

Annual Complaints Report
April 2025 – March 2026

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Purpose of the Report

This report summarises resident feedback and outlines our plans to respond during 2025/26, including improvements already made.

Why Complaints Matter

Complaints show us where to improve and help us deliver better services for residents; they also support us to achieve Babergh and Mid Suffolk's plans to deliver high quality services and to listen and work in partnership with our residents.

We're committed to putting residents at the heart of service design and improvement, using feedback to drive change.

Complaints Process Overview

Our complaints process follows best practice from the Housing Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman. It includes:

1. **Stage One** – Initial complaint review
2. **Stage Two** – Internal escalation if unresolved
3. **Final Stage** – Referral to the relevant ombudsman if needed

We have a visual process of our complaints, which can be found at:

- [Complaints Process](#)
- [Housing Complaints Process](#)

Overview and narrative for Complaints

Complaints Received

Complaint Trends

In 2025/26, we received:

- **1,010 stage one complaints** a decrease of 217 from the previous year
- **153 stage two complaints** a decrease of 7 cases from the previous year

A key milestone this year was a **decline in the overall number of complaints received**. This was the first time complaints had decreased on the previous reporting year since reporting began in 2019/2020 and the lowest volume of complaint since 2022/23.

Complaints by District

This data is taken from the postcode data from complaints that the customer has used to submit their complaint:

- Babergh 488
- Mid Suffolk 424
- Out of District 98

The 98 recorded as out of district are largely due to people who live outside the district helping others to complain (for example family members). We have now updated our complaints system and since April 2026 we have been able to record the district the complaint relates to for those where the address recorded is outside of the District.

Fig 1. Complaints Received by Year:

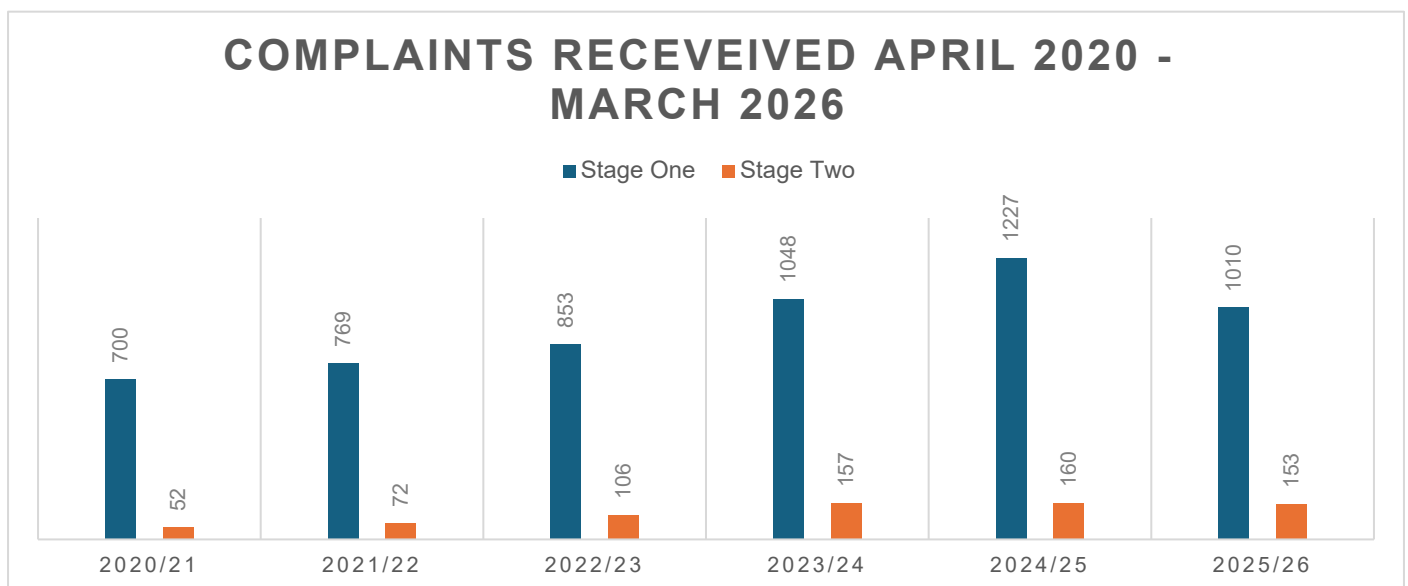
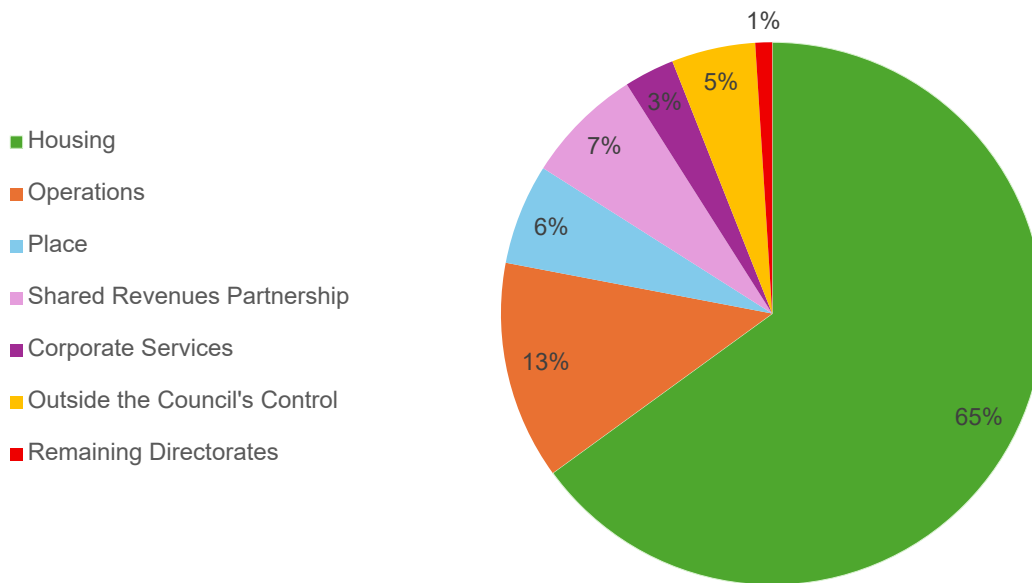


Fig 2. Stage One Complaints Received by Directorate:



For this year's report, complaints are presented in two categories, those related to our housing service and those from the remaining services of the Council. Most housing related complaints are overseen by the Social Housing Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman Service.

In the section below, "Complaints Received by Other Departments" there are appendices that show the year on year complaint figures for those years for 2022/23, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Complaints Closed

During 2025/26 when closing complaints, the complaint closure figures were as follows:

Stage One:

- 46% Upheld
- 32% Not Upheld
- 22% Not considered to be a complaint

Complaints submitted at stage one that are later not considered to be a complaint are for reasons such as:

- A request for a service that is being made for the first time.
- There is an appeals process in place (Planning Inspectorate, Housing Allocations)
- Outside the Council's control (e.g. Suffolk County Council administered service)

Stage Two:

- 43% Upheld
- 37% Not Upheld
- 20% Not considered to be a complaint

Complaints escalated to Stage Two that are later not considered to be a complaint are for reasons such as:

- The reasons listed above at stage one
- It has been escalated whilst the stage one complaint is still open
- It has been raised before a stage one complaint has been raised

We monitor complaint response times against our policy timeframes using key performance indicators, which are reported on a quarterly basis through our corporate performance reporting. In 2025/26, during the transition between our old and new complaints systems:

- **87%** of Stage One complaints were responded to on time
- **99%** of Stage Two complaints were responded to on time

Complaints responded to on time has improved over the course of the past year. In our previous reporting year, we reported that 69% of stage one complaints were responded to in time which is an 18% improvement, and that 94% of stage two complaints were responded to in time, a 5% improvement. This aligns with findings from the most recent resident survey, which showed a significant increase of 12% to 61% for Babergh and 14% to 60% in Mid Suffolk in response to the question *“the Council responds quickly when asked for help.”*

Average working days to respond:

- 14.63 working days at Stage One, 4.63 days above target
- 17.49 working days at Stage Two. 2.51 days below target

Under our complaints policy, we can extend complaints by a further 10 working days at stage one if needed. This is communicated with the resident either in the form of an extension letter or other preferred method of communication agreed with the resident. This accounts for some of the higher average response time. However, with 13% of complaints not responded to on time, we know that this would have also had an impact and there is room for improvement. We are monitoring complaint performance through monthly performance reporting, the Housing Taskforce, the Housing CHAR report and quarterly complaints improvement meetings.

At stage two, we can extend complaints by a further 20 working days however, whilst extensions would have been applied for some complaints due to high complexity, complaints have still been responded to well within timeframe.

Online Web Forms Received

In 2025/26 the Council received a total of 1,499 submissions relating to compliments, comments and complaints.

The Council also received a further 7,213 submissions through our “Contact Us” form which acts as a form for when residents cannot resolve their query through the self-service options.

Compliments, Comments, Complaints, Contact Us Enquiry Forms

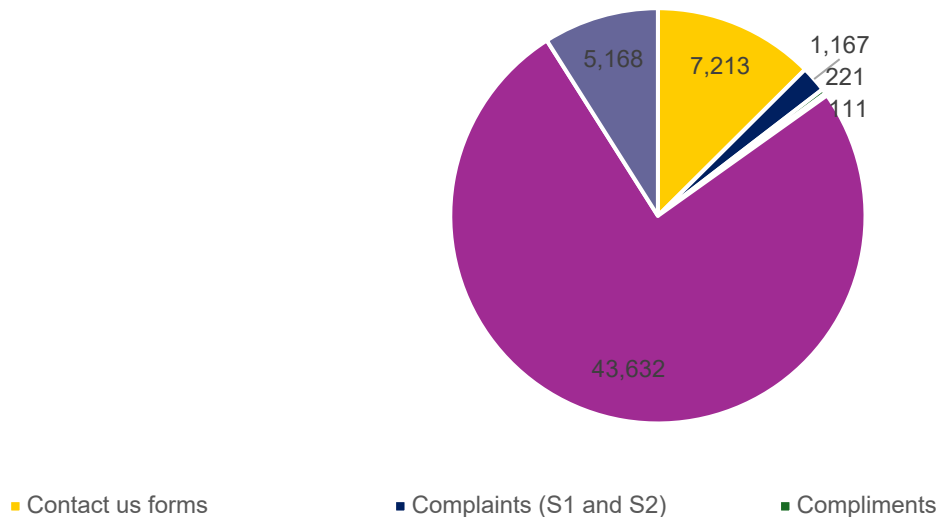


Fig 3: Council Complaints, comments and compliments form and contact us general enquiry form.

In addition to formal complaints, the Council received significant levels of wider customer contact during 2025/26. This included 114,608 reports submitted through self-service webforms, 43,632 calls to our general enquiries line (130, 927 when considering our Council Tax and benefits line and Housing line), and 5,168 face-to-face visits to our customer access points.

These interactions cover a wide range of service requests, such as reporting repairs, managing Council Tax accounts, and requesting waste services.

Against this broader level of contact, complaints represent a relatively small proportion around 2% of general enquiry contact and an even smaller proportion of overall customer interactions. This reflects a decrease from 2.6% in 2024/25, indicating an improving position.

Face to face visits increased during the year following the expansion of access arrangements, in line with our Mid Suffolk plan. This includes the full time opening of the Stowmarket office, additional access points in Eye with Citizens Advice, and outreach through the rural coffee van.

These changes support our commitment to deliver high quality services that are easy for residents to access. We have also increased promotion of existing sites, such as the Hadleigh Customer Access Point, through targeted advertising and local posters.

Customer satisfaction with our Customer Services Team has also improved. An automated telephone survey shows that 83% of over 2,000 respondents reported being satisfied or highly satisfied with the service they received in the last year, versus 73% the previous year.

O&S Recommendations from 2024/25 Report

The following recommendations were made at the February 2026 O&S following the previous annual report being presented:

- That the Committee notes the Annual Complaints Report for 2024/5, as well as the actions underway to strengthen complaint handling and service improvement in line with Ombudsman requirements.
- That the Cabinet Members for Performance and Resilience seek to improve communication with residents to both reduce the number of complaints submitted, as well as support residents through the complaints process.
- That data on complaints and feedback relating to the Better Recycling waste changes are incorporated into a future review of the changes by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Actions to address these recommendations are reflected throughout this report, demonstrating how they have supported ongoing improvements.

Complaints Received

Complaints Received by Housing

Housing Complaints Breakdown

Complaints made to our Housing Directorate made up 65% of all complaints received by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils in 2025/26. This is an increase of the 57% received in 2025/26.

For the second year in a row, there has been a large drop in complaints made to our Housing Repairs and Maintenance team, who are responsible for the majority of day to day repairs in our homes with 194 complaints received, down 249 complaints on the 443 received two years ago.

Learning from complaints and tenant impact

We are increasingly using complaints as a form of service intelligence, helping to drive tangible improvements. Over the past twelve months there have been a series of service improvements implemented.

Examples include:

- We've improved communication around gas-servicing appointments. Our contractor now sends text reminders so you know when to expect the visit.
- A new job system was introduced to manage repairs, including customer feedback by text after every job, which is reviewed weekly. All repair contractors (repairs, roofing, drainage) now use the same system, so everything is tracked in one place.
- A new van stock system means operatives can carry more parts and fix more issues on the first visit.
- Flooring replacements are now handled in-house, providing a more efficient service and higher satisfaction.
- We've improved how homes are advertised for letting, helping to reduce delays before new tenants move in.

- The Mutual Exchange Process is presently being reviewed to ensure that residents mutually exchanging receive an improved service.
- Damp and Mould Policy and procedures were updated in preparation from the introduction of Awaabs Law in October 2025.
- Two new damp and mould contractors were onboarded, one for survey works and one for construction works.
- With the introduction of Awaab's Law, all staff in our Housing department and customer services team attended damp and mould awareness sessions.
- We now give tenants an information leaflet after damp and mould work is completed. It explains the next steps and what to do if the damp or mould comes back.
- We now have a programme to regularly service solar panels.
- We want to support every tenant with their tenancy and create a proactive tenancy-management approach, which includes through regular visits so we can identify and deal with any issues early. This will be launched in the summer of 2026.
- We've made big improvements to our electrical safety checks. Three years ago, 1,300 homes were overdue, but now fewer than 10 are still outstanding. This improvement happened after we introduced a new approach to gaining access, which we developed with our contractor.
- Around two-thirds of our homes now meet at least the LD2 fire safety standard, which means fires can be detected earlier and homes are safer.
- We're developing new policies, including temporary move, mutual exchange, updated Anti-Social Behaviour guidance, and a hoarding policy so tenants know exactly what they can expect from us. We've created a 'Good Neighbour' toolkit, developed with tenants, so minor issues can be handled quickly and by tenants themselves. The toolkit also sets out how to escalate things when extra support is needed.
- The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) procedure is in the process of being reviewed to ensure that cases are appropriately risk assessed. ASB training was also provided to Community Housing Officers in late 2025 by an external provider.
- We have implemented a servicing programme for solar panels on our homes to ensure that our solar panels are in full operation, something that we had not previously had in place.
- Our "Getting To Know You " project was started to ensure that we hold data about our tenants to support with providing high quality, person centred services.
- We have also shared lessons learnt and performance with tenants through the annual tenant engagement report.

The focus now is to ensure that this learning consistently translates into improved outcomes and experiences for tenants, not just process changes.

Over the past year, we have strengthened complaint handling through a more structured and consistent approach. Key improvements include:

- Continuation of the Housing Complaints Taskforce, bringing together officers, tenants and Councillors to review performance and drive improvement
- Created a group of Tenant Complaint Experts who review complaints and check the quality of our responses. Their feedback is shared with our Complaints Taskforce.
- Implementing root cause analysis, enabling better identification of recurring issues

- Strengthening performance reporting, with complaints monitored through dashboards, the Council Housing Assurance Report (CHAR), and governance processes
- Reviewed and improved our Compensation Policy so it is cleared and fairer.
- Made sure complaints are regularly discussed with our contractors, so they understand issues and improve their performance.
- We have also undertaken two tenant scrutiny projects regarding complaints and communication to ensure we are improving tenant satisfaction with complaints handling and responding to a key theme identified through our complaints feedback regarding tenant communication.

Our focus going forward

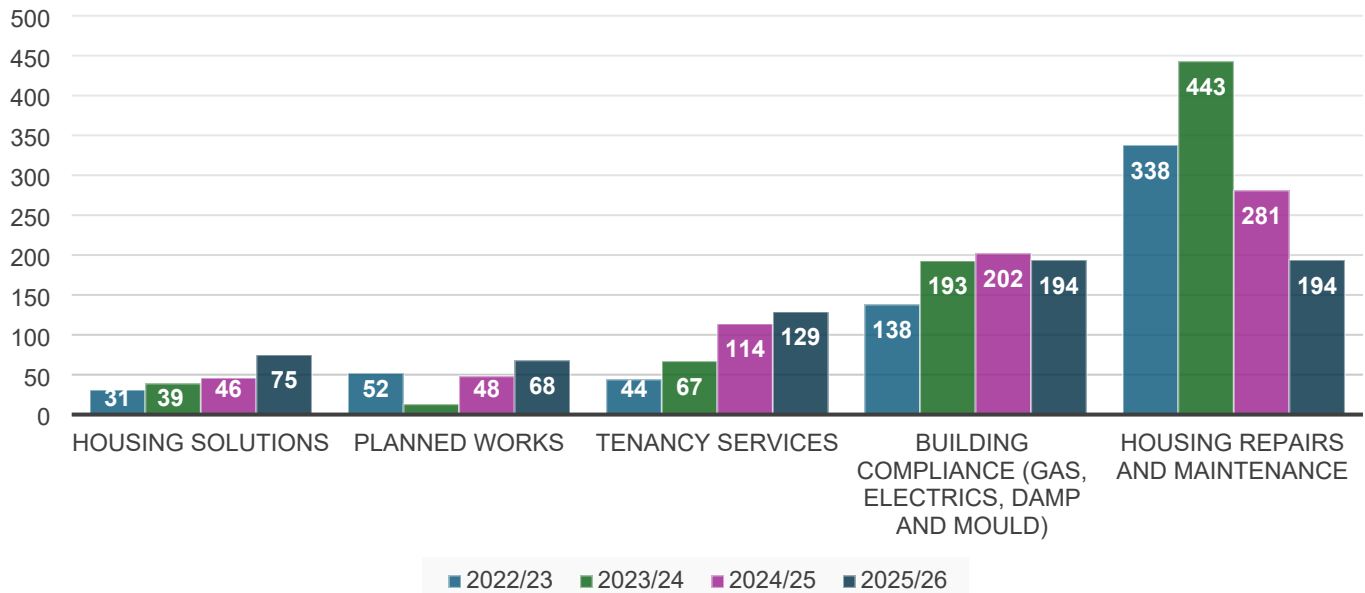
While progress has been made in strengthening complaint handling, we are clear that more needs to be done.

Our priorities are to:

- Improve tenant satisfaction with complaint handling ensuring the complaints scrutiny and communication tenant scrutiny project outcomes are delivered.
- Strengthen communication and response quality through the housing complaints taskforce.
- As well as undertaking a complaints culture review, which will seek to:
 - Reduce repeat and avoidable complaints
 - Ensure learning is consistently translated into service improvement
 - Continue to build a culture where complaints are seen as a valuable source of feedback
- We will continue to strengthen joint working between Customer Experience and Housing to review and simplify processes, reducing handoffs and delivering a more seamless and consistent experience for tenants.

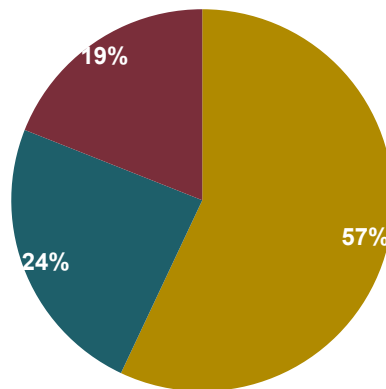
Fig 4 and 5: Complaints received by housing teams and closure status

Complaints Received by Team (Housing)



HOUSING COMPLAINT CLOSURE BY STATUS (%)

■ Upheld ■ Not Upheld ■ Not Considered to be a complaint



Complaints Received by Other Departments

The other areas of complaints across the organisation are relatively low in comparison to Housing. In this report we have chosen to focus on the top three other directorates with the highest volume of complaints which are:

- Operations
- Planning
- Shared Revenues Partnership

Operations

Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, the Operations Directorate received 131 complaints, representing the second highest volume of complaints and accounting for 13% of all complaints across Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

This reflects a significant reduction from the previous year, when 246 complaints were received a decrease of 115 complaints (46.7%).

The volume of complaints is consistent with the directorate's high level of public-facing services, including Waste Services, Public Protection and Public Realm.

Within the directorate, Waste Services received the highest number of complaints, accounting for 73 complaints (56%). However, this represents a substantial improvement compared to the previous year (164 complaints), a reduction of 55.5%.

The higher complaint levels previously experienced were largely linked to recruitment challenges for HGV drivers during late 2024 and early 2025, which impacted service delivery. These issues have now been resolved, contributing to the improved position seen this year.

During 2025/26, the Waste Services teams focused on preparing for the implementation of Better Recycling. The full impact of this programme will be reported in next year's annual report.

Waste-related complaints continue to primarily relate to missed collections and issues with general waste or recycling services. Analysis of root cause data (introduced in October 2025) shows that the most common trend within waste complaints is that they are in fact service requests, rather than formal complaints.

This is reflected more widely across the Operations Directorate, where almost 50% of complaints recorded in 2025/26 were ultimately classified as "not considered a complaint". In many cases, residents are reporting a missed collection for the first time, rather than using the dedicated reporting tools available on the council's website.

To address this, we are reviewing and improving our website to ensure residents are clearly directed to the correct reporting routes, encouraging the use of online service request forms instead of the formal complaints process.

Outside of Waste Services, a number of service improvements have been delivered across the Operations Directorate, including:

- **Public Realm schedules:** For the first time, a winter works schedule was published, providing residents with advance visibility of planned activity in their area.
- **Improved communications:** Increased use of social media to highlight service delivery, including "day in the life" features with officers such as Tree and Play Officers, which generated positive engagement from residents.

- **Visible environmental improvements:** Stowmarket Town Rangers and the REACT team carried out works including cutting back vegetation and cleaning road signs, improving the appearance of local areas.
- **Faster response to fly-tipping:** Collaboration with Customer Services has streamlined reporting processes, enabling reports to be passed directly to operational teams for quicker action.
- **Improved information for residents:** Work is underway to enhance website content and FAQs, particularly around trees and public realm services, making it easier for residents to find information and access services.

Fig 6: Complaints received by the Operations Directorate (waste services, car parking, public realm and environmental protection)

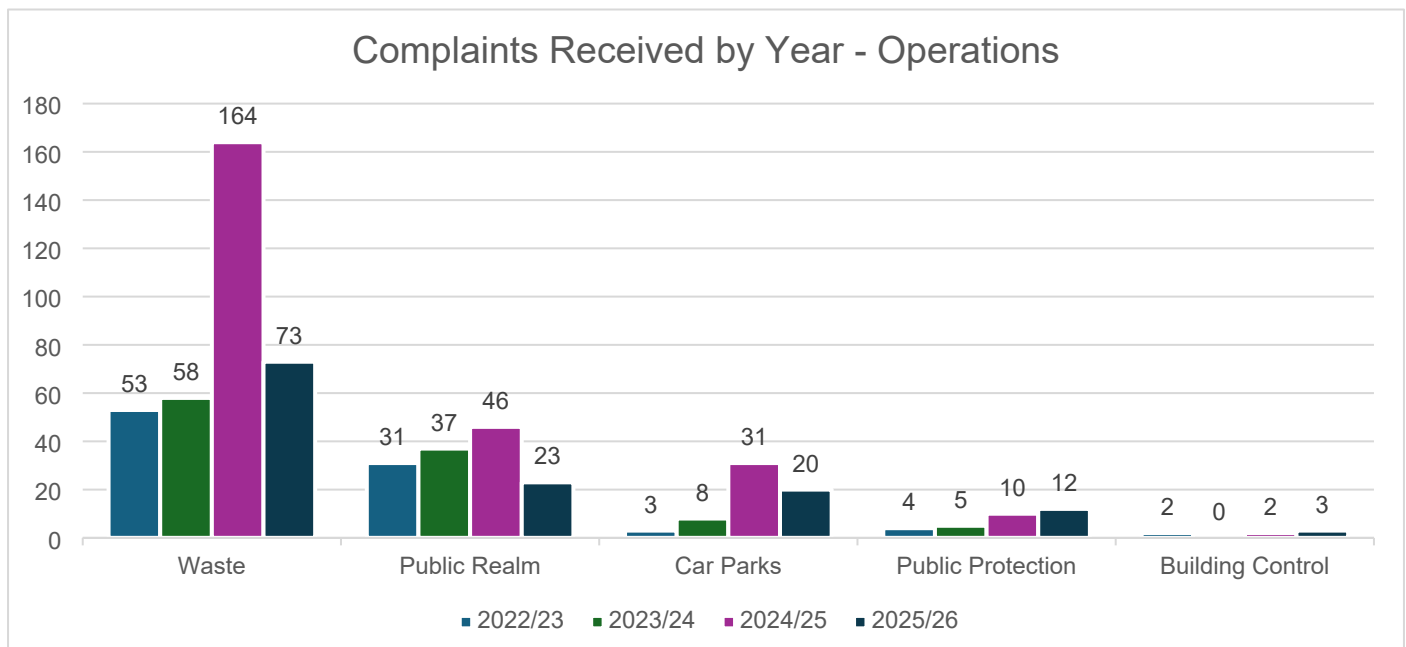
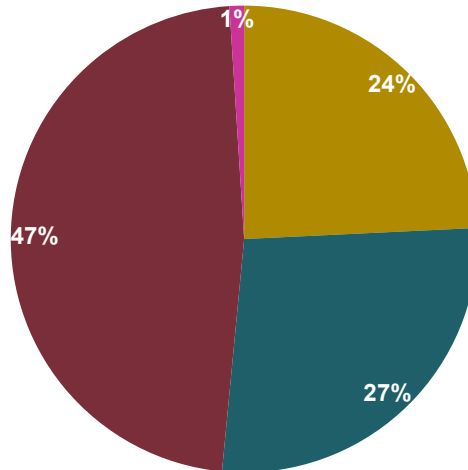


Fig 7: Operations complaint outcomes

OPERATIONS COMPLAINT OUTCOME (%)

■ Upheld ■ Not Upheld ■ Not Considered To Be A Complaint ■ Withdrawn



Place Directorate

In 2025/26, the Place Directorate received **65 complaints** relating to Planning, Planning Enforcement and Communities. This represents a reduction from 73 complaints in the previous year.

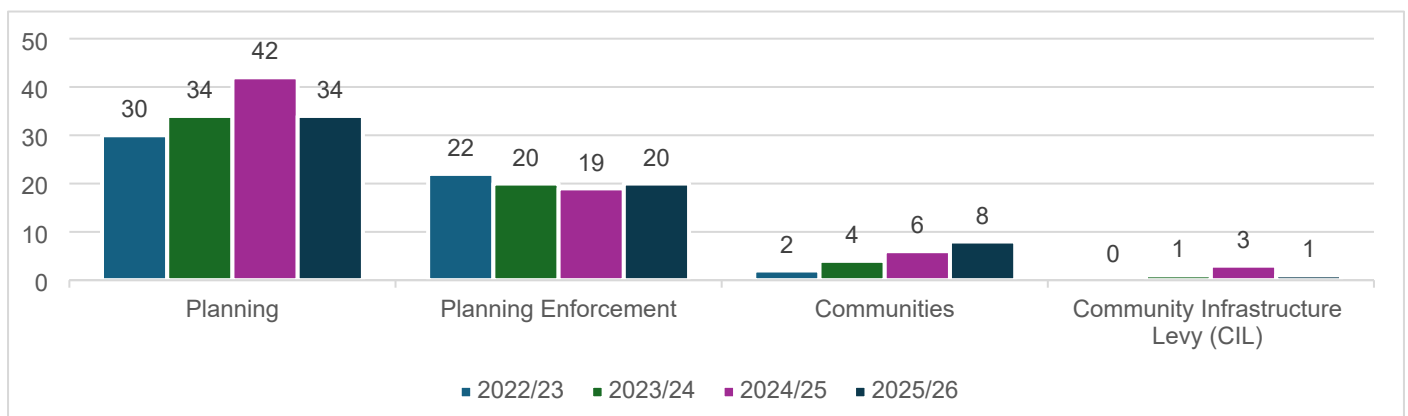
Complaints relating to Planning and Planning Enforcement continue to make up the largest proportion within this directorate and are predominantly raised by non-applicants. While there has been a small increase in complaints relating to the Communities team, volumes remain low and not significant.

Over the past 12 months, the Place Directorate has delivered a number of improvements, including:

- **Conservation and planning work:**
 - Designation of a new Conservation Area in Bentley (April 2025), alongside publication of the Bentley Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) in November.
 - Consultation on the Sproughton CAAMP (January–February 2026).
- **Learning from feedback:**
 - Following resident feedback, improvements have been made to ensure photographs used in planning documents are correctly attributed and taken from appropriate locations or with landowner permission.
- **Forward planning and engagement:**

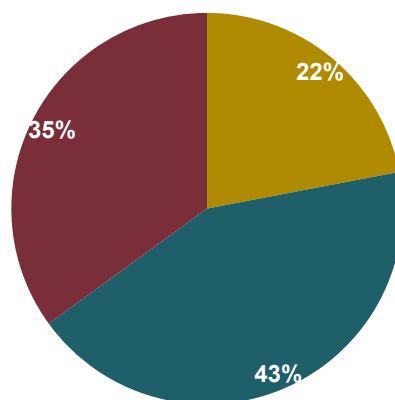
- A “call for sites” exercise (October–January) to identify land for future housing, business, community use and nature recovery.
- **Service improvements from complaints:**
 - Introduction of a “search by agent” function on the planning website, directly responding to customer feedback.
- **Planned improvements:**
 - Work is underway to improve the planning enforcement reporting form, including clearer guidance and more information to help residents better understand the process.

Fig 8 and 9: Complaints received by the Place Directorate (planning, planning enforcement, communities, strategic planning and the community infrastructure levy)



PLACE COMPLAINT OUTCOMES BY %

■ Upheld ■ Not Upheld ■ Not Considered to be a Complaint



The Shared Revenues Partnership (SRP), based at Ipswich Borough Council, delivers Council Tax and Housing Benefits services on behalf of the councils.

In 2025/26, the Council Tax team received **68 complaints**, while the Benefits team received **2 complaints**.

Although there has been an increase in Council Tax complaints compared to the previous year, only a small proportion were upheld (9%), indicating that most concerns were either resolved or not found to be due to service failure.

It is also important to note that complaint volumes should be viewed in context. The Council Tax service has regular contact with all households across the district, meaning higher volumes of interaction, and therefore complaints, do not necessarily reflect poor service performance.

Council Tax complaints mainly involved:

- Incorrect charges
- Direct debit errors
- Enforcement Agent involvement
- Issues accessing online accounts

In response to the small number that were upheld, actions taken included refunds, withdrawal of enforcement action, and clarification of account details. Investigations highlighted the need for clearer communication and more thorough account checks. It is important to note that the volume of complaints received against the level of contact received directly by SRP works out at less than 0.1% of all contact.

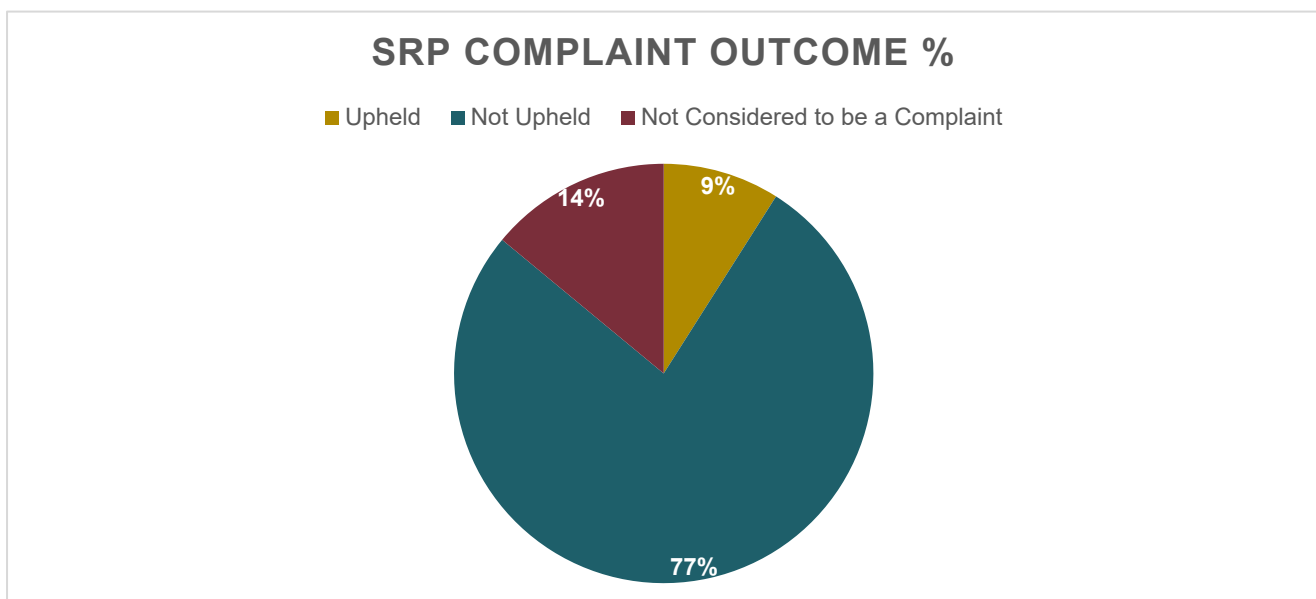
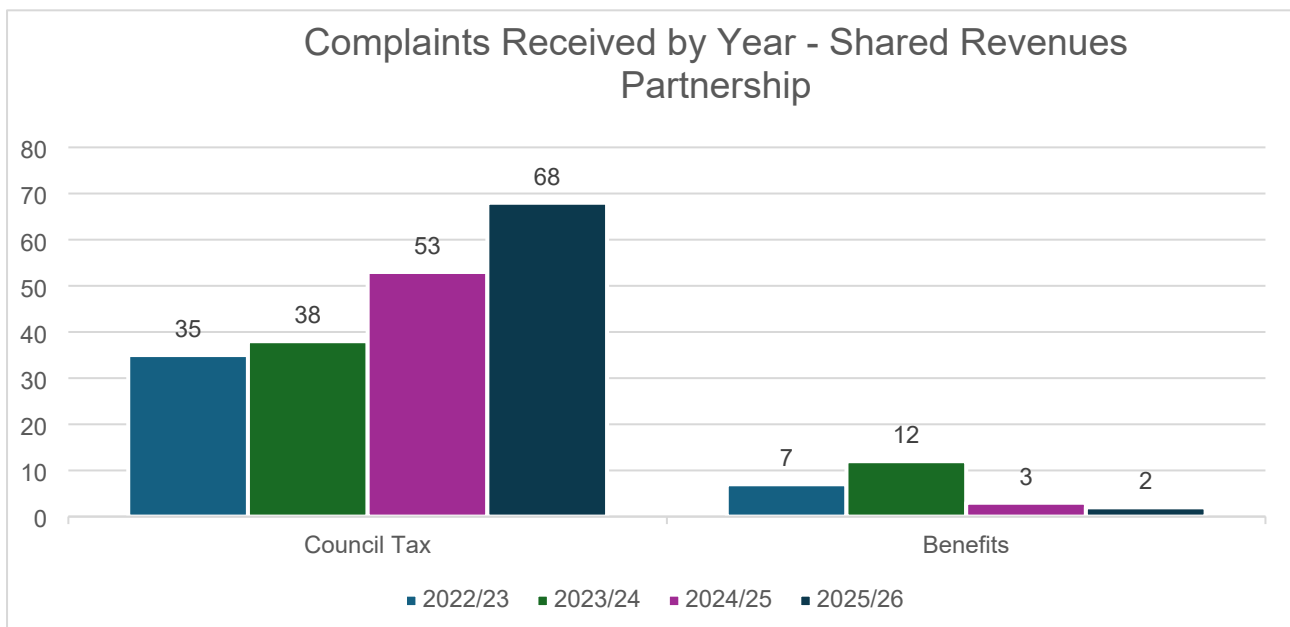
A review of complaints received over the last 12 months shows that only a small proportion have been upheld. Given the nature of the services delivered by the Shared Revenues Partnership (SRP), complaints are often driven by dissatisfaction with an outcome or decision, rather than a failure in service delivery. In these cases, investigations have confirmed that decisions were made in line with legislation, policy and procedures.

Complaints relating to Benefits remain extremely low, with only two received in 2025/26.

Over the past year, the Shared Revenues Partnership has implemented a number of service improvements, including:

- **Text message reminder campaigns:**
Monthly SMS reminders (via Telsolutions) are used to prompt customers about missed Council Tax payments. This has reduced the number of formal reminders issued, lowered printing and postage costs, and provides a more proactive and supportive approach for residents. The schedule has also been refined to avoid Mondays, ensuring weekend payments are reflected on accounts.

- Vulnerability awareness and support:**
 All Revenues staff have received in-house training on vulnerability, supported by guidance and tools to help staff identify needs and signpost residents to appropriate support services.
- Improved billing accuracy for businesses:**
 Ahead of changes to business rates rules on 1 April 2026, all non-domestic properties were reviewed to ensure the correct rate was applied when moving from two to five multipliers. This resulted in more accurate billing from the outset and has reduced the number of queries and challenges from businesses.
- Fig 10 and 11: Complaints received by year for Council Tax and Benefits and outcome status.**



Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)

Introduction

If tenants are not satisfied with how their complaint is handled, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman. This is an independent service that investigates complaints about housing providers, including councils, housing associations, and some private landlords.

The Ombudsman helps resolve issues fairly and may recommend compensation or other actions. It also works with landlords to improve how complaints are handled, ensuring tenants' concerns are taken seriously and their rights are protected.

The Housing Ombudsman's Annual Complaints Review of national trends has not yet been published. As agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2026 this information will be added later and circulated to the Committee. This ensures our own annual complaints reporting is completed in a timely manner.

HOS Complaint Investigation Reports

In 2025/26:

- Babergh District Council received four upheld decisions made by the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- Mid Suffolk District Council received one upheld decision made by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

You can access the links to these cases (including a summary of the cases and findings) in appendix 2 and 3.

Compliance with Complaint Handling Code

As part of the compliance of the Complaint Handling Code under section 8.1, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council must produce an annual complaints report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include the following information:

- (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
- (F) any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord

You can find out how we comply with points A-F in the following appendix 4 – Compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.

Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment

Each year, the Council are required to complete a self-assessment against the complaint handling code. The date for submission to the Housing Ombudsman this year was the 30th September 2025.

Landlords are required to submit a self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code to ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in how we are handling complaints.

- Appendix 10 – Annual HOS Self-Assessment

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)

Introduction

If residents are dissatisfied with how their complaint has been handled at Stage 1 or Stage 2, they can escalate it to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). The Ombudsman is an independent body that reviews complaints and promotes fairness, transparency and accountability in local authorities.

Complaints referred to the LGO for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk remain low in number. In total, the LGO dealt with **24 complaints** relating to both councils during the year, of which only **two were upheld**.

You can find a breakdown by district below as well as a table below comparing to other Suffolk authorities.

Babergh District Council

In 2025/26, the LGO dealt with 13 complaints regarding Babergh District Council, with one of these upheld. This is a reduction of the two upheld in 2024/25.

The complaint was upheld as the Council failed to demonstrate that it had properly considered whether to exercise its discretion when deciding not to include two of the resident's children on their housing register application.

The Ombudsman found this amounted to fault, as the decision relied on policy without showing that the individual circumstances had been fully considered.

The agreed remedy included an apology, a review of the application with full consideration of discretion, and a reminder to officers about the need to properly consider and record discretionary decisions.

- You can find the full decision on the LGO's website here: [24 016 746 - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Mid Suffolk District Council

In 2025/26, the LGO dealt with 11 complaints regarding Mid Suffolk District Council, with one of these upheld. In line with the one complaint upheld in 2024/25.

The complaint was upheld as the Council delayed sending a postal application form for a Certificate of Lawful Use and failed to handle the resident's initial complaint in line with its complaints procedure.

The Ombudsman found these issues amounted to fault, but was satisfied that the apologies provided by the Council were sufficient to remedy any injustice caused. There was no fault identified in the remaining aspects of the complaint.

- You can find the full decision on the LGO's website here: [24 020 511 - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

LGO Self-Assessment

From April 2026, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council have completed a self-assessment alongside the LGO's complaint handling code. The Code has been issued as "advice and guidance" and applies to all local councils in England. The Code only applies to complaints where there is no statutory process in place. This means that some complaints about children's services, adult social care and public health are not covered by the expectations set out in the Code. The Code does not apply to complaints about the behaviour of locally elected officials.

You can find out more information about the LGO's complaint handling code below.

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/information-for-organisations-we-investigate/complaint-handling-code>

A copy of our self-assessment can be found in the appendices:

- Appendix 11 – Annual LGO Self-Assessment

Comparative Data

The appendices include a chart and table comparing Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils with other local authorities in Suffolk. The data is presented as follows:

- **Complaints dealt with by the LGO:** Total complaints received during the reporting period.
- **Not for the LGO:** Complaints the LGO determined were outside its scope.
- **Assessed and closed:** Complaints reviewed but not taken forward for investigation.
- **Investigated – Not Upheld:** Complaints investigated with no fault found.
- **Investigated – Upheld:** Complaints investigated where fault was identified.

The LGO also reports the number of upheld complaints per 100,000 residents, in line with Office for Local Government (Oflog) performance metrics.

Comparison to other Suffolk Authorities:

	Complaints dealt with by the LGO (Total)	Not for the LGO	Assessed and Closed by the LGO	Investigated – Not Upheld	Investigated - Upheld (& upheld total per 100,000 residents)
Babergh	2024/25: 13	2024/25: 3	2024/25: 6	2024/25: 2	2024/25: 2 (2.1)
	2025/26: 13	2025/26: 5	2025/26: 6	2025/26: 1	2025/26: 1 (1)
Mid Suffolk	2024/25: 16	2024/25: 10	2024/25: 5	2024/25: 0	2024/25: 1 (0.9)
	2025/26: 11	2025/26: 1	2025/26: 7	2025/26: 2	2025/26: 1 (0.9)
Ipswich	2024/25: 9	2024/25: 3	2024/25: 5	2024/25: 1	2024/25: 0 (0.0)
	2025/26: 13	2025/26: 8	2025/26: 4	2025/26: 1	2025/26: 1 (0.7)
East Suffolk	2024/25: 38	2024/25: 6	2024/25: 30	2024/25: 1	2024/25: 1 (0.4)
	2025/26: 35	2025/26: 11	2025/26: 23	2025/26: 0	2025/26: 1 (0.4)
West Suffolk	2024/25: 19	2024/25: 5	2024/25: 11	2024/25: 0	2024/25: 3 (1.6)
	2025/26: 19	2025/26: 7	2025/26: 11	2025/26: 1	2025/26: 0 (0.0)
Suffolk County Council	2024/25: 186	2024/25: 38	2024/25: 68	2024/25: 5	2024/25: 75 (9.7)
	2025/26: 178	2025/26: 39	2025/26: 78	2025/26: 4	2025/26: 57 (7.2)

All data collected by the LGO can be publicly accessed here: [Your council's performance \(lgo.org.uk\)](https://lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance)

Lessons Learned from Complaints

User Stories

The appendix includes user stories that illustrate the processes individuals went through before and after submitting a complaint. These narratives have been developed to highlight the impact of their experiences with the Council.

- Appendix 6 – User Stories

Housing Complaints Taskforce

Each quarter, Housing managers, tenant representatives and senior officers meet through the Complaints Handling Taskforce to review complaints performance and drive service improvement.

Membership includes representation from all Housing teams, the Complaints and Feedback Officer, Head of Housing Transformation, Housing Portfolio Holders and the Tenant Board.

The Taskforce provides clear oversight and challenge, ensuring complaints are not only managed effectively but used to improve outcomes for tenants. It plays a key role in strengthening accountability, identifying risks and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

The group reviews a range of performance and insight data, including:

- Complaint volumes and trends by service area, to identify pressure points and emerging risks
- Stage 2 complaints, focusing on why complaints escalate and how earlier resolution can be improved
- Housing Ombudsman decisions, particularly where fault has been identified, to ensure learning is applied
- Root cause analysis and complaint themes, to identify recurring issues and prioritise action

Importantly, the Taskforce ensures that learning is translated into practical service improvements, rather than remaining at a reporting level.

This includes:

- Driving improvements to communication, response quality and timeliness, based on complaint feedback
- Challenging contractor and service performance where complaints highlight issues
- Applying national learning from Housing Ombudsman Spotlight reports (e.g. damp and mould, anti-social behaviour) to local services
- Ensuring services remain aligned with emerging regulatory and legislative requirements, including Awaab's Law

Tenant involvement is a key feature of the Taskforce, providing independent challenge and assurance that improvements are meaningful from a resident perspective.

Impact for tenants

As a result of this approach, complaints are increasingly used as a driver for service improvement, leading to clearer communication, stronger accountability and more consistent service delivery.

Monitoring and governance

Actions arising from the Taskforce are tracked and reported through performance dashboards, the Council Housing Assurance Report (CHAR), and senior governance routes, ensuring issues are owned, monitored and delivered.

The terms of reference and objectives for the Taskforce are going to be refreshed as part of the next group meeting to ensure improvement plans are in place for each area of housing.

You can find more information, including recent minutes and presentations, on the Council's websites:

- <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/our-complaints-task-force>
- <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/our-complaints-task-force>

Complaints Improvement Project

In 2025, we introduced the Complaints Improvement Project to strengthen complaint handling across all Council services. Building on the strong arrangements already in place within Housing, the project aims to deliver greater consistency, oversight, and learning across the organisation.

The project has focused on improving how complaints are recorded, categorised and acted upon. This includes making better use of complaint data to identify trends, root causes, and support service improvement. It also aims to improve the quality and consistency of responses, reduce repeat complaints, and minimise the impact of service failures.

We review complaints performance on a quarterly basis using a dashboard that highlights volumes, trends, key themes, and areas for improvement. The reviews also include response times, quality, and whether appropriate actions have been taken. This information is shared with service areas to help drive improvements at a service level and prevent similar issues occurring.

Going forward key aims of the project will include a focus on driving service improvements and strengthening a culture where complaints are recognised as a valuable source of feedback.

Alongside this customer services have been undertaking process review across services including public realm and housing to ensure

Compliments

In 2025/26, the Council received 221 compliments, compared with 233 the previous year.

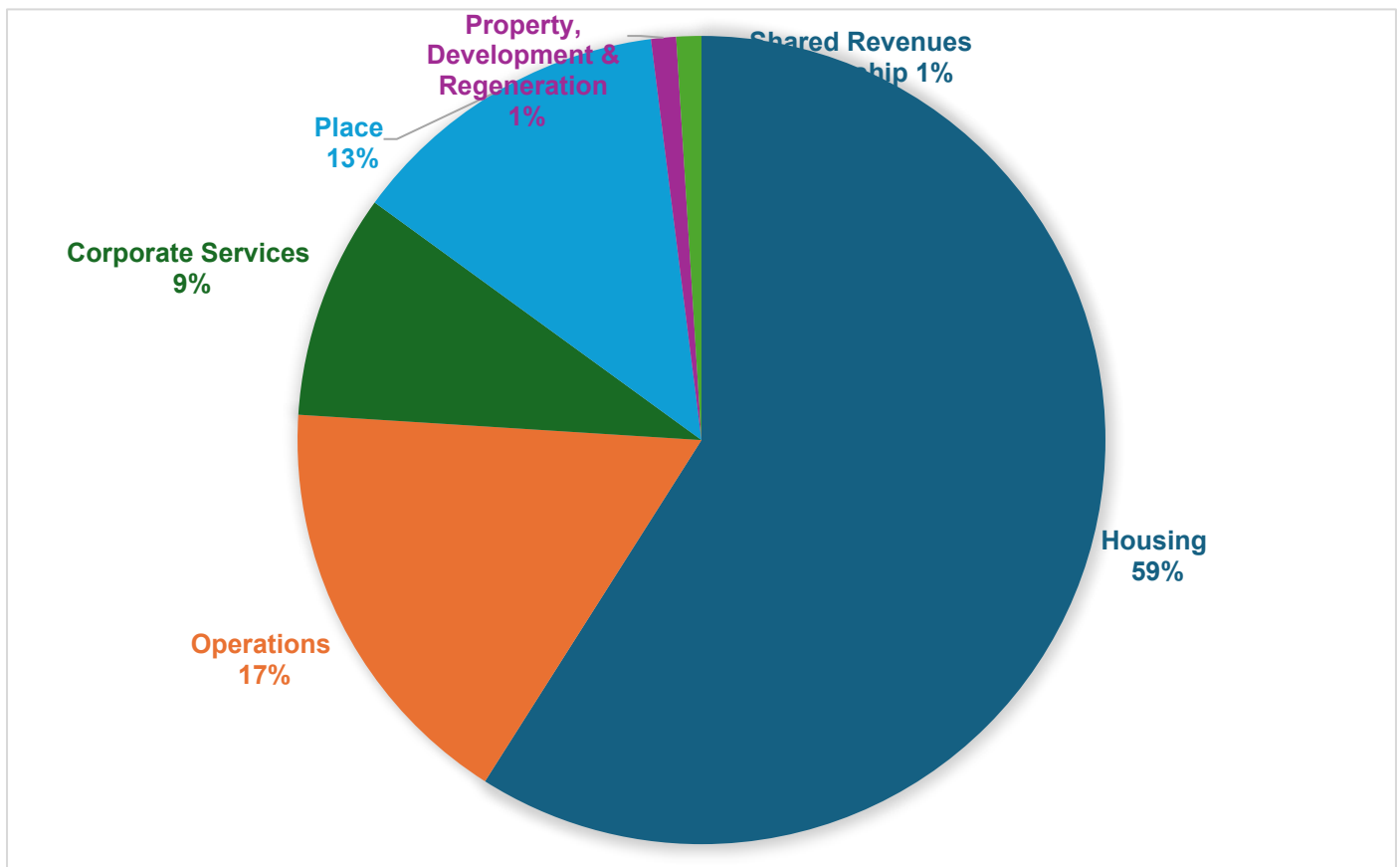
Compliments usually rely on staff self-referring compliments, and this can cause fluctuations in the amounts received. We will ensure that this is an area that we continue to improve on and ensure that staff are uploading compliments.

We have identified that our top reason for submitting compliments to the council is for our staff's professionalism and the quality of work that we undertake. We'll continue to work with service areas to ensure that we are capturing compliments to identify our areas of best practice.

We have included a number of compliments received in the appendix.

- Appendix 7 – Sample of Compliments Received

Fig 12/13: compliments received by year and by directorate:



Other Data and Information for Housing

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

As a social housing provider, we are required to collect data on Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing to help improve standards. These measures aim to:

- Give tenants visibility into how well their landlord is performing and enables them to hold their landlord to account.
- Help the Regulator identify where improvements may be needed.

Every three months, an independent company, Acuity, surveys our tenants about their satisfaction with housing services. These results are publicly available.

TSMs assess performance across key areas, including:

- Property repairs and building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Complaint handling
- Neighbourhood management

There are 22 measures in total: 12 based on tenant perceptions and 10 based on management data. Full results are available here:

- [Tenant satisfaction measures - Babergh District Council - baberghmidsuffolk.com](https://www.baberghmidsuffolk.com/tenant-satisfaction-measures-babergh-district-council)
- [Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Mid Suffolk District Council - baberghmidsuffolk.com](https://www.baberghmidsuffolk.com/tenant-satisfaction-measures-mid-suffolk-district-council)

Babergh

In 2025/26, Acuity surveyed 642 tenants, using a mix of 505 telephone interviews and 137 online surveys.

Overall, 34.2% of tenants reported that they were satisfied with complaint handling. This represents a slight improvement on the previous year, indicating early progress, although satisfaction remains below the level seen across most other service areas.

Mid Suffolk

In 2025/26, Acuity surveyed 620 tenants, using 492 telephone interviews and 128 online surveys.

Overall, 31.9% of tenants reported that they were satisfied with complaint handling. This reflects a small decrease compared to the previous year and remains an area of focus for improvement.

Context and comparison

Satisfaction with complaint handling is consistently one of the lowest-scoring Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) across the housing sector, typically averaging around 30–35% nationally. The results for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk are therefore broadly in line with sector trends, although improving tenant experience remains a priority.

How this is being addressed

Improving complaints satisfaction is a key focus. The Housing Complaints Taskforce plays a central role in this by:

- Reviewing complaint themes, escalation rates and satisfaction feedback
- Identifying root causes of dissatisfaction, particularly around communication, timeliness and clarity of responses
- Driving improvements to response quality, tone and consistency
- Ensuring that learning from complaints and Ombudsman decisions is translated into tangible service changes

This is supported by ongoing tenant scrutiny, including recent reviews of complaints and communication, ensuring that tenant feedback directly informs service improvements.

- Appendix 8 – TSM Complaints Data

Unique or Repeat Complainants

For the purposes of this report, a repeat complainant is defined as an individual who has submitted two or more complaints relating to the same service area or service grouping.

To provide a clearer overview, related service areas have been grouped into broader categories. For example, complaints relating to Housing Repairs, Tenancy Services, Anti-Social Behaviour, Planned Maintenance, Gateway to Homechoice, and Private Sector Housing are all classified under a single Housing category.

Complaints submitted across different service groupings (for example, Housing and Waste Services) are treated as separate and do not constitute a repeat complainant for reporting purposes.

Duplicate contacts made within a short timeframe (for example, on the same day or within a few days) have been excluded to avoid counting repeat contacts rather than distinct complaints.

In 2025/26, a total of 128 individuals submitted more than one complaint under this definition, with the majority relating to the Housing service grouping.

The majority of repeat complainants are raising issues about our Housing service area. Going forward we will look to explore this further through the Housing Complaints Taskforce to ensure we are spotting service improvements at the earliest opportunity.

This definition has been developed for internal performance analysis and is not prescribed by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

- Appendix 9 – Repeat Complainant Data

Complaint Handling Risks

The Council recognises that effective complaint management is essential to maintaining public trust, improving services and ensuring accountability. Key risks associated with complaints handling are identified and monitored through the Council's operational risk management system.

To manage these risks, the Council will continue to:

- Monitor performance against key indicators
- Provide regular staff training on complaint handling
- Improve access to the complaints process
- Ensure clear and timely communication with residents
- Use complaint data to identify trends and drive service improvements

Future Plans

We continue to strengthen our complaints handling through the Housing Complaints Taskforce and the Complaints Improvement Project. With the implementation of root cause analysis in October 2025, we have built a foundation for identifying themes and trends in relation to the complaints that we receive, and this will support service improvement work going forward. This will continue throughout 2026/27 and progress will be reported in our next annual report.

For next year's annual report, we also have implemented an option for our waste team to categorise complaints received about Better Recycling. This data capture will help assist the works being undertaken by waste and any future review undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny.