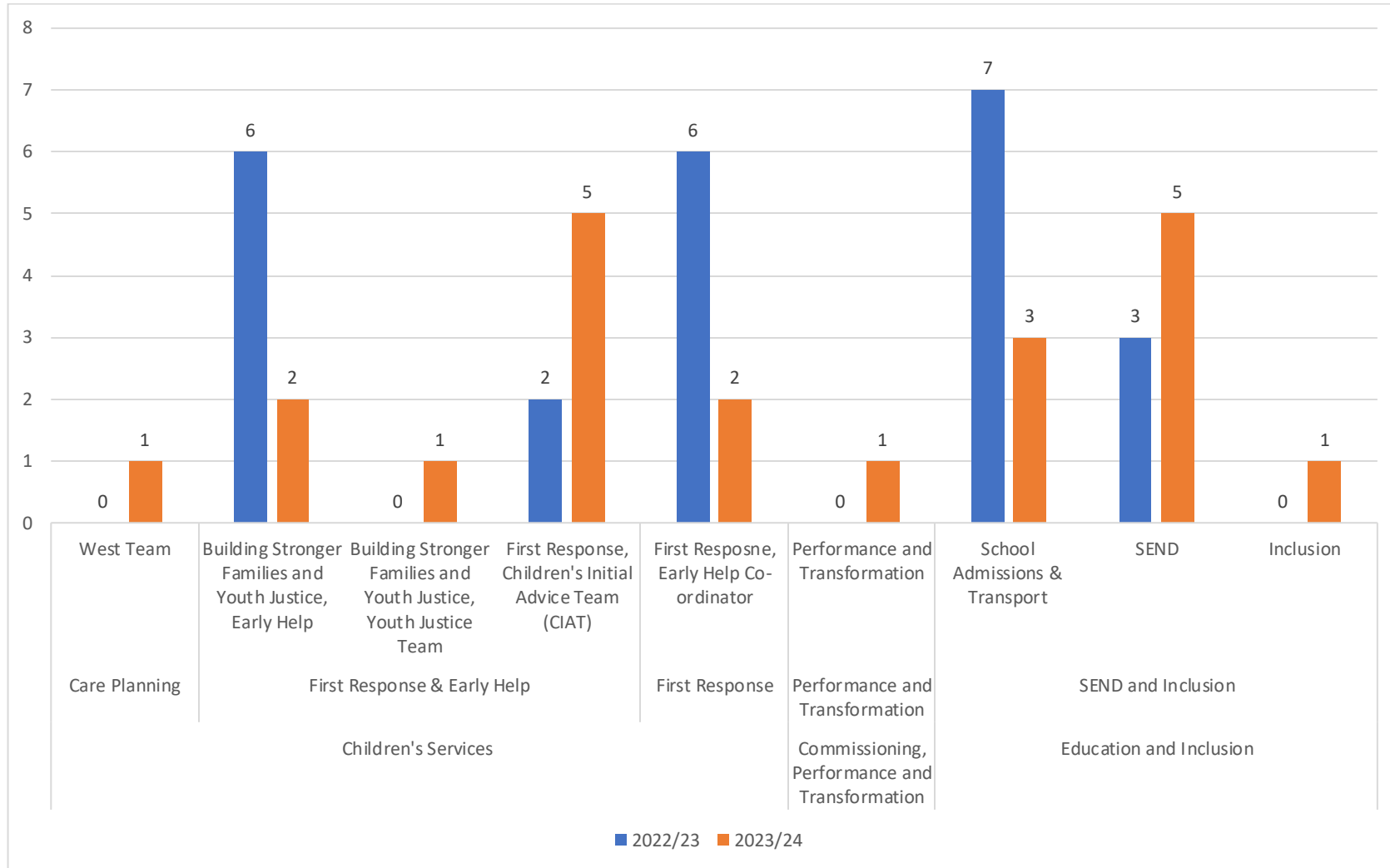
Organisational learning

67. All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints, the following organisational learning resulted from the complaint investigations concluded during 2023/24.
68. Following a complaint for the Complaints and Information Governance Team about the Council's response to a Subject Access Request (SAR), Children's Services were reminded of the importance of undertaking thorough searches to ensure all information held is provided and of the importance of providing records in a timely manner.
69. Following a complaint for Housing Options, officers were advised that during investigations around someone's suitability for a tenancy or when issues are raised about unacceptable behaviours, they should update the applicant/tenant every 20 working days with progress, and they should inform an applicant/tenant in writing of any decision made within 5 working days, including setting out clearly what procedures have been considered, how and why the decision was reached, any actions the applicant/tenant can consider and next steps.
70. Following another complaint for Housing Options, the officer who made the decision was given further training regarding supporting evidence provided with applications and appropriate banding.
71. Following a further complaint for Housing Options, training was provided to ensure the team advise people applying for housing they will be carrying out a home visit to anyone who is awarded a priority banding.

72. Following a complaint for Lifeline, it was agreed Lifeline would review the telecare agreement and include that there are limitations to care provided when personal equipment (such as hoists) are required.

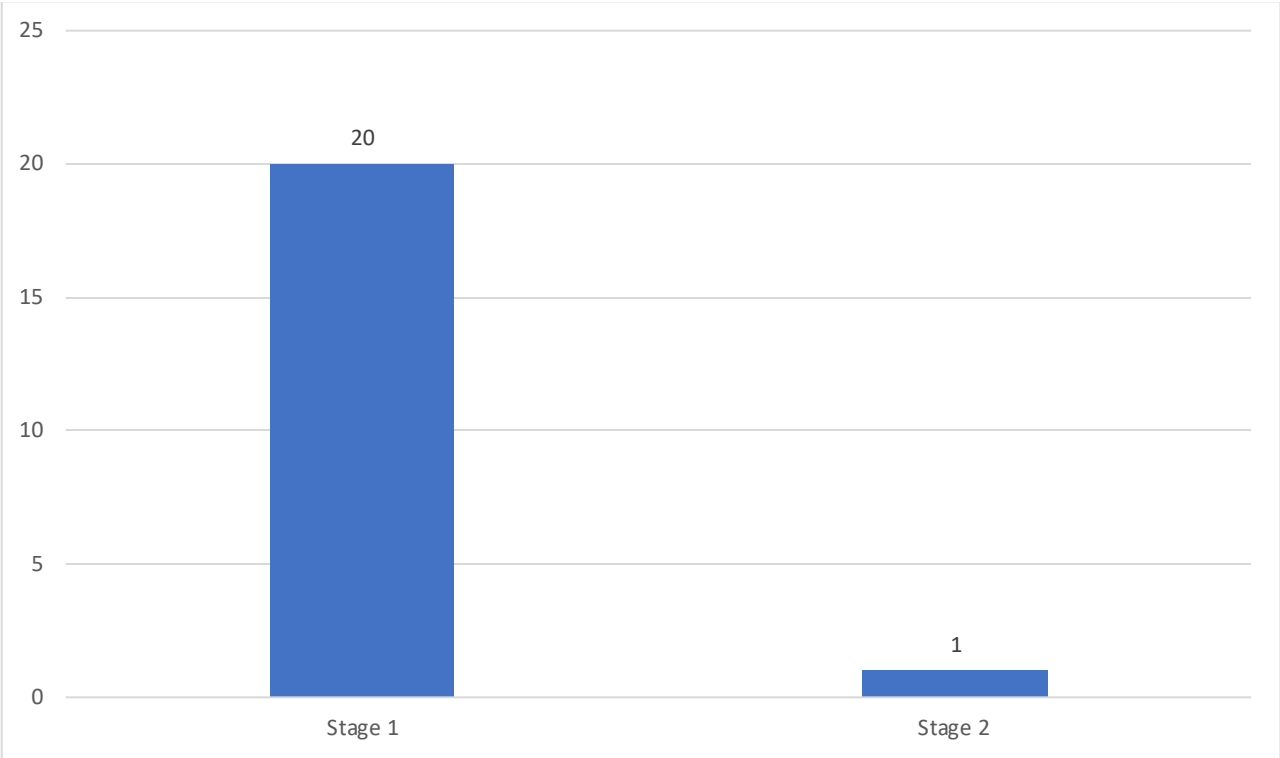
People Group Complaints by Service Area/Team

73. People received 21 corporate complaints during 2023/24.



74. West Team received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
75. Early Help received two complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from six in 2022/23.
76. Youth Justice Team received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
77. Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) received five corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from two in 2022/23. There were no identifiable themes in the complaints received.
78. Early Help Co-ordinator received two corporate complaints in 2023/24, a decrease from six during 2022/23.
79. Performance and Transformation received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
80. School Admissions and Transport received three corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from seven in 2022/23.
81. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) received five corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from three in 2022/23. Complaints primarily concerned dissatisfaction with the service provided, delays in issuing Education, health and Care (EHC) Plans and delays in securing the provision outlined in EHC Plans.
82. Inclusion received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.

Complaints by Stage



N.B. One complaints was escalated directly to Stage 2

Compliments by Service Area/Team

83. Adult Contact Team received one compliment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.

Comments by Service Area/Team

84. People did not receive any corporate comments during 2023/24, as was the case in 2022/23.

Complaints by Outcome

85. The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints during 2023/24.

Stage 1 Outcomes

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Looked After Through Care (LATC) Team	0	0	0	1	0	1
Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) at the Front Door	0	0	0	1	0	1
Early Help	1	0	0	3	0	4
Early Help Co-ordinator	0	1	0	0	1	2
Children's Initial Advice Team	0	1	0	0	0	1
Youth Justice Team	0	0	1	0	0	1
West Team	0	1	0	0	0	1
Performance and Transformation	0	0	0	1	0	1
SEND	0	2	3	0	0	5
School Admissions & Transport	0	2	2	1	0	5
Totals	1	7	6	7	1	22

Stage 2 Outcomes

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Early Help	0	0	1	0	0	1
Children's Initial Advice Team	0	0	0	0	1	1
West Team	0	1	0	0	0	1
SEND	0	1	1	0	0	2
School Admissions & Transport	0	0	1	1	0	2
Totals	0	2	3	1	1	7

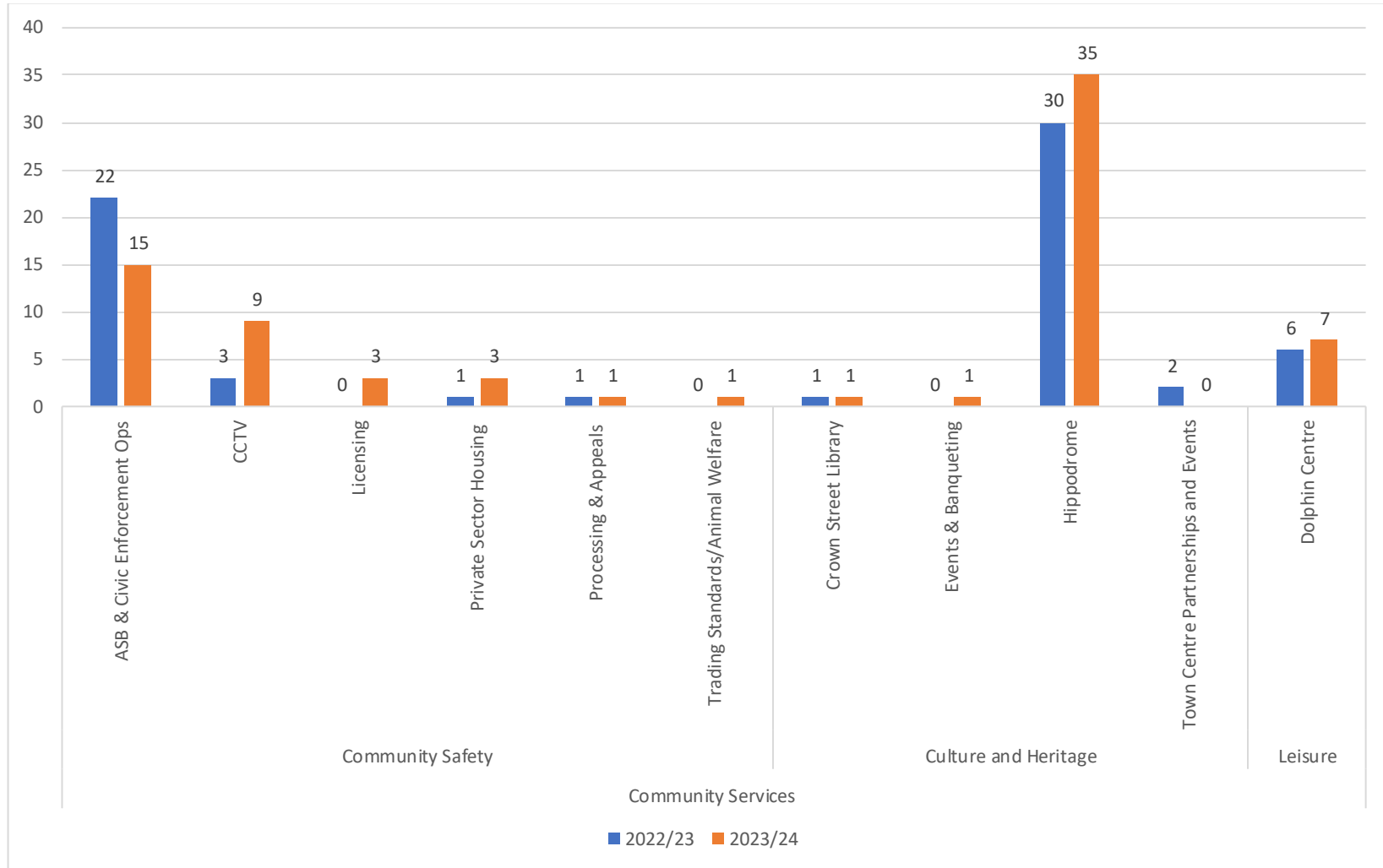
Organisational learning

86. All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints, the following organisational learning resulted from the complaint investigations concluded during 2023/24.
87. Following a complaint for Early Help, the Building Stronger Families Service agreed to review their response process when concerns are raised and investigated further. Officers were also reminded of the importance of adhering to the timescales in the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.
88. Following a complaint for School Admissions and Transport the team decided to review how sensitive information is shared with PA's, how sharing is documented/measured and if the use of IT equipment would improve service delivery.
89. Following a complaint for SEND, officers were reminded of the need to keep accurate records in relation to the discharge of the Council's statutory duties.
90. Following another complaint for SEND, officers were reminded of the need to take into account the parents disabilities when communicating with them.

Services Group

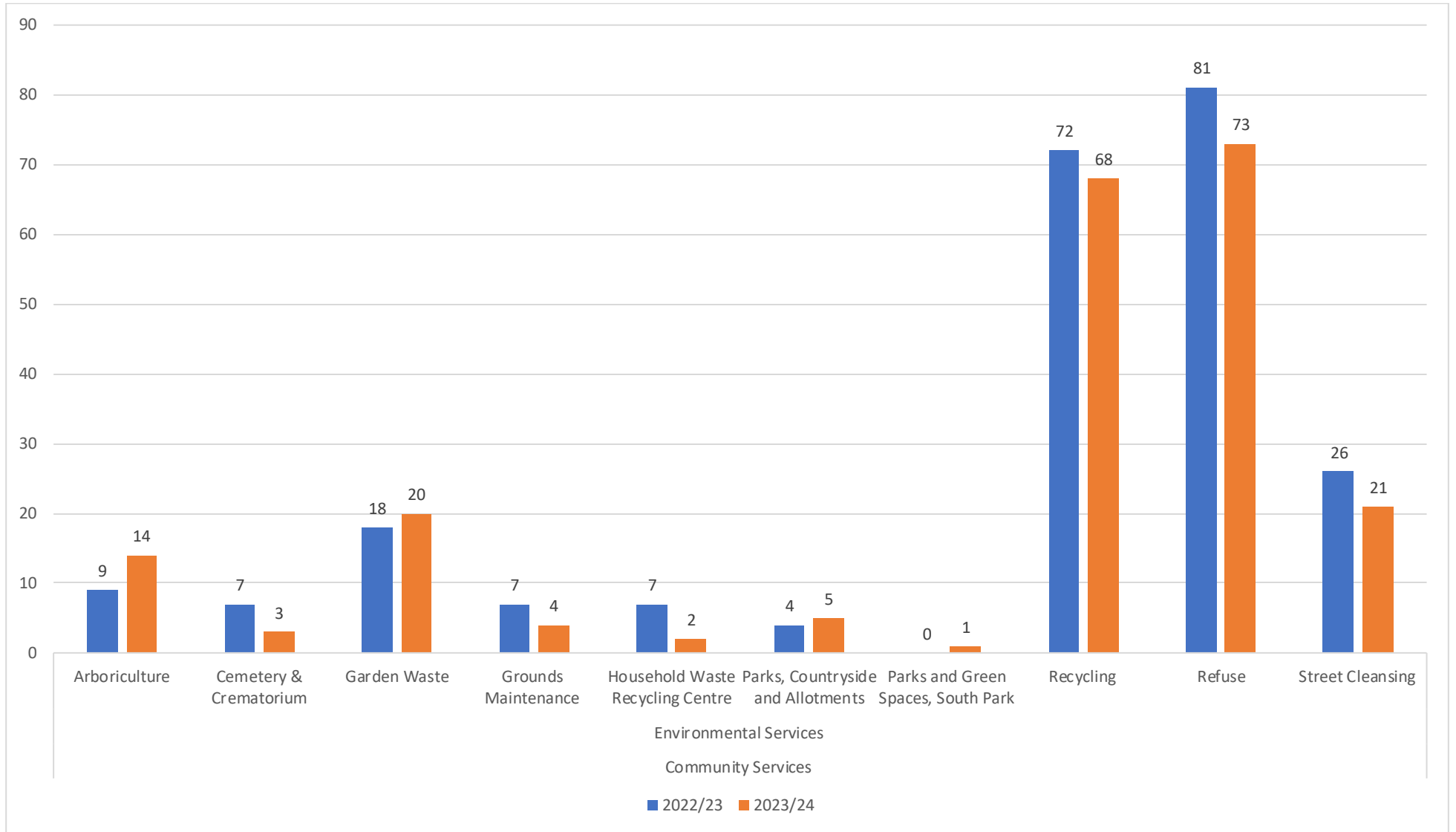
Complaints by Service Area/Team - Community Services

91. Services received 334 corporate complaints during 2023/24.



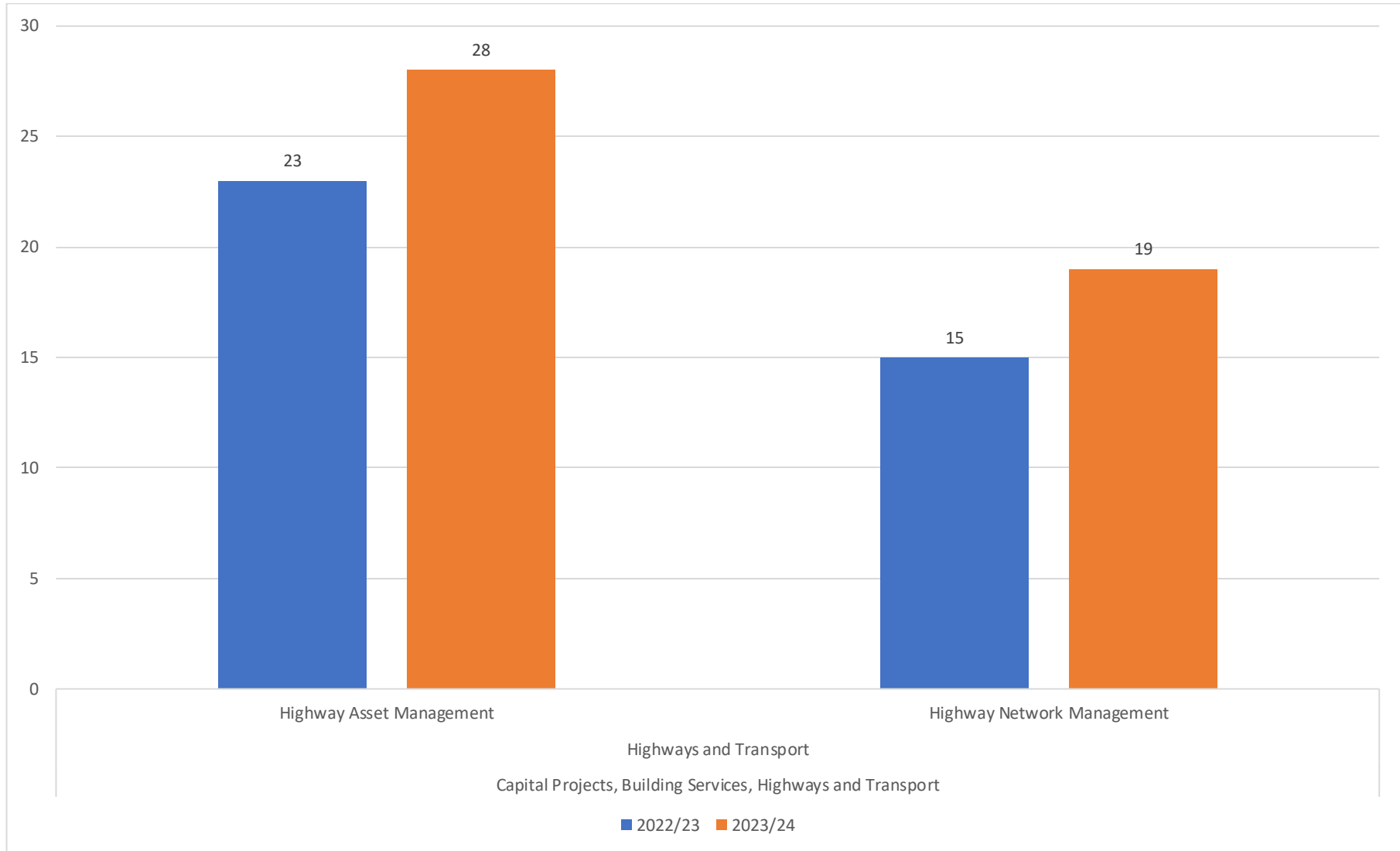
92. Anti-Social Behaviour & Civic Enforcement Ops received 15 corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from 22 in 2022/23. The most common themes were dissatisfaction with a perceived lack of action in relation to requests for enforcement and dissatisfaction with the attitude and actions of enforcement officers.
93. CCTV received nine corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from three in 2022/23. The most common theme was staff attitude when contacting CCTV.
94. Licensing received three corporate complaints 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23. Two of the complaints concerned staff attitude/behaviour.
95. Private Sector Housing received three corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from one in 2022/23. Two of the complaints concerned a lack of communication.
96. Processing & Appeals received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23.
97. Trading Standards/Animal Welfare received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
98. Crown Street Library received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23.
99. Events and Banqueting received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
100. Hippodrome received 35 corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from 30 in 2022/23. The main cause of complaints was that Hippodrome staff did not address inappropriate behaviour by other audience members during shows. Other issues concerned the venue including, restricted visibility and the toilets.
101. Dolphin Centre received seven corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from six in 2022/23. Three complaints concerned swimming and two related to bowling.

Community Services continued...



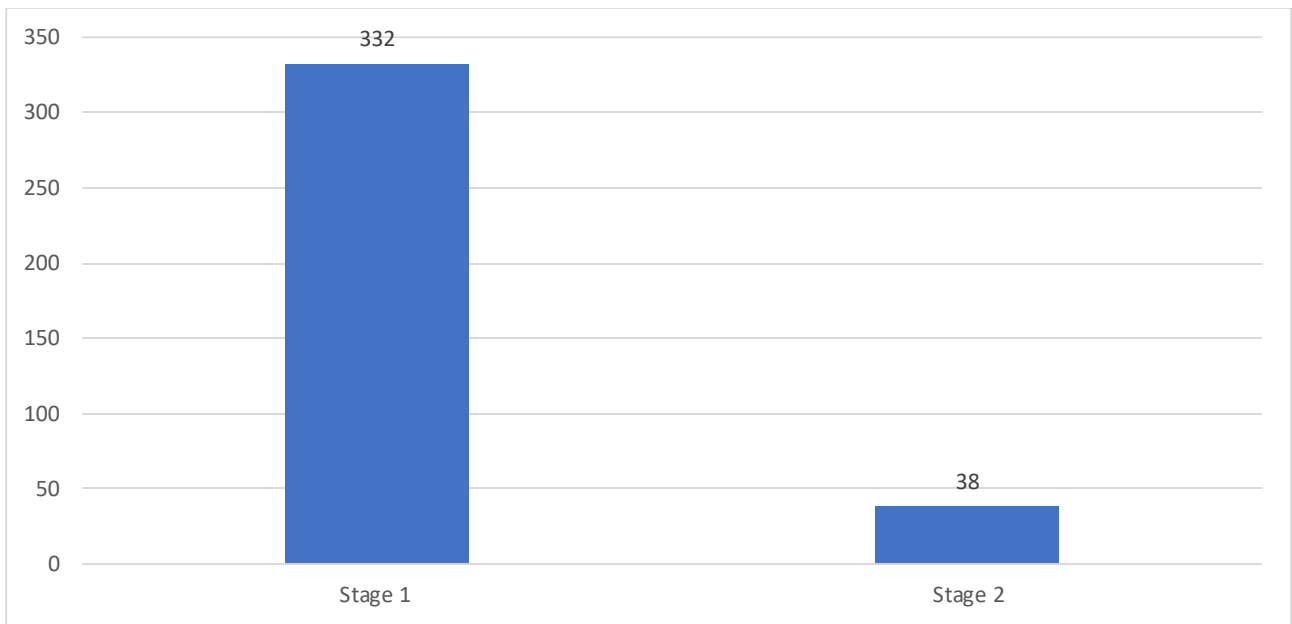
102. Arboriculture received 14 corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from nine in 2022/23. These complaints generally resulted from a lack of response to initial enquiries and/or dissatisfaction with a decision not to undertake works to a tree for the reasons requested.
103. Cemetery & Crematorium received three corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from seven in 2022/23. There were no identifiable themes.
104. Garden Waste received 20 corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from 18 in 2022/23. Complaints primarily concerned missed collections.
105. Grounds Maintenance received four corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from seven in 2022/23. There were no identifiable themes.
106. Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) received two corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from seven in 2022/23.
107. Parks, Countryside and Allotments received five corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from four in 2022/23. Poor communication was the most common cause of complaint.
108. South Park received one corporate complaint during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
109. Recycling received 68 corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from 72 in 2022/23. The most common cause of complaint was recycling not being collected and bins and boxes either being broken or not returned to the position they were put out for collection.
110. Refuse received 73 corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from 81 in 2022/23. Complaints primarily related to refuse collections, including assisted collections being missed on one or more occasion. Other complaints concerned bulky waste collections and bins not being returned to the position they were put out for collection.
111. Street Cleansing received 21 corporate complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from 26 in 2022/23. Complaints primarily related to the lack of response to requests for service.

Capital Projects, Building Services, Highways and Transport



- 112. Highway Asset Management received 28 corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from 23 in 2022/23. Themes included delays in responding to requests for service and dissatisfaction with the impact of highway works on individuals and their property.
- 113. Highway Network Management received 19 corporate complaints during 2023/24, an increase from 15 in 2022/23. Themes included delays in responding to requests for service and dissatisfaction with decisions in relation to variety of highways issues.

Complaints by Stage

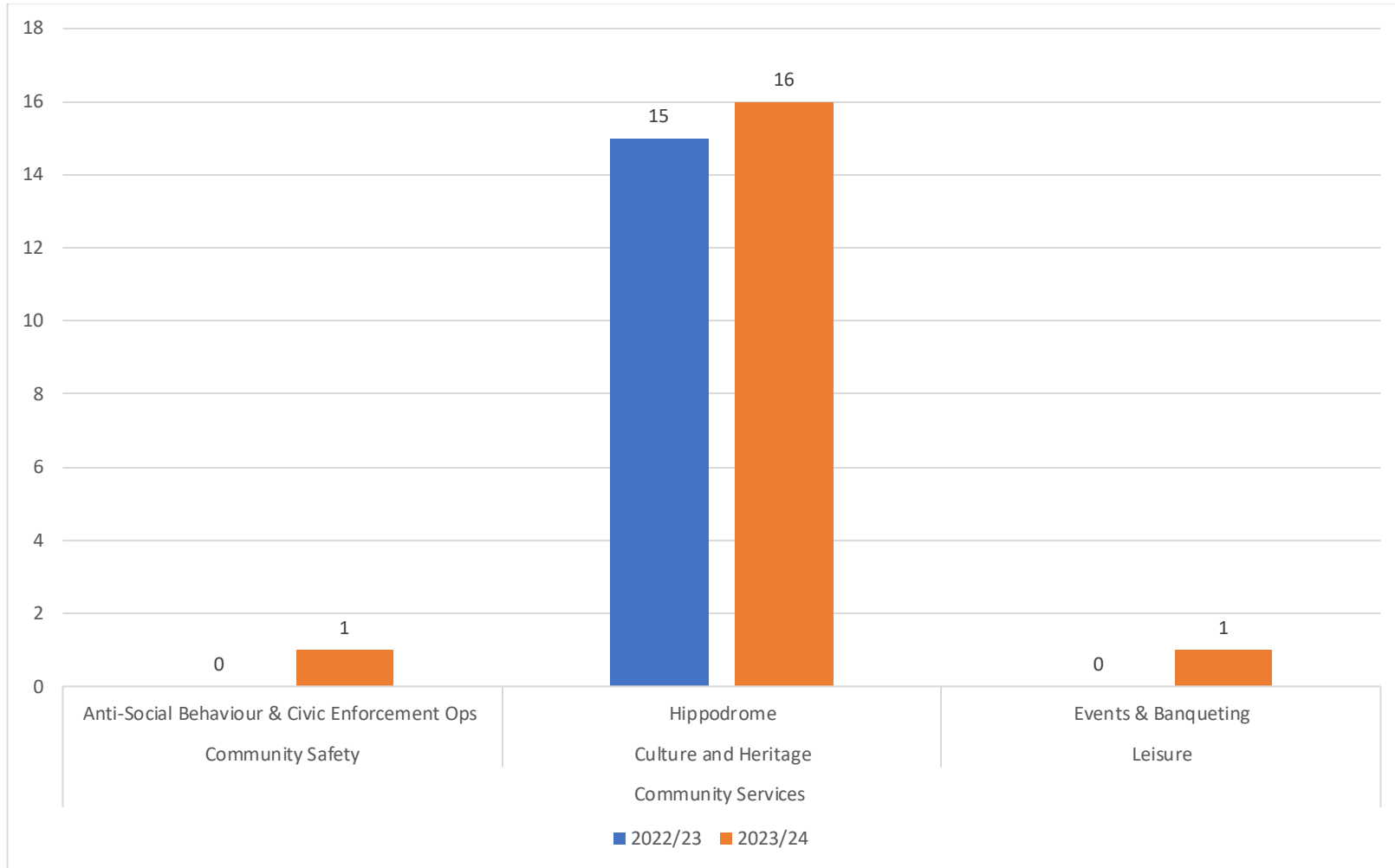


N.B. Two complaints were escalated directly to Stage 2

Compliments by Service Area/Team

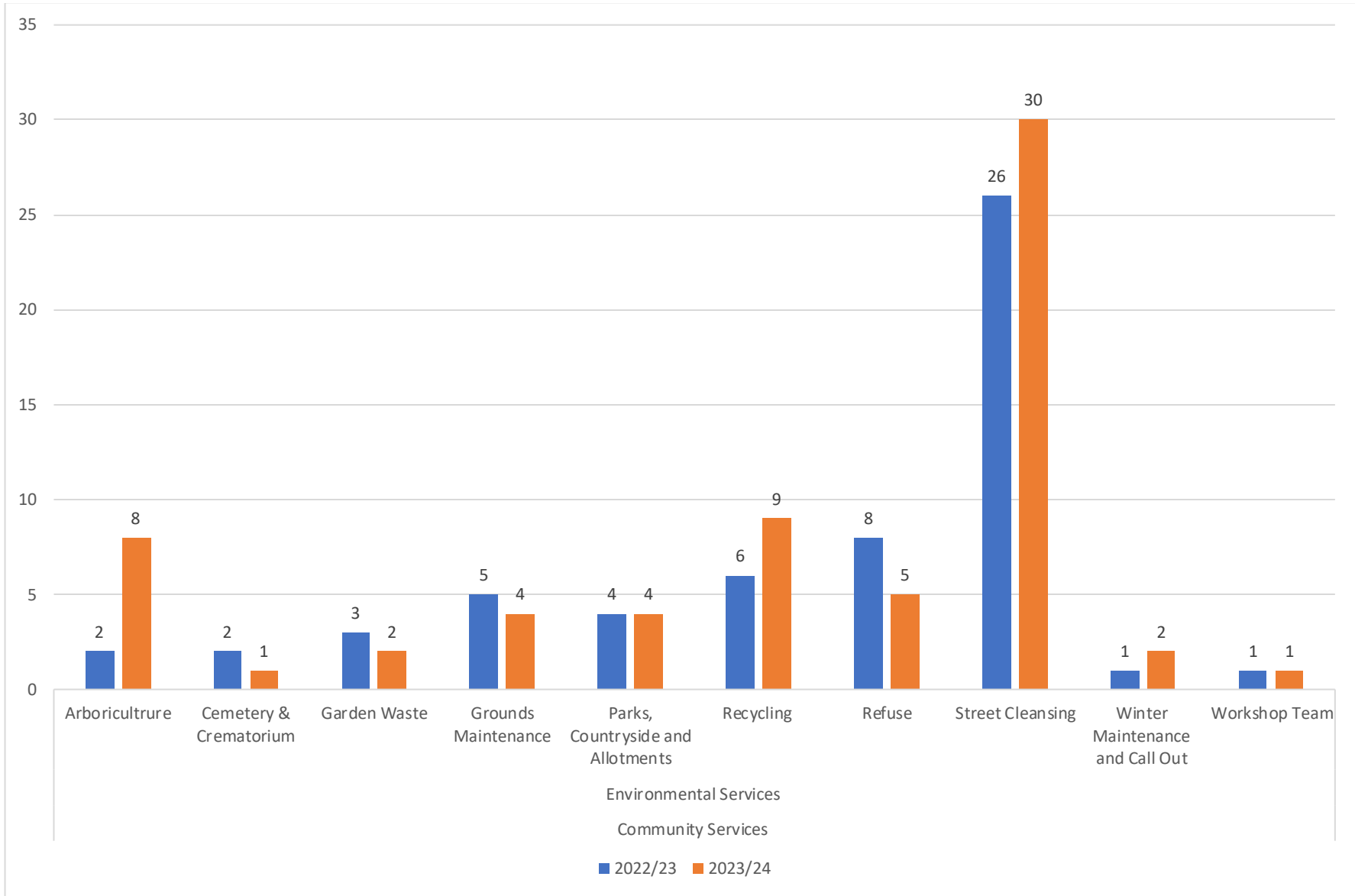
Community Services

114. Services received 88 corporate compliments during 2023/24.



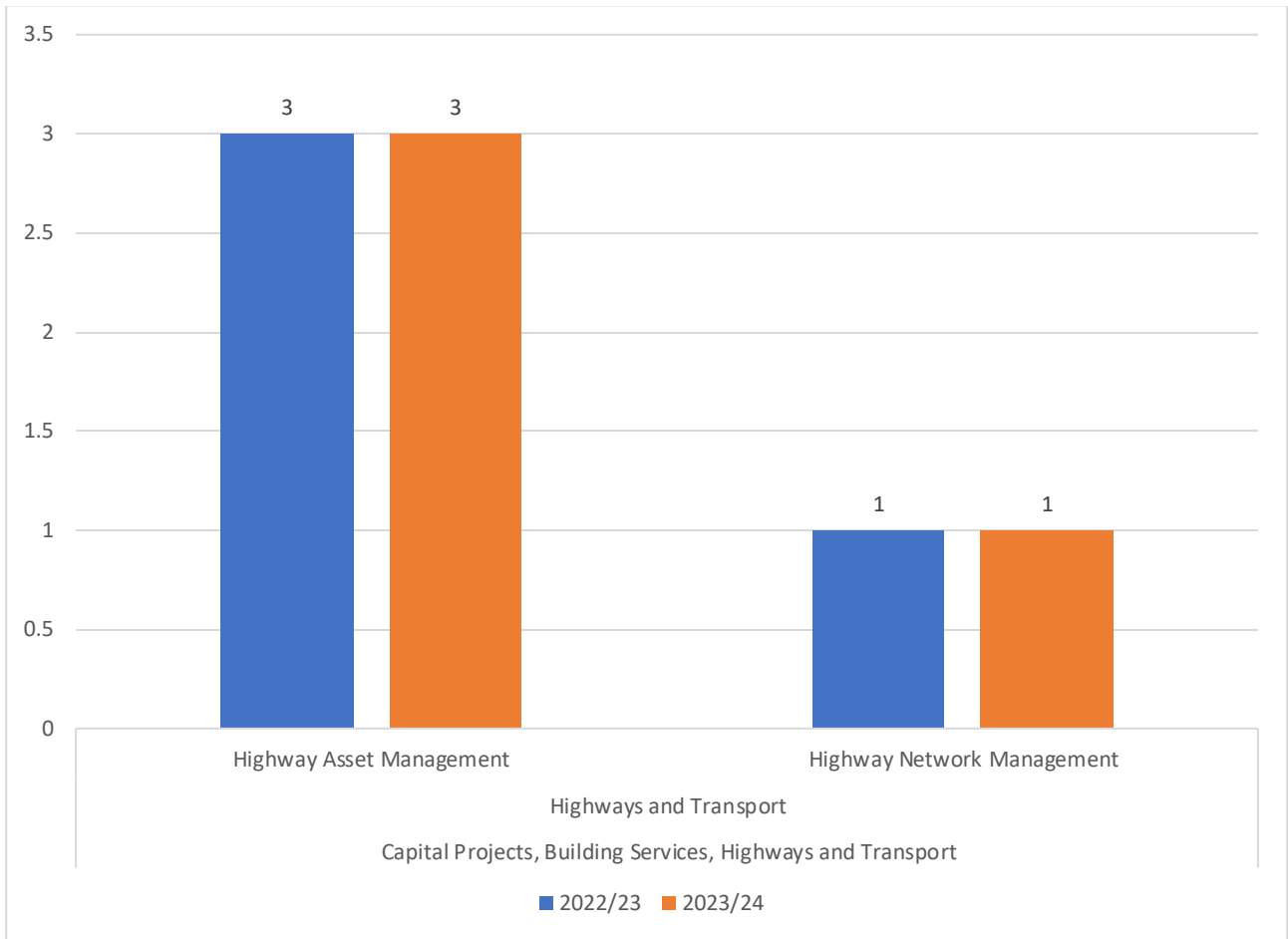
115. Anti-Social Behaviour and Civic Enforcement Ops received one corporate compliment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
116. Hippodrome received 16 corporate compliments during 2023/24, an increase from 15 in 2022/23. The most common themes were satisfaction with the level of customer service and support from staff and the quality of performances.
117. Events and Banqueting received one corporate compliment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.

Community Services continued...



118. Arboriculture received eight corporate compliments during 2023/24, an increase from two in 2022/23. The most common theme was satisfaction with tree works.
119. Cemetery & Crematorium received one corporate compliment during 2023/24, a decrease from two in 2022/23.
120. Garden Waste received two corporate compliments during 2023/24, a decrease from three in 2022/23.
121. Grounds Maintenance received four corporate compliments during 2023/24, a decrease from five in 2022/23.
122. Parks, Countryside and Allotments received four corporate compliments during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23.
123. Recycling received nine corporate compliments during 2023/24, an increase from six in 2022/23. Themes included satisfaction with the service provided and the attitude of staff.
124. Refuse received five corporate compliments during 2023/24, a decrease from eight in 2022/23. They all concerned the excellent service provided, including two in relation to assisted collections.
125. Street Cleansing received 30 corporate compliments during 2023/24, an increase from 26 in 2022/23. Themes included general satisfaction with the cleanliness of streets and satisfaction with the team's response to specific requests for service.
126. Winter Maintenance and Call Out received two corporate compliments during 2023/24, an increase from one in 2022/23.
127. Workshop Team received one corporate compliment during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23.

Capital Projects, Building Services, Highways and Transport



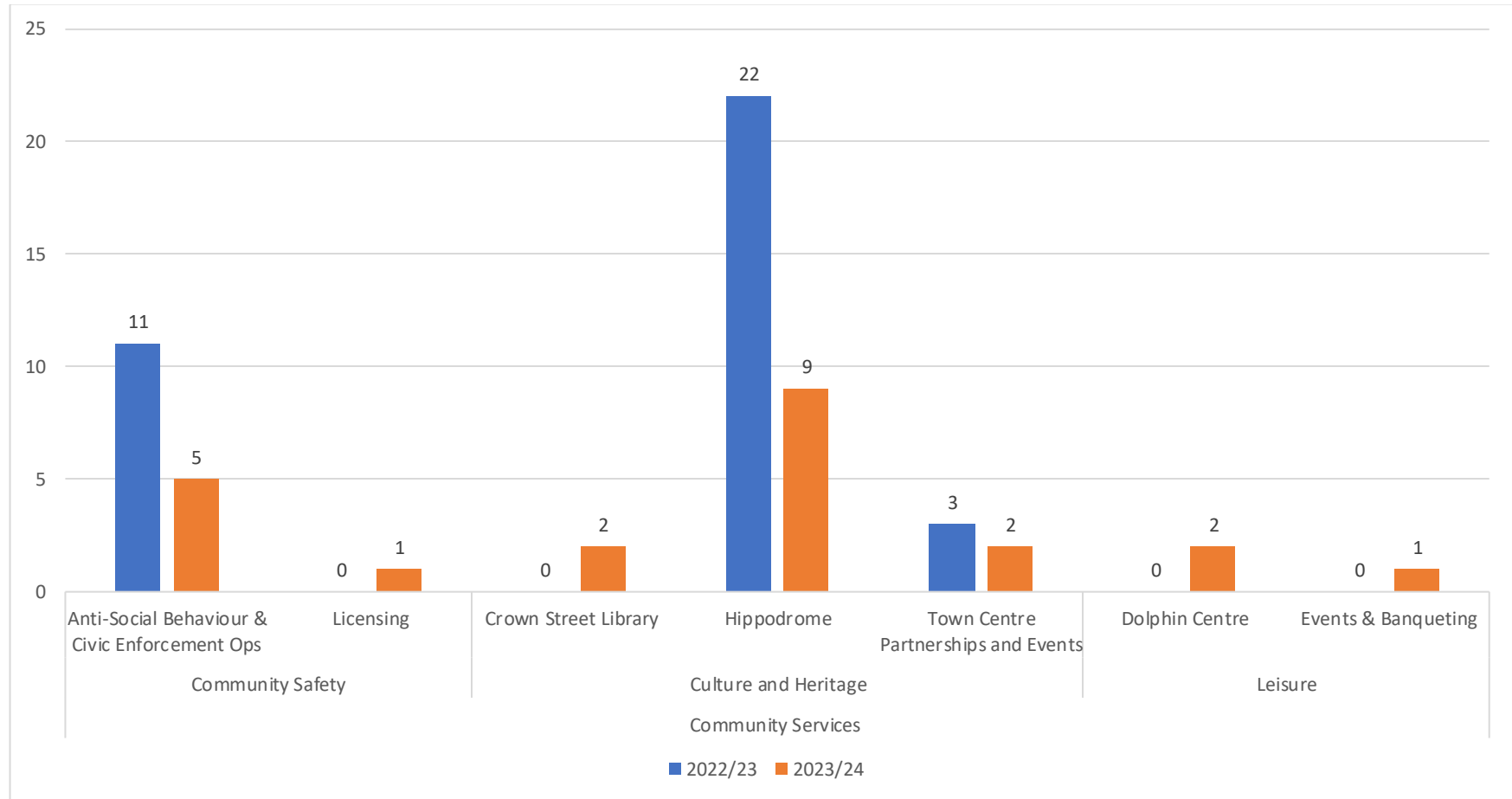
128. Highway Asset Management received three corporate compliments during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23.

129. Highway Network Management received one corporate compliment during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23.

Comments by Service Area/Team

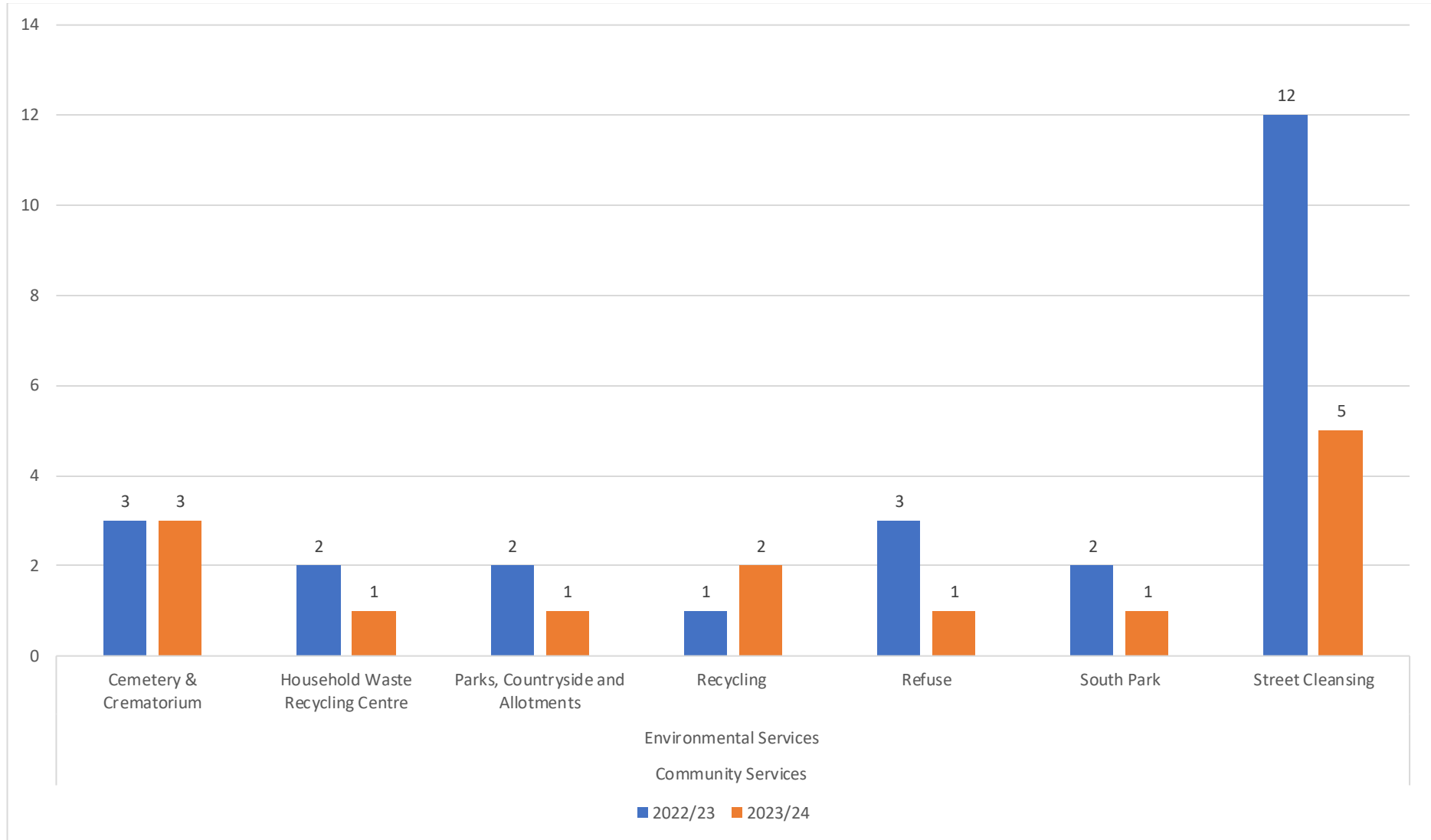
Community Services

130. Services received 63 corporate comments during 2023/24.



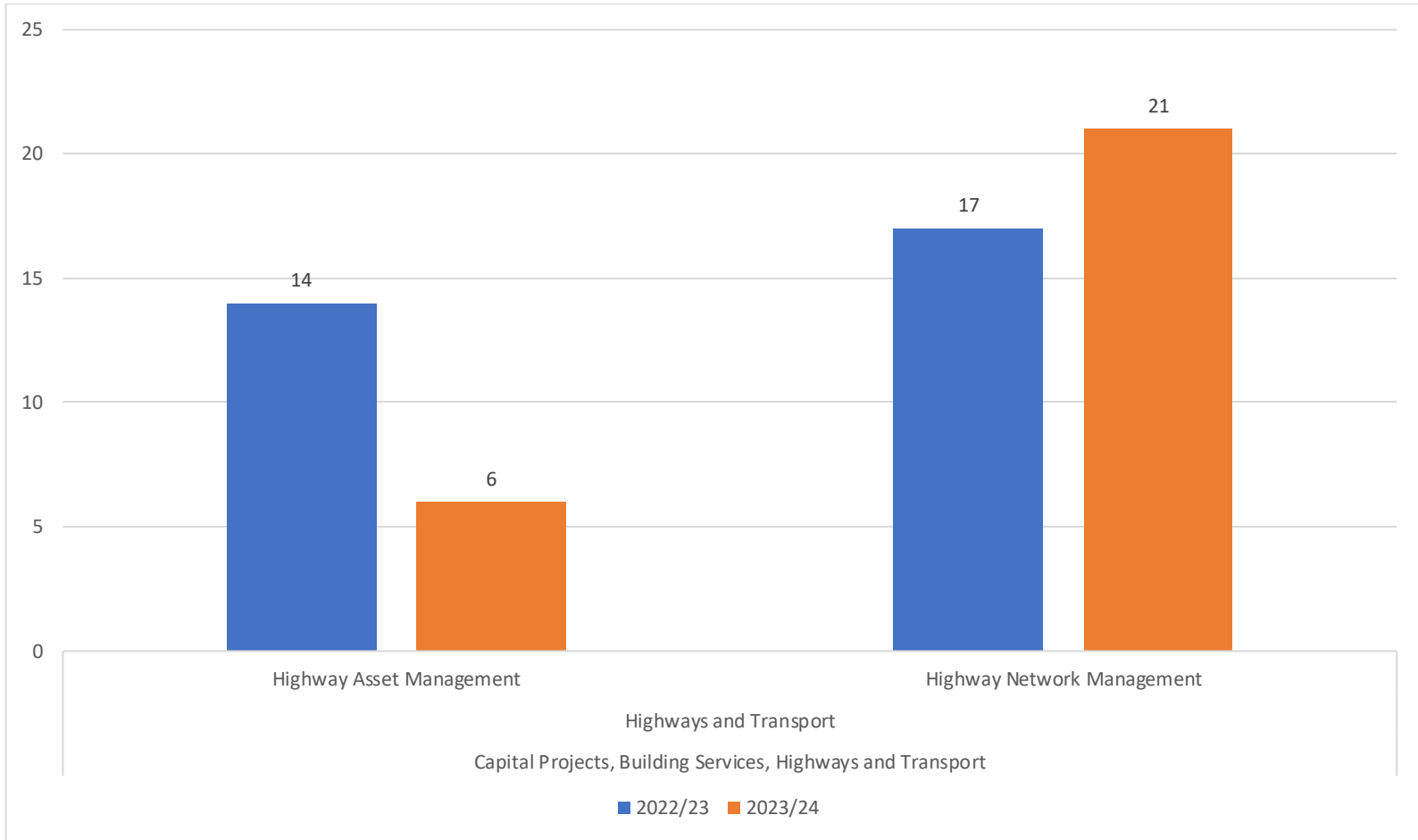
131. Anti-Social Behaviour & Civic Enforcement Ops received five corporate comments during 2023/24, a decrease from 11 in 2022/23. There were no identifiable themes.
132. Licensing received one corporate comment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
133. Crown Street Library received two corporate comments during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
134. Hippodrome received nine corporate comments during 2023/24, a significant decrease from 22 in 2022/23. Dissatisfaction with quality of shows was the most common theme.
135. Town Centre Partnerships and Events received two corporate comments during 2023/24, a decrease from three in 2022/23.
136. The Dolphin Centre two corporate comments during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.
137. Events and Banqueting received one corporate comment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23.

Community Services continued...



138. Cemetery & Crematorium received three corporate comments during 2022/23, the same number as in 2022/23. There were no identifiable themes.
139. HWRC received one corporate comment during 2023/24, a decrease from two in 2023/24.
140. Parks, Countryside and Allotments received one corporate comment during 2023/24, a decrease from two in 2023/24.
141. Recycling received two corporate comments during 2023/24, an increase from one in 2022/23.
142. Refuse received one corporate comment during 2023/24, a decrease from three in 2023/24.
143. South Park received one corporate comment during 2023/24, a decrease from two in 2023/24.
144. Street Cleansing received five corporate comments during 2023/24, a decrease from 12 in 2022/23. There were no identifiable themes.

Capital Projects, Building Services, Highways and Transport



32. Highway Asset Management received six corporate comments during 2023/24, a decrease from 14 in 2022/23. The most common theme was people's dissatisfaction with road works.
33. Highway Network Management received 21 corporate comments during 2023/24, an increase from 17 in 2022/23. Common themes included people's dissatisfaction with the removal of the two hours free parking and changes to bus services.

Complaints by Outcome

34. The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints during 2023/24.

Stage 1 Outcomes

Service Area/Team	Escalated to Stage 2 (No S1 Response)	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
CCTV	0	1	4	3	0	1	9
Anti-Social Behaviour & Civic Enforcement Ops	0	0	4	2	0	0	6
Licensing	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Private Sector Housing	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Trading Standards/Animal Welfare	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Hippodrome	0	0	17	2	18	0	37
Arboriculture	0	0	8	1	1	0	10
Cemetery & Crematorium	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Parks, Countryside and Allotments	0	0	1	1	2	0	4
South Park	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Grounds Maintenance	0	0	1	0	3	0	4
Street Cleansing	0	0	13	0	10	0	23
Garden Waste	0	2	2	0	15	1	20
Recycling	0	9	19	3	33	1	65
Refuse	0	9	24	0	29	2	64
Winter Maintenance and Call Out	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
HWRC	0	0	2	0	2	0	4
Dolphin Centre	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Events & Banqueting	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Highway Asset Management	0	1	15	2	7	1	26
Highway Network Management	1	0	12	0	4	0	17
Building Surveying	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Totals	1	23	127	19	128	6	304

Stage 2 Outcomes

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
CCTV	0	1	1	0	0	2
Anti-Social Behaviour & Civic Enforcement Ops	0	0	3	0	0	3
Licensing	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hippodrome	0	3	0	0	0	3
Arboriculture	0	2	1	2	0	5
Cemetery & Crematorium	0	1	0	0	0	1
Parks, Countryside and Allotments	0	1	0	0	0	1
Grounds Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	1
Street Cleansing	0	5	1	0	1	7
Garden Waste	0	1	0	0	1	2
Recycling	0	0	0	2	0	2
Refuse	1	0	0	3	0	4
Winter Maintenance and Call Out	0	0	0	1	0	1
Events & Banqueting	1	0	0	0	0	1
Highway Asset Management	0	3	0	1	0	4
Highway Network Management	0	4	2	1	1	8
Totals	2	22	8	11	3	46

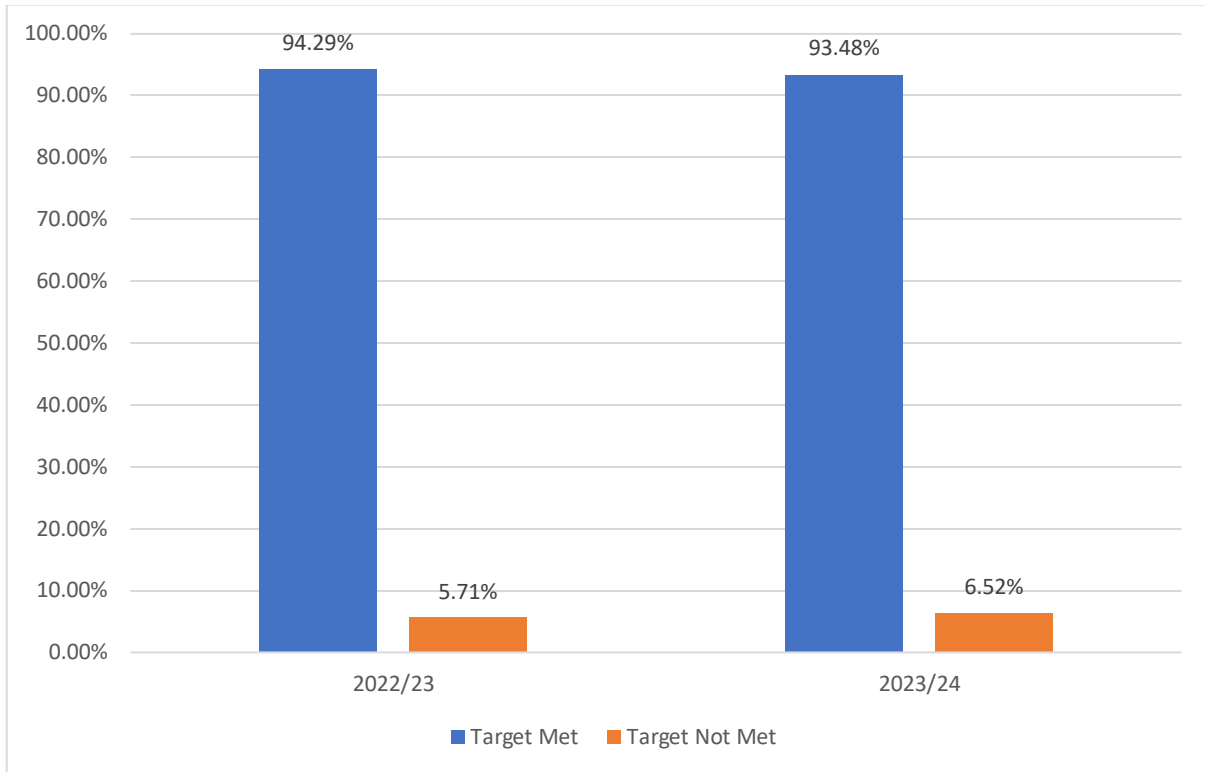
Organisational Learning

35. All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints, the following organisational learning resulted from the complaint investigations concluded during 2023/24.
36. Following a complaint for Anti-Social Behaviour & Civic Enforcement Operations, the team divert phone calls to someone who was available to answer.
37. Following a complaint for Arboriculture, officers were made aware of the fact cancer is a disability as defined by the Equalities Act 2010.
38. Following a complaint for Recycling regarding an assisted collection, both the refuse and recycling teams were reminded them of the standards expected by both the Council and the general public when carrying out there duties.
39. Following a complaint for Refuse the crews were reminded to return bins to the location they were placed out for collection.

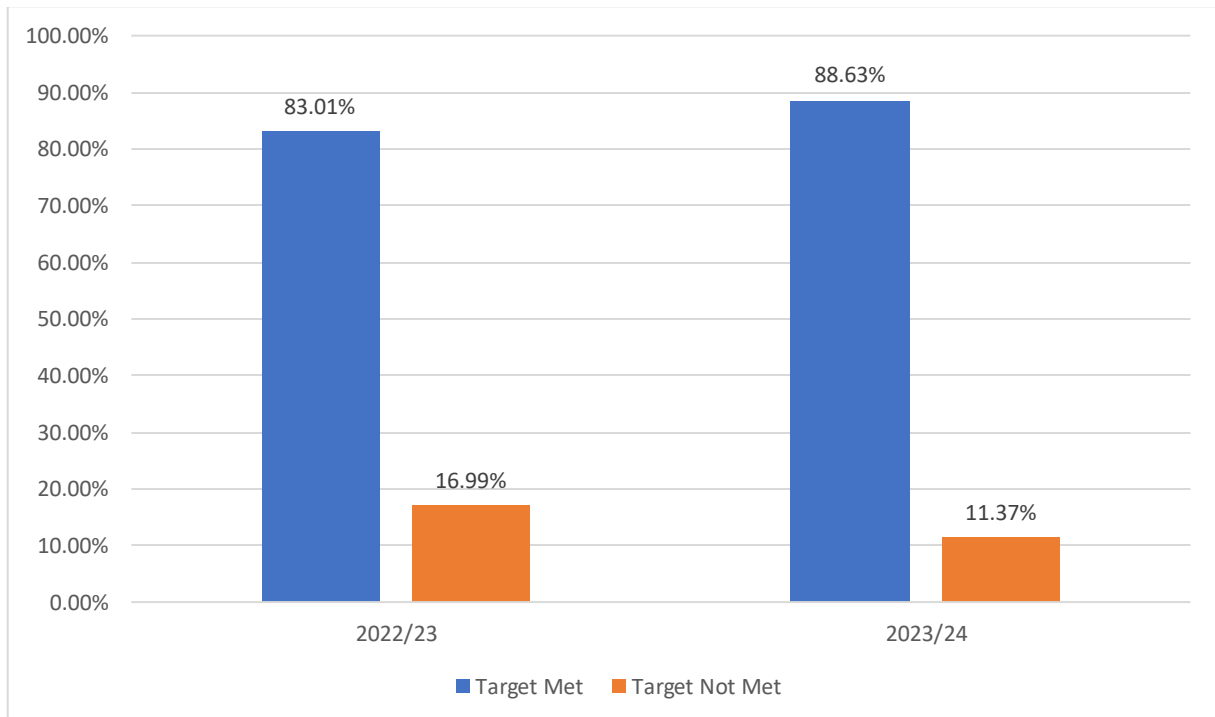
Performance against the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

Stage 1

Performance against Stage 1 complaint acknowledgement target (3 working days)

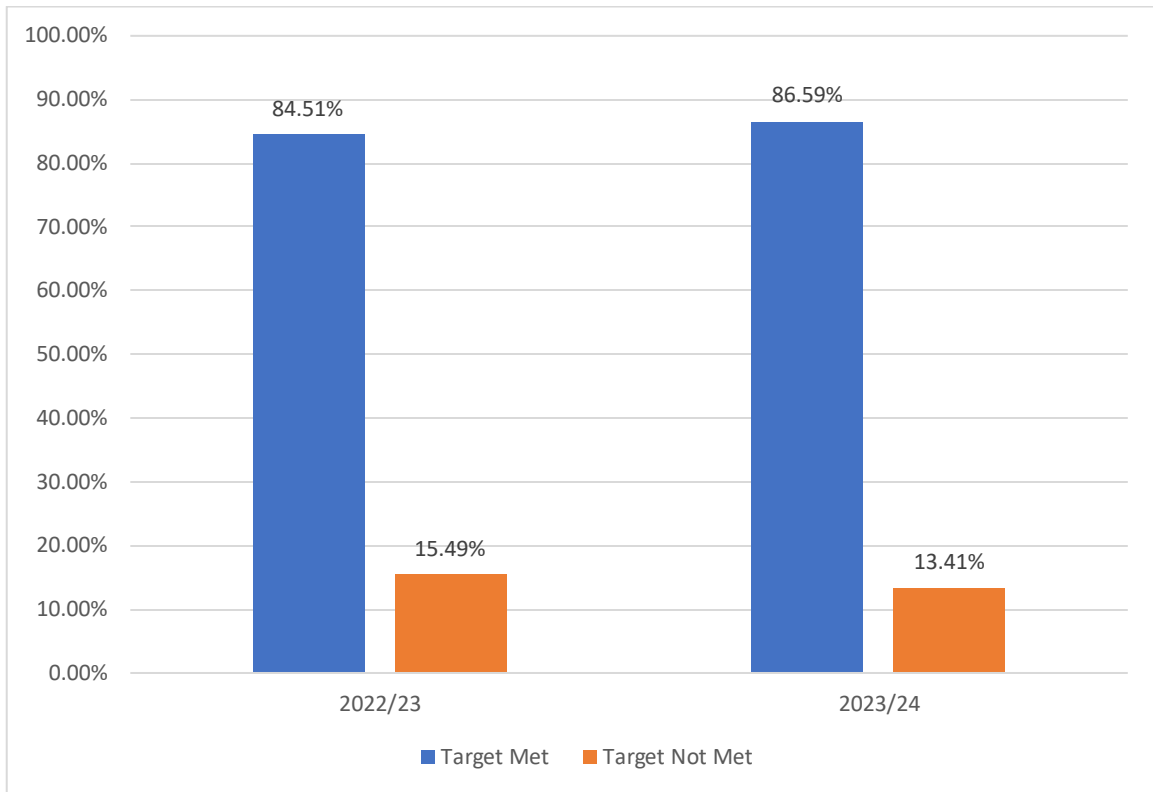


Performance against Stage 1 complaint response target (25 working days)

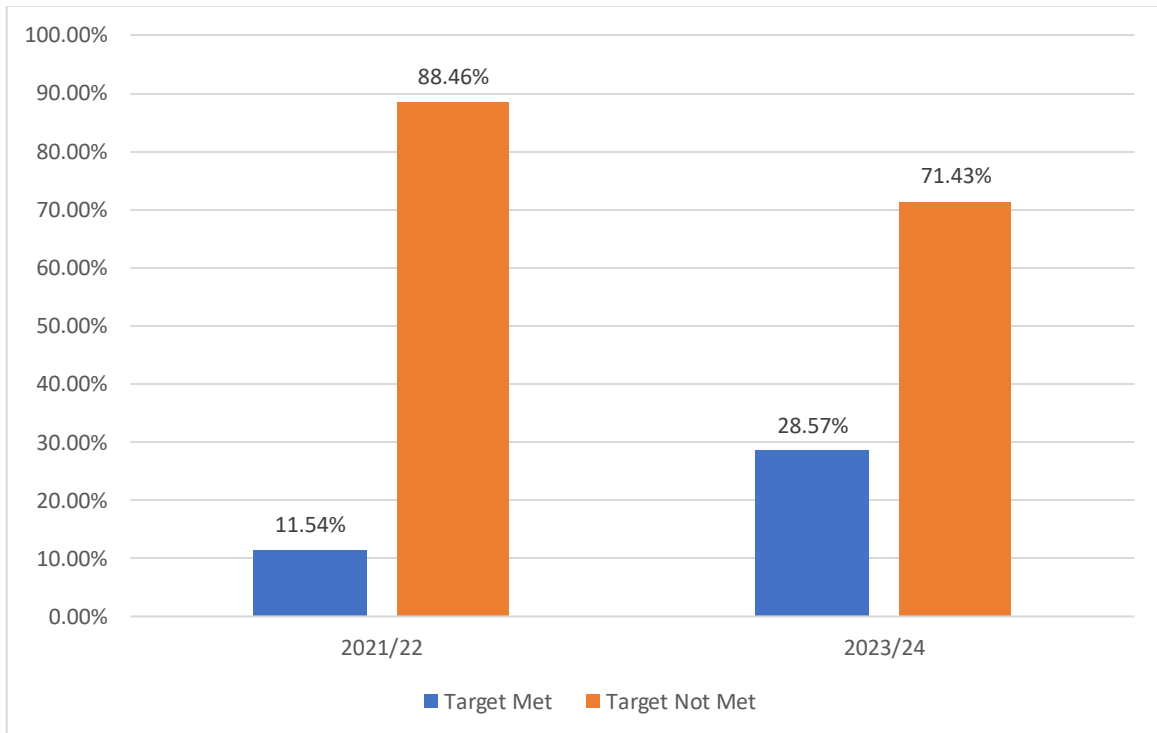


Stage 2

Performance against Stage 2 complaint acknowledgement target (3 working days)



Performance against Stage 2 complaint response target (30 working days)



Further Recommendations

40. Stage 1 Responding Officers should familiarise themselves with the new Stage 1 timescales in the complaints procedure (introduced by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code on 1 April 2024), and ensure they are complying with them prior to the Council's performance against them being monitored by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman from 1 April 2026.
41. The Complaints & Information Governance Team should ensure they are complying with the new Stage 2 timescales (introduced by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code on 1 April 2024), prior to the Council's performance against them being monitored by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman from 1 April 2026.

Performance against Local Performance Indicators

42. In relation to corporate complaints the Council's key performance indicator is the number of upheld decisions received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Council received two upheld decisions during 2023/24, and increase from one in 2022/23.
43. Full details of those complaints determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are included in the Cabinet reports of 5 December 2023 and 10 September 2024 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2023/24

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Introduction

1. While the Council has produced an annual report, relating to its function as a social landlord for over a decade, this is now a requirement of the Housing Ombudsman's [Complaint Handling Code](#) which became statutory on 1 April 2024. It is also a requirement to submit a self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman and publish a copy publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on our website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this. A copy of the self-assessment is contained in the final section of this report.
2. This report provides an analysis of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during 2023/24 under the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the procedure) / The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The purpose of the report is to identify topics and trends in relation to complaints; identify areas of organisational learning that have taken place over the past year as a result of the complaints received and make further recommendations based on trend data to improve services. The report also seeks to highlight any areas of good practice and identify topics and trends in relation to comments made by members of the public so the Council can take action where appropriate to improve services.
3. In addition to the statistical information presented in this report it is important to recognise the work of the Complaints and Information Governance (CIG) Team that underpins this in terms of promoting an organisational culture in which complaints are recognised, accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. This also enables the Council to collect accurate information on complaints in order to identify topics and trends and improve services accordingly.

Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

4. The procedure sets out how the Council will deal with complaints, compliments and comments received about the Council as a social landlord (as well as in respect of its ownership and management of leasehold housing).
5. The procedure has 2 stages. Stage 1 is a local resolution stage where we try to resolve those complaints that cannot be resolved immediately as part of our day to day business. Stage 1 complaints are dealt with locally, that is within the service being complained about. We aim to resolve the majority of complaints at Stage 1 of the procedure. Housing Services have employed a Housing Complaints Officer to assist with meeting the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code timescales during 2023/24.
6. Stage 2 is a formal investigation stage where complaints will usually be investigated by the Complaints Investigator or Complaints and Information Governance Manager.

7. The Council has appointed the Complaints and Information Governance Manager in line with the Code to be accountable for complaint handling. The Complaints and Information Governance Manager will assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.
8. In addition to this, as required by the Code, the Council has appointed the Assistant Director, Housing and Revenues as a member of the governing body (or equivalent) to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').

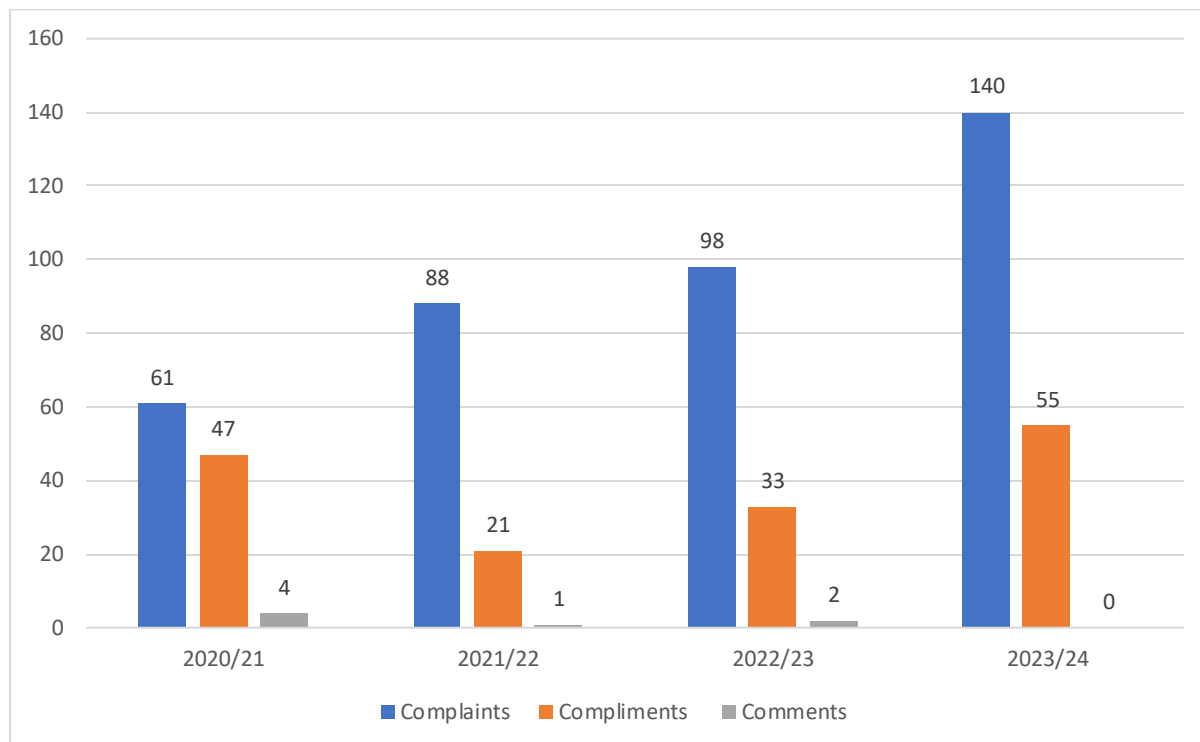
Public Information and Accessibility

9. We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services. To help make sure the Council's complaints procedures are easily accessible we have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services to reflect the single point of access for complainants within the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.
10. Information is available on the Council's website which contains an electronic form people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.
11. The Council can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

Complaints Information and Organisational Learning

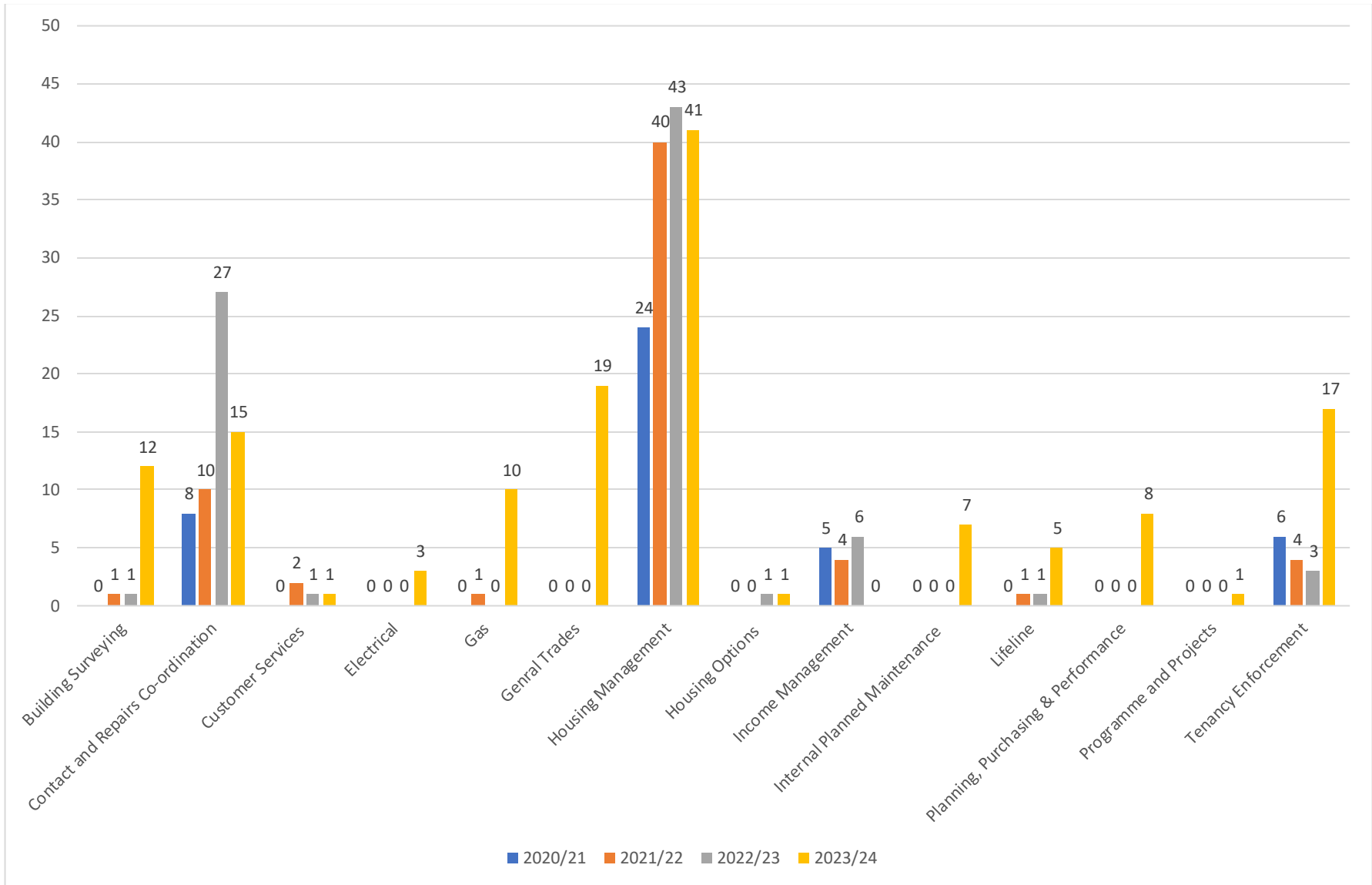
Overview of Complaints, Compliments and Comments

Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments



12. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 the Council received a total of 140 complaints under the procedure, a significant increase from 98 in 2022/23, 88 in 2021/22 and 61 in 2020/21. This increase can in part be attributed to the additional promotional work undertaken by Housing Services to highlight the complaints procedure.
13. A total of 30 complaints were considered at Stage 2, which again was a significant increase from 17 in 2022/23, 16 in 2021/22 and 13 in 2020/21.
14. The Council received 55 compliments under the procedure, a significant increase an increase from 33 in 2022/23, 21 in 2021/22, and an increase from 47 in 2020/21.
15. The Council did not receive any comments under the procedure, a decrease from two in 2022/23, one in 2021/22 and four in 2020/21.
16. The Council did not receive any non-qualifying complaints during 2023/24.

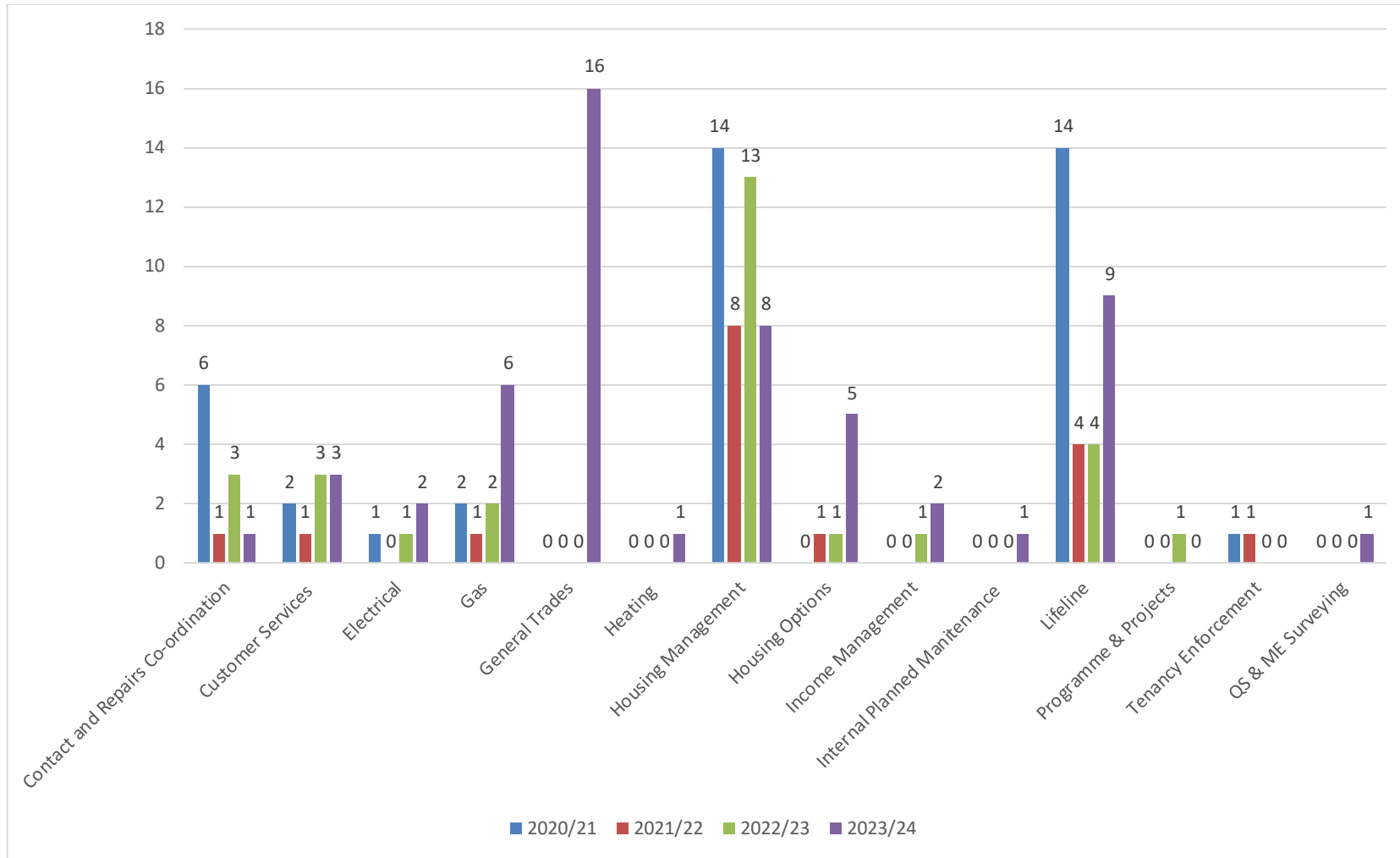
Complaints by Team – Housing Services



17. Building Surveying received 12 complaints, a significant increase from one in 2022/23 and 2021/22 and zero in 2020/21. Themes included people's dissatisfaction with delays in completing repairs and with the decision that they would not be getting new windows.
18. Contact & Repairs Co-ordination received 15 complaints, a significant decrease from 27 in 2022/23, although an increase from 10 in 2021/22 and eight in 2020/21. Complaints concerned communication, appointments not being kept and delays in undertaking repairs.
19. Customer Services received one complaint, the same as in 2022/23, a decrease from two in 2021/22 and an increase from zero in 2020/21.
20. Electrical Services received three complaints, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22 and 2020/21. There were no identifiable themes.
21. Gas received 10 complaints, an increase from zero in 2022/23, one in 2021/22 and zero in 2020/21. The most common cause of complaint was people's dissatisfaction with the time taken to repair boilers. Issues with appointment and the attitude/behaviour of the gas engineer were also matters of complaint.
22. General Trades received 19 complaints, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22 and 2020/21. The most common causes of complaint were dissatisfaction with quality of repairs, the time take to complete repairs.
23. Housing Management received 41 complaints in 2023/24, a decrease from 43 in 2022/23 and an increase from 40 in 2021/22 and 24 in 2020/21. Complaints concerned dissatisfaction with support in relation to neighbour nuisance issues and the attitude/behaviour and general level of support from Housing Management Officer(s) in relation to a variety of housing matters.
24. Housing Options received one complaint during 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23, an increase from zero in 2021/22 and 2020/21.
25. Housing Income Management received zero complaints during 2023/24, a decrease from six in 2022/23, four in 2021/22 and five in 2020/21.
26. Internal Planned Maintenance received seven complaints, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22 and 2020/21. The most common causes of complaint were peoples dissatisfaction with the quality of the completed works and issues experienced while the works were being undertaken.
27. Lifeline received five complaints during 2023/24, an increase from one in 2022/23 and 2021/22, and zero in 2020/21. There were no identifiable themes.

28. Planning, Purchasing and Performance received eight complaints in 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22 and 2020/21. Complaints concerned communication and delays in undertaking repairs.
29. Programme and Projects received one complaint in 2023/24, and increase from zero in 2022/23, 2021/22 and 2020/21.
30. Tenancy Enforcement received 17 complaints during 2023/24, a significant increase from three in 2022/23, four in 2021/22 and six in 2020/21. The majority of complaints concerned peoples dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of action in relation to reports of anti social behaviour.

Compliments by Team – Housing Services

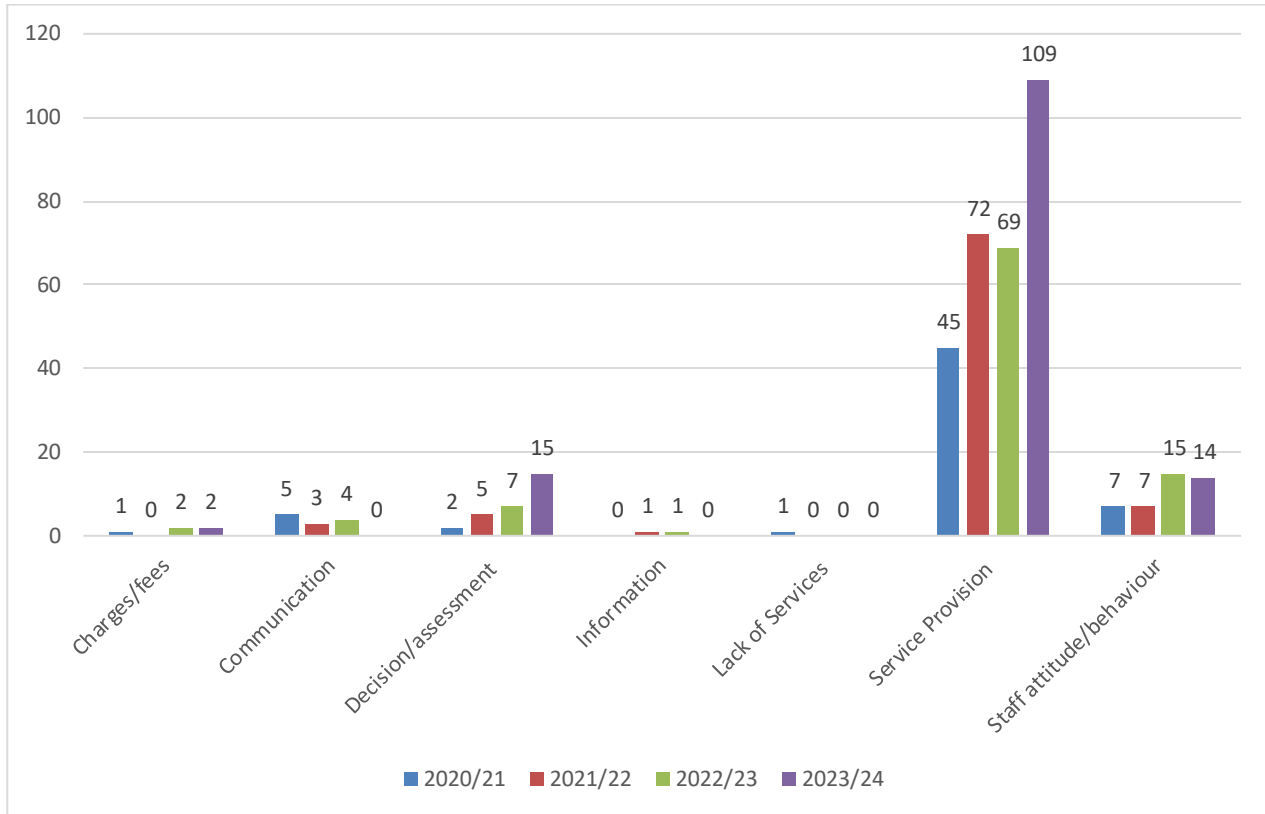


31. Housing Services received 55 compliments in 2023/24, a significant increase from 26 compliments in 2022/23, 16 in 2021/22 and 37 in 2020/21.

Comments by Team - Housing

32. The Council received zero comments during 2023/24, a decrease from two in 2022/23, one in 2021/22 and four 2020/21.

Complaints by Issue

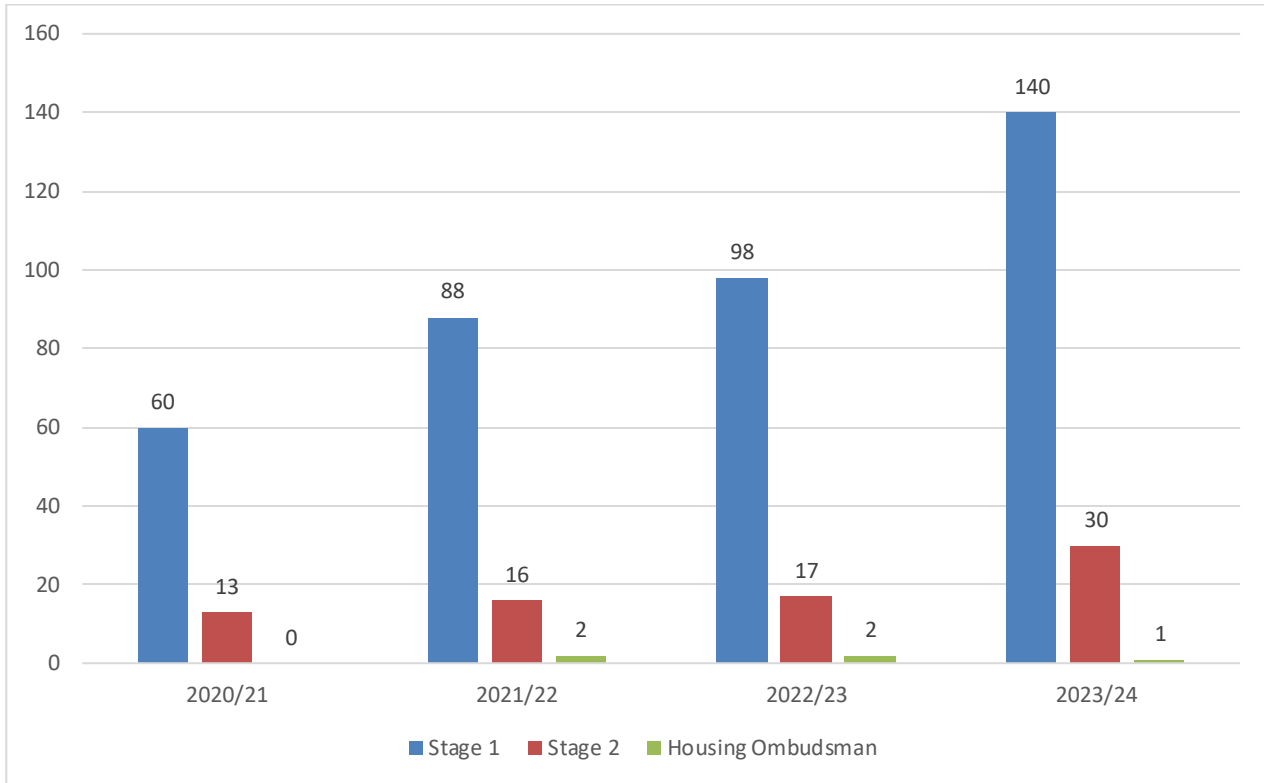


33. Two complaints related to charges/fees in 2023/24, the same as in 2022/23, an increase from zero in 2021/22 and one in 2020/21.
34. Zero complaints related to communication during 2023/24, a decrease from four in 2022/23, three in 2021/22 and five in 2020/21.
35. 15 complaints related to decision/assessment in 2023/24, an increase from seven in 2022/23, five in 2021/22 and two in 2020/21.
36. Zero complaints related to information in 2023/24, a decrease from one in 2022/23 and 2021/22 and the same number as in 2020/21.
37. There were no complaints about lack of services in 2023/24, 2022/23 or 2021/22, a decrease from one in 2020/21.
38. There were 109 complaints about service provision in 2023/24, a significant increase from 69 2022/23, 72 in 2021/22 and 45 in 2020/21.

- 39. 14 complaints related to staff attitude/behaviour in 2023/24, a decrease from 15 in 2022/23 and an increase from seven in 2021/22 and 2020/21.

Complaints by Stage

- 40. The below graph shows the number of complaints received at each stage of the procedure during.



- 41. The Council received 140 Stage 1 complaints in 2023/24, a significant increase from 98 in 2022/23, 88 in 2021/22 and 60 in 2020/21.
- 42. 30 were investigated at Stage 2, a significant increase from 17 in 2022/23, 16 in 2021/22 and 13 in 2020/21.
- 43. One complaint was escalated to the Housing Ombudsman in 2023/24, a decrease from two in 2022/23 and 2021/22 and an increase from zero in 2020/21.

Complaints Outcomes

44. The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints received during 2023/24.

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Customer Services	0	0	0	1	0	1
Housing Management	0	16	15	1	8	40
Tenancy Enforcement	0	12	4	0	1	17
Contact and Repairs Co-ordination	1	3	7	3	0	14
Housing Options	0	0	0	0	1	1
Lifeline	0	1	3	0	1	5
Programme and Projects	0	0	1	0	0	1
Gas	1	4	3	2	1	11
General trades	0	3	8	4	3	18
Electrical	0	0	0	0	3	3
Planning, Purchasing & Performance	0	1	2	1	1	5
Internal Planned Maintenance	0	2	5	0	0	7
Building Surveying	0	1	4	9	1	15
Building Cleaning and Compliance	0	0	1	0	0	1
Property Services	0	0	1	0	0	1
Totals	2	43	54	21	20	140
Percentage	1.4%	30.7%	38.6%	15%	14.3%	100%

Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Housing Management	1	6	1	2	1	11
Tenancy Enforcement	0	5	2	0	1	8
Contact and Repairs Co-ordination	0	0	3	1	0	4
Gas	0	1	0	0	0	1
General trades	0	1	1	0	0	2
Internal Planned Maintenance	0	0	1	0	0	1
Totals	1	13	8	3	2	27
Percentage	3.7%	48.1%	29.6%	11.1%	7.4%	100%

N.B. Three stage 2 complaints remained open at the time of writing.

Housing Ombudsman

45. The Housing Ombudsman commenced one investigation during 2023/24.
46. The Housing Ombudsman has not determined the complaint investigation it commenced during 2023/24. Similarly the Housing Ombudsman did not determine any complaints during 2022/23, a decrease from two in 2021/22 and one in 2020/21 and 2019/20.
47. Full details of any complaints determined by the Housing Ombudsman are included in the Cabinet reports of 5 December 2023 and 10 September 2024 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).

Organisational Learning

48. All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints and Information Governance Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints, a number of service improvements were made following complaint investigations during 2023/24, some of which are detailed below:

Building Surveying

49. It was agreed that responsive work lists would be checked weekly by the Building Surveying to ensure the contractor was initiating work within the 5 week timescale set.
50. Surveyors were reminded that when booking in plastering works to include in their report what items will need to be moved by workers/what will be left in the room e.g. sofas/TV stands, so the correct time can be booked in by the Planning Team.
51. Feedback was given to the contractor for improvements to be made going forward, such as ensuring notices are being left in the event a repair is being completed and ensuring they are calling tenants to provide an update if requested by Customer Services.
52. Staff were reminded of the need to comply with the timescales in the Councils Customer Service Standards.
53. All trades were reminded to offer to wear shoe coverings when going into tenants properties.

Contact and Repairs Co-ordination

54. It was agreed that an equality and diversity course would be arranged for all Tenancy Management staff.
55. An issue with the Council's IT system, that allowed appointments to be booked on bank holidays, was identified and fixed.
56. Staff were reminded to show their ID when attending a property to undertake repairs and the information on the Council's website regarding who to contact in relation to an Emergency Repair was updated.
57. There was a review of the escalation process for repairs, to ensure that any delays in follow on work are minimised. Staff were also provided training around the importance of updating notes and completing visit forms, so where a member of staff is absent other staff can continue the process.

Gas

58. The process for alternative heating sources when someone's heating is broken was reviewed.
59. The approach to take when a tenant reports a gas leak was discussed in a team meeting and staff were advised to give clear advice to the tenant on what will happen next.

General Trades

60. The team were reminded of the importance of contacting the tenant immediately if an appointment is unable to go ahead.
61. Trades were reminded to advise tenants when facilities would be available to be used and talk them through how to use the new shower facilities, etc.

Housing Management

62. Building Cleaning and Compliance staff were reminded to ensure they adhering to the Councils Customer Service Standards. They were also reminded to follow the follow liquid disposal guidance.
63. Housing Management Officers were reminded to ensure they upload emails received from tenants with regards to repair work into the Council's IT system, to ensure we have a record of any images sent of disrepair.
64. Officers were reminded of the importance of using the conversation cycle to avoid confrontational conversations and ensuring that following untidy garden appointments, appropriate records are made on the Council's IT system, including uploading any supporting images/action plan.
65. Consideration was given to amending warning letters which are sent to tenants who live in communal flats to reflect that we are contacting all residents who are affected by anti social behaviour (ASB) and to further encourage whistleblowing.

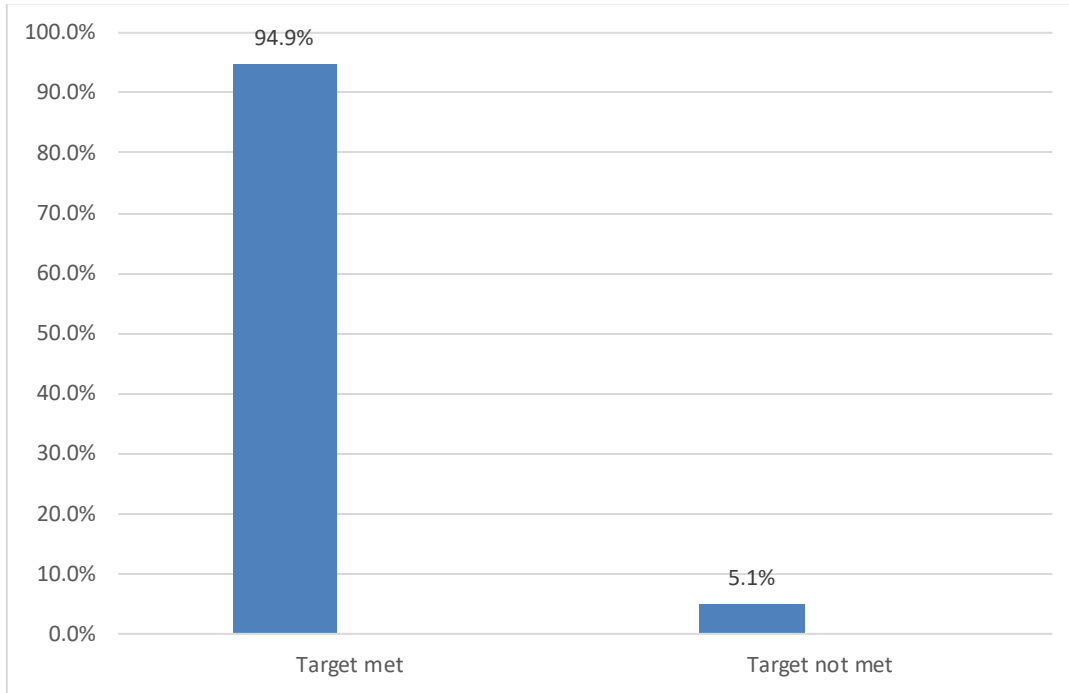
Internal Planned Maintenance

66. The IPM alterations letter was amended to advise that boilers will be left turned on following safety checks unless stated otherwise.

Performance against the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

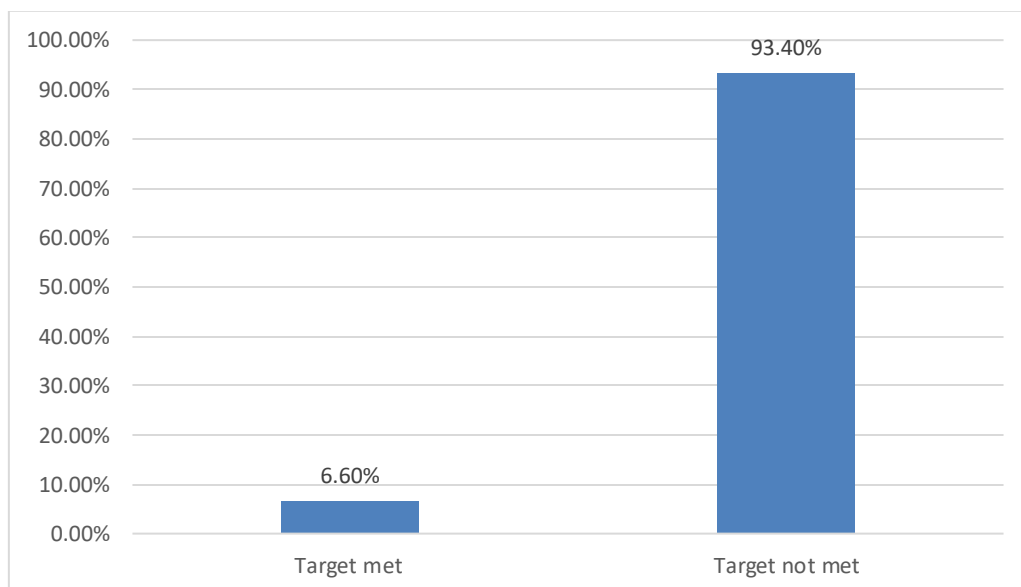
Stage 1

Proportion of stage one complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.



Stage 2

Proportion of stage two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.



67. The Regulator of Social Housing has issued guidance on how to calculate the above, which means the methodology used now differs from that previously used and that currently used in relation to all other Council complaints. We have applied this same methodology to the reporting of Housing Ombudsman decisions in this report, however, we do not intend to adopt it elsewhere.
68. The methodology identifies the percentage of complaints ***made by tenants during the reporting*** year that were responded to within timescale, as opposed to the overall percentage of complaints responded to during the reporting year within timescale. Consequently, any complaints received in 2022/23 and responded to in 2023/24 are excluded from the calculation.

Further recommendations

69. Housing Servies/the Complaints & Information Governance Team should establish why there has be an increase in the number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 and work to reduce this in during 2024/25.
70. The Complaints & Information Governance Team experienced issues in terms of the resource available to investigate Stage 2 complaints during 2023/24. Housing Servies/the Complaints & Information Governance Team should continue working to improve performance against the Stage 2 response target during 2024/25.

Housing Ombudsman Code Self-Assessment

71. This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord’s governing body at least annually.
72. Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body’s response to the report must be published alongside this.
73. Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.
74. We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.’</i>	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 3
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	The Council has adopted the definition in 1.2 which does not require a resident to use the complaint. Nor did our previous definition. This is

	that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy.			covered in our training.
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	The Council has separate and robust processes in place to consider requests for service and complaints.
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	This happens as a result of the afore mentioned process and is covered in our training.
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords	Yes		Details of how to complain are included in our Satisfaction Surveys.

	ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.			
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Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	The Council's approach has always been based on best practice and we look for every reason to accept a complaint, before deciding it does not qualify for investigating. Where we decide a complaint is non-qualifying we explain our reasons and advised the individual of their right to refer the matter to the HOS.
2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue giving rise to the complaint 	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 7

	<p>occurred over twelve months ago.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 			
2.3	<p>Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.</p>		<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	<p>See Section 7</p>
2.4	<p>If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	<p>Where we decide a complaint is non-qualifying we explain our reasons and advised the individual of their right to refer the matter to the HOS.</p>

	has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.			
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 7

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk) Darlington BC - Complaints compliments and comments	
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	Training provided to officers.

	appropriate person within the landlord.			
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord’s website.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 1
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 8

	be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.			
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk) Darlington BC - Housing complaints	See Section 12. This is also included response and extension letters

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 2.
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act	Yes		The Council's Complaints Manager, Complaints Investigator and the Housing Complaints Officer have access to

	to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.			staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints and have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk) Darlington BC - Annual reports	See Section 1 of the Complaints Procedure. The Council's culture in respect of complaints handling is detailed in its procedures, annual reports and its reports to its Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet . All staff are suitably trained. The sufficiency of resources is subject to the budget constraints of the Local Authority.

Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk) Darlington BC - Complaints compliments and comments	See Section 1.2

5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 6.5
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 6.5
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments	See Section 11

	escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.		Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	We set this out in our acknowledgment letters
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	All complaint handlers are appropriately trained to ensure complaints are handled in this manner.

<p>5.9</p>	<p>Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	<p>The Council informs the resident the date by which they can expect a response in the extension letter/email. Where the resident requires more frequent updates we agree this on an individual basis.</p>
<p>5.10</p>	<p>Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	<p>See Section 10</p>
<p>5.11</p>	<p>Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	<p>On the rare occasion we may refuse to escalate a complaint, for example where the resident or the Council has commenced legal proceedings in relation to the matter being complained about, we would explain this to the resident in writing and advise them of their right to refer</p>

				the matter to the HOS.
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 17 of the Complaints Procedure. This information is held in the Council's Complaints Management Database. Some information is also held on the tenancy record.
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 13
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 16 of the Complaints Procedure. The Council operates an Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Procedure and an Employee Protection Register to manage unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives.
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and	

	unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.		Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk) Darlington BC - Equality information	
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Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 11
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk) Darlington BC - Annual reports	
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure;	

	complaint being acknowledged.		April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk) Darlington BC - Annual reports	
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	This is included in our extension letter/email.
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	Response are issued when the answer to the complaint is known. All actions are allocated to a responsible officer and tracked via the Council's complaint management system.

	provided to the resident.			
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	We have template response letters and investigation reports which assist complaints officers in ensuring they address all points raised in the complaint definition.
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	This is something we have always done and will continue to do.
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint;	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	We have template response letters and investigation reports which ensure this information is provided in the response.

	<p>d. the reasons for any decisions made;</p> <p>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</p> <p>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</p> <p>g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.</p>			
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Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 11
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 11
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 11

	why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.			
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 11
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 11
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 11
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	This is included in our extension letter/email.
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	Complaint responses are issued when the answer to the complaint is known. All actions are allocated to a responsible officer

	issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.			and tracked via the Council's complaint management system.
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	This is standard investigative practice and something we do in all cases. We have template response letter and investigation report templates and good investigative practice guidance for complaints officers to ensure this happens. Complaints Officers also receive training on good investigative practice.
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; 	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	We have template response letters and investigation reports which ensure this information is provided in the response.

	<p>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</p> <p>g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.</p>			
6.20	<p>Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.</p>	Yes	<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	<p>All officers involved are consulted and the Assistant Director are given the opportunity to comment on the response/provide any further evidence that may lead the complaints office to a different conclusion prior to the response being sent.</p>

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; 	Yes	<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	See Section 13

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices. 			
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 13
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 13 of the complaints procedure. All remedy actions are allocated to a responsible officer and tracked via the Council's complaint management system.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	Complaints officers use the HOS Guidance on Remedies.

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	<p>Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord’s complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord’s performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 	Yes	<p>Darlington BC - Annual reports</p> <p>Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 10th September, 2024, 5.00 pm Darlington Borough Council</p>	
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the		<p>Darlington BC - Annual reports</p>	The annual report is also considered by Council Officers

	landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.		Agenda for Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 5th September, 2024, 10.00 am Darlington Borough Council Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 10th September, 2024, 5.00 pm Darlington Borough Council	at the Chief Officers Board.
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	See this document	This is our annual return and is being completed shortly after the recently restructure of Housing Services
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes		
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.	Yes		

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure;	See Section 13 of the complaints procedure.

	individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.		April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	Regular reports to the MRC and the annual report enable the Council to ensure this happens.
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 13 of the complaints procedure. Regular reports to the MRC and the annual report enable the Council to ensure this happens.
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	Darlington BC - Annual reports Agenda for Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 5th September, 2024, 10.00 am Darlington Borough Council Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 10th September, 2024, 5.00 pm Darlington Borough Council	See Section 14 of the complaints procedure. The report is also considered by the Chief Officer's Board and the Tenant's panel.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)	See Section 1. This is the Complaints and Information Governance Manager

<p>9.5</p>	<p>In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	<p>See Section 1. This is the Assistant Director, Housing and Revenues Services</p>
<p>9.6</p>	<p>The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Darlington BC - Annual reports Agenda for Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 5th September, 2024, 10.00 am Darlington Borough Council Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 10th September, 2024, 5.00 pm Darlington Borough Council</p>	<p>Regular information is also provided to the MRC and they have regular contact with the Complaints and Information Governance Manager.</p>
<p>9.7</p>	<p>As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Darlington BC - Annual reports Agenda for Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 5th September, 2024, 10.00 am Darlington Borough Council Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 10th September, 2024, 5.00 pm Darlington Borough Council</p>	<p>The MRC receives all of the items listed and has direct access to all officers as the relevant Assistant Director.</p>

	<p>progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and</p> <p>d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.</p>			
9.8	<p>Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</p> <p>a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;</p> <p>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</p> <p>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</p>	Yes	<p>Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; April 2024 (darlington.gov.uk)</p>	



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2023/24

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Introduction

1. The purpose of this annual report is to inform service users, carers, the public, Council Members and staff of the effectiveness of the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the Procedure).
2. On the 1 April 2013 the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 (the Regulations) came into force. Part five of the Regulations deals with Complaints about Public Health Functions of Local Authorities.
3. The Council implemented a new procedure providing a local framework to ensure complaints are handled effectively and in line with the regulations.
4. The procedure aims to:
 - (a) Make it as easy and accessible as possible for service users and their carers to raise complaints;
 - (b) Foster an organisational culture in which complaints are accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently as possible;
 - (c) Ensure high levels of customer satisfaction with complaints handling;
 - (d) Resolve individual issues when they arise and reduce the number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman; and
 - (e) Enable the Council to identify topics and trends in relation to Public Health complaints and improve services as a result.
5. The Chief Executive is the designated as the 'Responsible Person' for ensuring compliance with the arrangements made under the Regulations, and in particular ensuring that action is taken if necessary in the light of the outcome of a complaint. The functions of the responsible person will usually be performed by the Director of Public Health.
6. The Complaints and Information Governance Manager is designated the 'Complaints Manager' in accordance with the regulations and is responsible for managing the procedures for handling and considering complaints in accordance with the arrangements made under the Regulations.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

7. Although complainants can refer their complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) from the outset, the LGSCO will not normally investigate until the Council or service provider has conducted its own investigation and provided a response. Where it has not been possible for the complaint to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant they may refer the matter to the LGSCO.

Information and Accessibility

8. We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services, including the complaints procedure. To help make sure the Council's complaints procedures are easily accessible we have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services to reflect the single point of access for complainants within the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.
9. Information is available on the Council's website. There is also an electronic form which people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, by email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.
10. The Complaints Manager can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

Summary

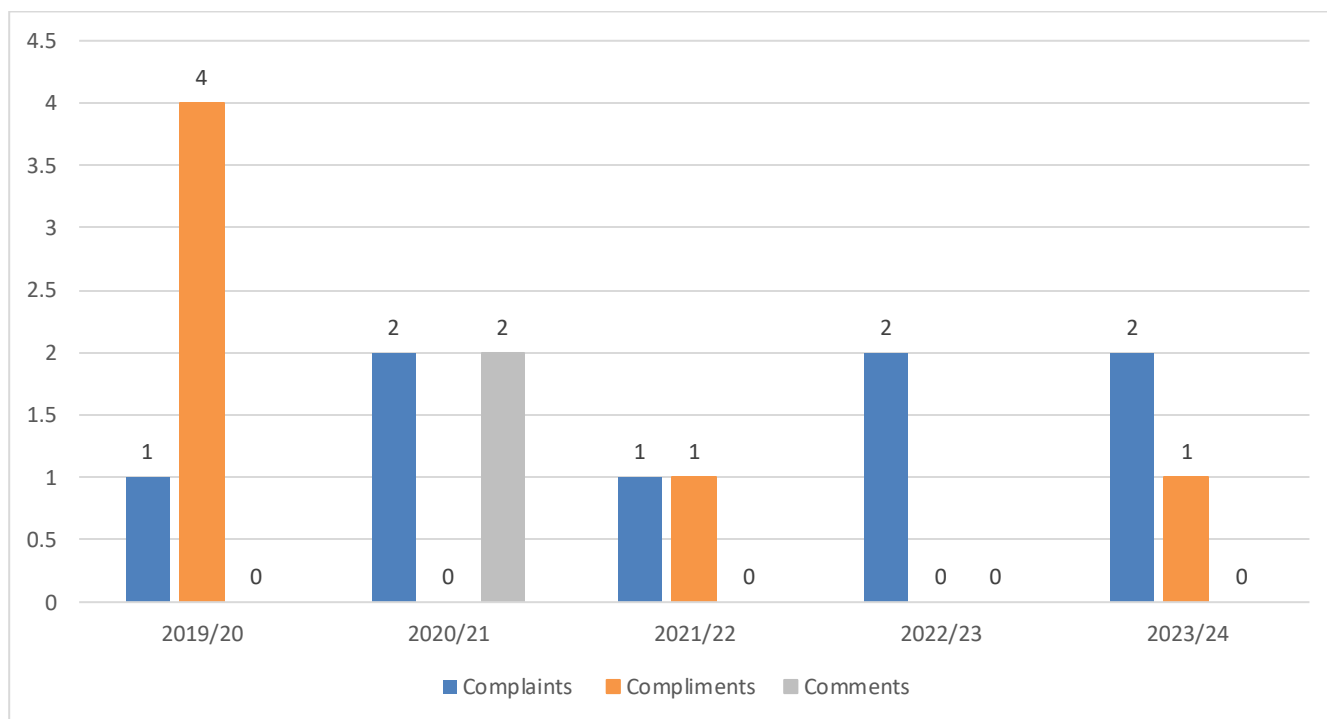
11. The Council received two complaints about Public Health services in 2023/24, the same number as in 2022/23, an increase from one in 2021/22, the same number as in 2020/21 and an increase from one in 2019/20.
12. The Council received one compliment during 2023/24, an increase from zero in 2022/23, the same number as in 2021/22, an increase from zero in 2020/21 and a decrease from four in 2019/20.
13. The Council did not receive any comments about Public Health services in 2023/24, 2022/23, or 2021/22, a decrease from two in 2020/21 and the same number as in 2019/20.

Review of the Year

Breakdown of all Representations

14. A total of three representations were handled under the procedure during 2023/24.

Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments Received



15. One complaint related to the NHS Health Check in relation to cardiovascular risk (QRISK), the other related to the Stop Smoking Clinic also provided by the NHS. Both of these services are commissioned by the Local Authority.

Complaint Outcomes

16. One complaints was determined during 2023/24. The complaint was withdrawn.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints (LGSCO) Received 2023/24

17. No Public Health complaints were progressed to the LGSCO during 2023/24, the same as in 2022/23.

Local Government Ombudsman Complaint Outcomes (LGSCO) 2023/24

18. No Public Health complaints were determined by the LGSCO during 2023/24, the same as in 2022/23.

Organisational Learning

19. There was no organisational learning resulting from the complaint investigation that was concluded during 2023/24.

Further recommendations

20. There are no further recommendations.

Performance against the Procedure

21. While the Regulations allow a maximum of six months to respond to a complaint, we aim to respond to complaints within 30 working days.
22. The complaint determined during 2023/24, was concluded within 30 working days.

Performance Indicator for 2023/24

23. In relation to Public Health complaints the Council's key performance indicator is, the number of maladministration decisions received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Council received zero maladministration decisions during 2023/24.
24. Full details of those complaints determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are included in the Cabinet reports of 5 December 2023 and 10 September 2024 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
WORK PROGRAMME**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the next Municipal Year and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included.

Summary

2. Members are requested to consider the attached draft work programme (**Appendix 1**) for the next Municipal Year which has been prepared based on Officers recommendations and recommendations previously agreed by this Scrutiny Committee.
3. Once the work programme has been approved by this Scrutiny Committee, any additional areas of work which Members wish to add to the agreed work programme will require the completion of a quad of aims in accordance with the previously approved procedure (**Appendix 3**)

Recommendation

4. Members are requested to consider and approve the attached draft work programme as the agreed work programme and consider any additional items which they might wish to include.

**Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance**

Background Papers

There were no background papers used in the preparation of this report.

Olivia Hugill, Extension: 5363

<p>Council Plan</p>	<p>The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan.</p> <p>All reports should detail the relevance of the proposed decision(s) to the Council Plan and its priorities (adopted by Council in July 2024).</p> <p>The priorities are:</p> <p>ECONOMY - building a strong sustainable economy and highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all.</p> <p>HOMES – affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents</p> <p>LIVING WELL – a healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most</p> <p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations</p> <p>COMMUNITIES – working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities</p> <p>LOCAL ENVIRONMENT – a well-connected, clean and sustainable borough</p>
<p>Addressing inequalities</p>	<p>There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address</p> <p>This is one of the 3 core principles of the council plan. Opportunities should be accessible to everyone, with a focus on ensuring a good job, home and/or social connections for all. You should identify how your work will address the causes of inequality or help to minimise inequality in the borough.</p> <p>Local authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under S.149 of the Equality Act 2010. This requires local authorities to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act; • advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; • foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. <p>There are 9 ‘protected characteristics’ - age, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, race, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. As a council we also consider people who are on a low income, carers, people who live in a rural location and</p>

	<p>care leavers.</p> <p>One of the ways that the Council can demonstrate that it has had due regard is by completing an equality impact assessment.</p>
Tackling Climate Change	<p>There are no issues which this report needs to address.</p> <p>This is one of the 3 core principles of the council plan. The Council is committed to being carbon neutral to 2040. We need to consider the carbon impact of the decisions we make. You should identify how your work will contribute to reducing climate change and the impact of climate change for the council and wider borough.</p> <p>Questions to help you consider how to assess the carbon impact of a proposal/decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the proposal/project result in an increase in carbon emissions? (For example, through increased energy use/increased vehicle movements) • Will this increase be mitigated against? (For example improved energy efficiency of buildings and the promotion of sustainable fuels/forms of transport, the development of renewable energy, or sustainable materials) • How will you minimise climate related risks? (consider the impact of current climate change and potential future changes; the risks; resulting inequalities; and any opportunities that can arise by tackling climate change)
Efficient and effective use of resources	The Work Programmes are integral to scrutinising and monitoring services efficiently (and effectively), however this report does not identify specific efficiency savings.
Health and Wellbeing	This report has no direct implications to the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.

Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The format of the proposed work programme has been reviewed to enable Members of this Scrutiny Committee to provide a rigorous and informed challenge to the areas for discussion.

Forward Plan and Additional Items

6. Once the Work Programme has been agreed by this Scrutiny Committee, any Member seeking to add a new item to the work programme will need to complete a quad of aims. A revised process for adding an item to a previously approved work programme, has been agreed by the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group.
7. Details of the items included on the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 2** for information.

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ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

	Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Scrutiny's Role
RESOURCES				
	Performance Management Framework	Work to be undertaken to look at relevant PI's. Informal meeting to be arranged 5 September 2024 9 January 2025	Relevant Assistant Directors	To understand/monitor and challenge the indicators
	Sickness Absence Year-end turn out	To be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Committee as a briefing note	Brett Nielsen	N/A
	Health and Safety Year-end turn out	To be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Committee as a briefing note	Brett Nielsen	N/A
	Medium-Term Financial Plan - Monitoring	Quarterly monitoring reports to be submitted to meetings of this Scrutiny Committee 5 September 2024 31 October 2024 30 January 2025	Brett Nielsen	To contribute and challenge the Medium-Term Financial Plan and assist with the implementation and development of the required savings

	Medium-Term Financial Plan	December – February 2024/25	Brett Nielsen	To provide a response to Cabinet on the proposals in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan
	Capital Programme and Project Position Statement	Quarterly monitoring reports to be submitted to meetings of this Scrutiny Committee 5 September 2024 31 October 2024 30 January 2025	Anthony Hewitt	To look at the position
	Investment Fund	5 September 2024 Last considered: 31 August 2023	Brett Nielsen	To consider progress against the agreed investments being funded through the Investment Fund.
	Complaints, Compliments and Comments - Annual Report	5 September 2024 Last considered: 31 August 2023	Lee Downey	To look at the position
	Complaints Made to Local Government Ombudsman	5 September 2025 Last considered: 31 August 2023	Lee Downey	To consider the outcome of cases which have been determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and forward any view to Cabinet
	Customer Services and Digital Strategy	30 January 2025 Last considered: 31 August 2023	Anthony Sandys	To review and provide a response to Cabinet.

ECONOMY				
106	Economic Strategy	3 April 2025	Mark Ladyman	Development of Strategy
114	Housing Strategy	3 April 2025	David Hand	Development of the Strategy and Actions
209	Climate Change	31 October 2024	Cabinet Member	To update on the work of the Review Group
	Markets Update	9 January 2025 Last considered: 2 November 2023	Mark Ladyman	To update Scrutiny on compliance with the contract
	Towns Fund	9 January 2025 Last considered: 11 April 2024	Mark Ladyman	To update Members of Scrutiny
	Footfall Causes and Impacts Study	31 October 2024		To update Members of Scrutiny
	Section 106 Funding	9 January 2025		To update Members of Scrutiny
	Office Demand Study (Council Assets)	30 January 2025	Mark Ladyman	To update Members of Scrutiny
	Agile Working	30 January 2025	Brett Nielsen	To update Members of Scrutiny

	Artificial Intelligence Usage	30 January 2025	Neil Bowerbank	To update Members of Scrutiny
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**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN**



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

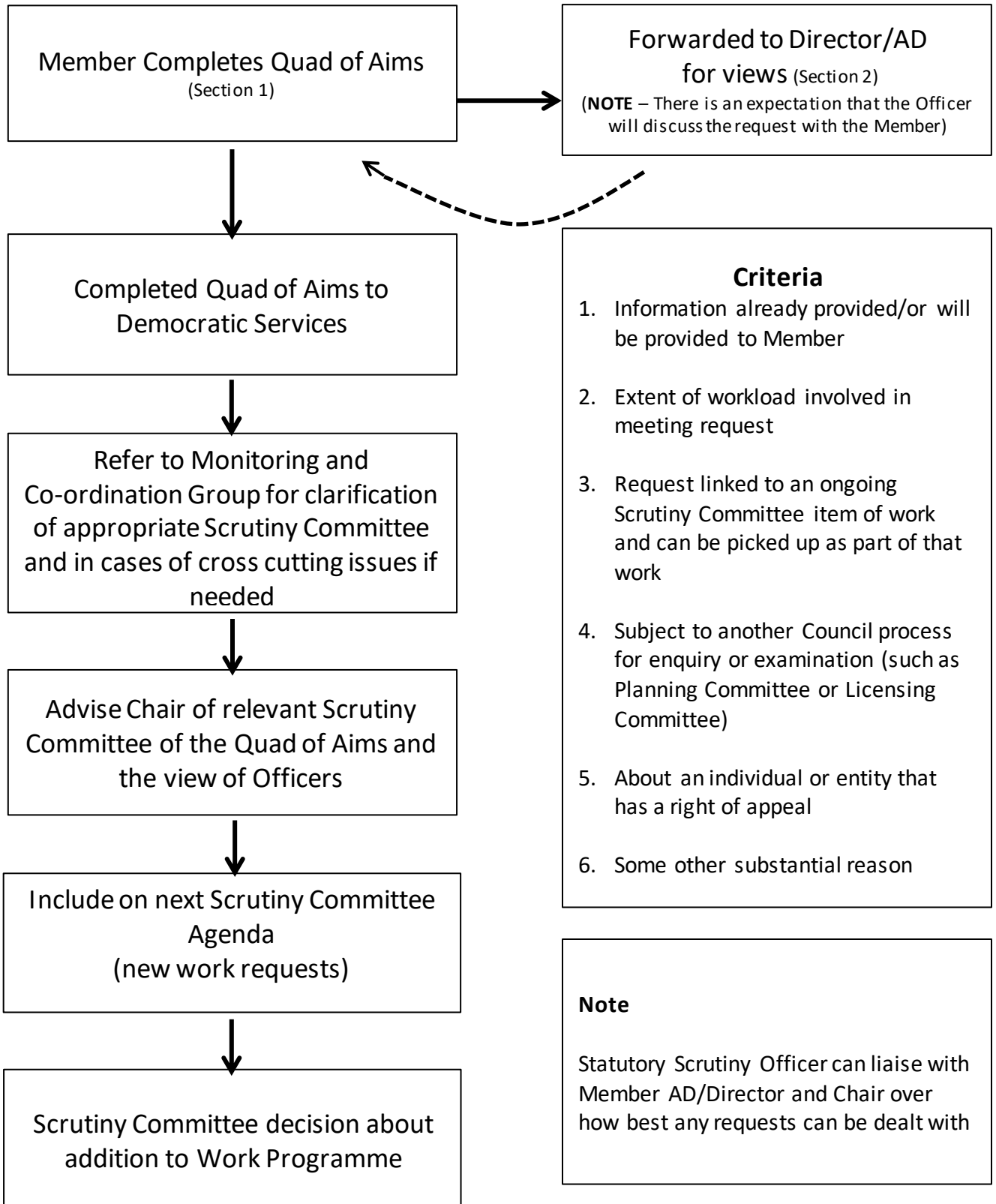
**FORWARD PLAN
FOR THE PERIOD: 5 JUNE 2024 - 30 OCTOBER 2024**

Title	Decision Maker and Date
Darlington Long Term Plan for Town Funds	Cabinet 11 Jun 2024
Release of Education Capital Funds	Cabinet 11 Jun 2024
Representation on Other Bodies 2024/25	Cabinet 11 Jun 2024
Schedule of Transactions - June 2024	Cabinet 11 Jun 2024
Wilkinsons Building Acquisition and Procurement of Development Partner	Cabinet 11 Jun 2024
Collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Rent 2023-24	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Council Plan	Council 25 Jul 2024 Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Council Plan Performance Report - Quarter Four	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Disabled Facilities Grant 2024/25	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy 2024/29	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Housing Services Gas and Electrical Safety Policies 2024/29	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Land at Faverdale / Burtree Garden Village 'Cell CH' Feasibility Work	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Outturn 2023/24	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Public Consultation on Draft Appraisal for the Northgate Conservation Area including Proposed Boundary Extensions	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Revenue Budget Outturn 2023/24	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN**

Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report	Cabinet 9 Jul 2024
Annual Review of the Investment Fund	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Climate Change	Council 26 Sep 2024 Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2023/24	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Complaints Made to Local Government Ombudsman	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Land at Faverdale - Burtree Garden Village - Proposed Infrastructure Development Agreement (IDA)	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter 1	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Proposed Middleton St George Conservation Area - Consultation	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 1	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Treasury Management Annual Report and Outturn Prudential Indicators 2023/2024	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Waste Collection Arrangements	Cabinet 10 Sep 2024
Annual Procurement Plan Update	Cabinet 8 Oct 2024
Offset Strategy	Cabinet 8 Oct 2024
Air Quality Strategy 2024/29	Cabinet

PROCESS FOR ADDING AN ITEM TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WORK PROGRAMME



PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

QUAD OF AIMS (MEMBERS' REQUEST FOR ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED BY SCRUTINY)

SECTION 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBERS

NOTE – This document should only be completed if there is a clearly defined and significant outcome from any potential further work. This document should **not** be completed as a request for or understanding of information.

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REASON FOR REQUEST?	RESOURCE (WHAT OFFICER SUPPORT WOULD YOU REQUIRE?)
PROCESS (HOW CAN SCRUTINY ACHIEVE THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOME?)	HOW WILL THE OUTCOME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Signed Councillor

Date

SECTION 2 TO BE COMPLETED BY DIRECTORS/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS
(NOTE – There is an expectation that Officers will discuss the request with the Member)

	Criteria
1. (a) Is the information available elsewhere? Yes No If yes, please indicate where the information can be found (attach if possible and return with this document to Democratic Services)	1. Information already provided/or will be provided to Member
(b) Have you already provided the information to the Member or will you shortly be doing so?	2. Extent of workload involved in meeting request
2. If the request is included in the Scrutiny Committee work programme what are the likely workload implications for you/your staff?	3. Request linked to an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and can be picked up as part of that work
3. Can the request be included in an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and picked up as part of that?	4. Subject to another Council process for enquiry or examination (such as Planning Committee or Licensing Committee)
4. Is there another Council process for enquiry or examination about the matter currently underway?	5. About an individual or entity that has a right of appeal
5. Has the individual or entity some other right of appeal?	6. Some other substantial reason
6. Is there any substantial reason (other than the above) why you feel it should not be included on the work programme?	

Signed **Position** **Date**

PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

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