

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ward(s) affected: All

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides Members with information on complaints and compliments received by the Council between April 2024 – March 2025 and complaints referred to the LGO. Whilst this Report is produced on an annual basis for Members, complaints are monitored monthly through the Performance and Efficiency Board and the Corporate Leadership Team (Governance) receive a monthly more detailed update on complaints and compliments.

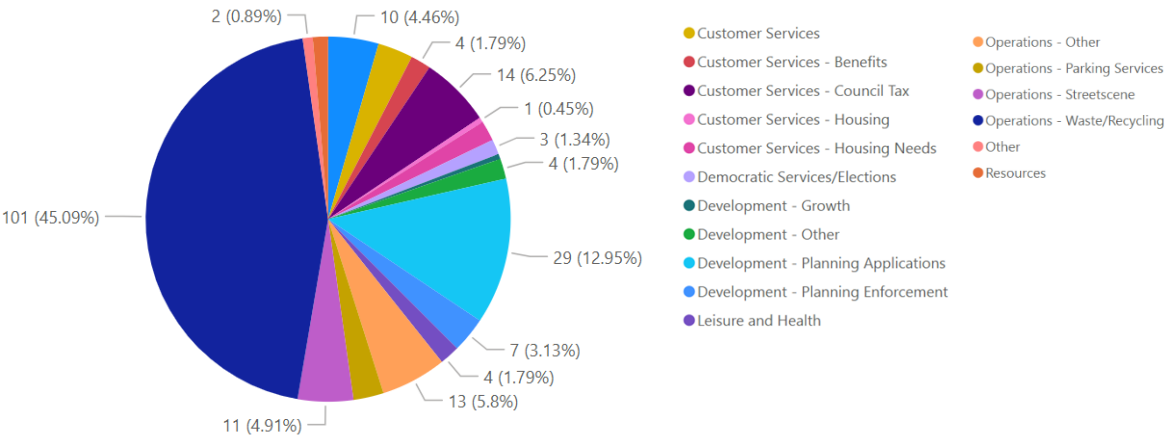
2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

2.1 One of the purposes of this report is to provide Members with data relating to Stage One and Stage Two complaints and compliments received by Service area. The Council offers a two-stage process, if the customer remains dissatisfied after Stage One, they may escalate to Stage Two, for review by the relevant Senior Manager or a manager who is independent of the service that is the subject of the complaint. Customers are then signposted to the LGO.

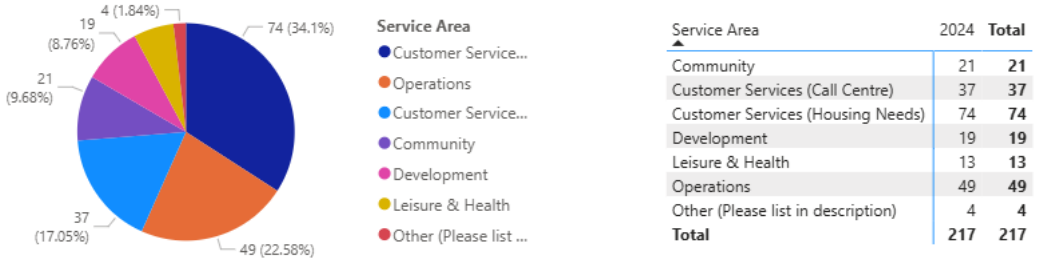
2.2 A further purpose of this is report is to provide Members with data relating to the annual summary of statistics on complaints made to the LGO. The LGO statistics show complaints and enquiries received by service area and whether a decision was upheld, not upheld, advice given, closed after initial enquiry, incomplete/invalid, or referred back for local resolution.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

3.1 The number of Stage One complaints recorded on Complaints Tracker (224) has increased from last year (206). 31 out of 224 complaints were broadly related to Garden Waste Service which was an additional/new service as compared to 2023-24.



The number of compliments recorded on Compliments Tracker (217) has increased from last year (206)



To provide context, for the Services with the higher number of complaints received, the higher volume customer transactions for these Services have also been indicated below:

- 131 complaints received by Operations, these related mainly to missed bins (*approx. 5.7 million bins collected per year, 99.93% collection rate*). The Garden Waste Subscription Service was introduced in April 24, a significant service change; which did result in additional complaints, approx. 31 complaints broadly related to garden bins.
- 41 complaints received by Development & Growth (29 relating to Development Management and 7 for Enforcement), these related mainly to delays in response or decision making or dissatisfaction with decision (*2794 planning decisions made, and 322 enforcement cases registered*)
- 30 complaints received by Customer Services (Customer Services includes a number of different services e.g., council tax, benefits, housing needs, and customer services/call centre), these related mainly to decisions about council tax, or how housing case handled (*Council Tax administered for 83,928 properties; live case load of 8,150 benefit claims*)
- 10 complaints received by Community these related to a mixture of issues around investigations or licensing issues
- 6 complaints received by Finance & Corporate Services, these related mainly to Estates management and Elections
- 2 complaints received relating to 'Other' (Building Control)
- 4 complaints received by Leisure & Health (*1,246,420 attendances*).

3.2 The number of Stage Two complaints (43) received has increased from last year (33). 13 of these related to Operations/Waste & Recycling and 10 of these related to Development/Planning Applications).

3.3 Summary of themes, actions taken/service improvements from Stage One and Stage Two complaints are included in Appendix 3 and 4.

3.4 Annual Performance monitoring:

- 94.2% of Stage One complaints were resolved within time against a target of 90%.
- 81.4% of Stage 2 complaints were resolved within time against a target of 90%.

43 Stage 2 complaints received, of which 8 were responded to late.

Late responses:

Planning – of a total 16 Stage 2 Complaints, five were responded to late (at the time there was a senior officer absence for Q3 & Q4).

Customer Services of a total of five Stage 2 complaints, one was responded to late (by one day).

Operations of a total of 16 Stage 2 complaints, two were responded to late.

Services have been reminded that extensions to timescales are possible and of the importance of updating customers where delays are unavoidable.

- 3.5 In 2024/25, the LGO received 21 complaints. Of these, 17 were reviewed and four did not move past the initial stage. Out of the 17 reviewed, one was fully investigated and upheld. The other 16 were either closed early (where a full investigation is not warranted), referred back for local resolution (typically because the complaint is considered premature) or found to be incomplete or invalid.

Detailed investigation - In summary:

- A Complaint about the Council's decision not to investigate a Code of Conduct complaint made against a town councillor. The LGO found the Council at fault for not considering the complaint, because the arrangements it had in place did not fulfil legal requirements. This caused the complainant avoidable frustration. The Council agreed to apologise, assess the Code of Conduct complaint, and make service improvements.

- 3.6 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) has launched a new interactive tool called "[Your Council's Performance](#)", which provides access to decisions made on all cases involving the LGO. For comparative data with neighbouring authorities, please refer to Appendix 6.

- 3.7 Unreasonable Complainants

One customer continues to be managed under the Council's Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour Policy; with a single point of contact at HDC; and we are continuing to manage the case in a way that does not entail a disproportionate amount of time at the expense of other residents.

- 3.8 There are occasions where complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests are intertwined. Customer complaints may include an FOI request that fall within scope of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 or the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Or information received following an FOI may be used within a complaint. While they follow separate processes it should be recognised that there can be crossover as customers use both processes to address their complaint. This can, in some cases, contribute to the failure to meet the councils deadlines for a response.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 With complaints, there is always a risk that we do not record all the complaints we receive and so do not have the full picture or identify trends. There will also be risks arising from the complaints themselves such as financial, operational, legal, and reputational implications resulting from fault.
- 4.2 The majority of complaints are now being received via the online form. As

a result of improved online processes and content, we continue to see a significant reduction in complaints about issues that are not within HDC remit (e.g., private facilities, Highways, Town Council) with customers being redirected to the correct organisation from the website. Four recorded non HDC complaints received 2024/25.

- 4.3 The Council's internal monitoring and recording system for complaints (Complaints Tracker) continues to provide a significant aid to improving how complaints are both recorded/monitored and handled on time. The system sends deadline reminders to Officers, who have reported it as a helpful function.
- 4.4 Where possible, the identification of lessons learnt and service improvements as a result of complaints by Service area (you said – we did) has been reflected in Appendix 3 and 4 below. A complaint is generally upheld where fault is found, an apology is always provided but where appropriate, actions/service improvements are made to ensure the customer does not experience the issue again. Of the 224 complaints received, 95 (42%) were upheld and data indicates that there were approx. 73 specific actions taken to address faults. Highlights include – site visits, property allocated to specific crew, assisted collection offered, maps/reminders to crews, introduction of additional collection point, systems updated, website updated, staff training and reminders, processes reviewed, weekly checks.
- 4.5 Complaints are just one aspect of customer feedback, it is important that we also record, monitor and report upon compliments, 217 were received in 2024/25. 206 were received in 2023/24 (see Appendix 5). Primarily Housing, Operations and the Call Centre received most compliments, but compliments also received for Planning, Community and Leisure.
- 4.6 Work will continue on development of the process to demonstrate evidence on how complaints lead to service improvements alongside continued staff guidance and training.
- 4.7 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) have introduced a new [Complaints Handling Code](#) which will need to be in place by April 2026. The Code is issued under the Ombudsman's power to issue guidance; this means councils are expected to follow the Code unless there are good reasons not to. Work is currently being undertaken to review gaps with HDC's current complaints handling policy and processes to ensure compliance with the new Code. There is a specific [Guide for Members responsible for complaints: Effective scrutiny of complaint systems](#) which sets out the role and key part Members play in the overall accountability and governance of complaints data and trends.

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

[See Corporate Plan](#)

- 5.1 Complaints handling links to the following Priority within the

Corporate Plan – Doing our core work well. Delivering good quality, high value-for-money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations.

- 5.2 In August 2025, an internal audit of complaints and compliments was carried out. The objective was to review whether complaints and compliments are handled appropriately and in line with guidance. Whether complaints and compliments are acknowledged, shared with service areas and responded to in line with agreed timeframes, with themes identified and monitored. Outcomes from this review are currently being considered.

6. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 6.1 Members are invited to note the LGO Local Authority Report for Huntingdonshire District Council and note the data relating to Stage One and Stage Two complaints and compliments received by the Council.

7. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1	LGO statistics for HDC
Appendix 2	HDC recorded complaints by Service
Appendix 3	Complaints – Stage 1 themes/actions taken/service improvements
Appendix 4	Complaints – Stage 2 themes/actions taken/service improvements
Appendix 5	Compliments
Appendix 6	LGO statistics – neighbouring authority comparison

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Appendix 1

LGO Local Authority Report – Huntingdonshire District Council

Complaints and Enquiries Received (by Category) 2024/25

HDC	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Environment Services, Public Protection and Regulation	Planning and Development	Housing	Highways and Transport	Adult Care Services*	Total
2024/25	2	1	8	8	1	1	0	21
2023/24	3	2	4	9	1	0	0	19

Complaints and Enquiries Decided (by Outcome) 2024/25

HDC	Upheld	Not upheld	Advice given	Closed after initial enquiry	Incomplete/invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Total	Uphold rate* (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities**
2024/25	1	0	0	10	2	4	17	100%	66%
2023/24	1	2	0	12	0	6	21	33%	63%

A number of cases will have been received and decided in different business years; this means the number of complaints and enquiries received will not always match the number of decisions made. The LGO have made changes to the way data is presented; retaining the existing statistics (uphold rate, satisfactory remedies provided by the authority, compliance rate) switch of emphasis from percentages to numbers. *e.g. whether the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.**In 2022-23 they also changed the investigation processes, contributing towards an increase in the average uphold rate across all complaints. **Consider comparing individual council uphold rates against the average rate rather than against previous years.**

Appendix 2 - HDC Recorded Complaints by Service April 2024 – March 2025

Service	Stage One		Stage Two		Total		LGO investigations	
	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25
Community*	13	10	3	3	16	13		
Customer Services**	28	30	3	6	31	36	1	
Development & Growth***	50	41	10	16	60	57	2	
Operations	98	131	15	16	113	147		
Finance & Resources	5	6	1	1	6	7		1
Leisure and Health	10	4	1	1	11	5		
Shared Services****	0	2	0	0	0	2		
Other (cross cutting)	2	0	0	0	2	0		
Total	206	224	33	43	239	267	3	1

*Community includes environmental health, community protection and enforcement, licensing.

**Customer Services includes a number of different services e.g., council tax, benefits, housing needs, and customer services/call centre, Fraud.

*** includes Growth (Housing/Regeneration). ****3CICT/building control. ***** S2 reporting amended to ensure data includes all S2 received in financial year even if S1 received in previous financial year.

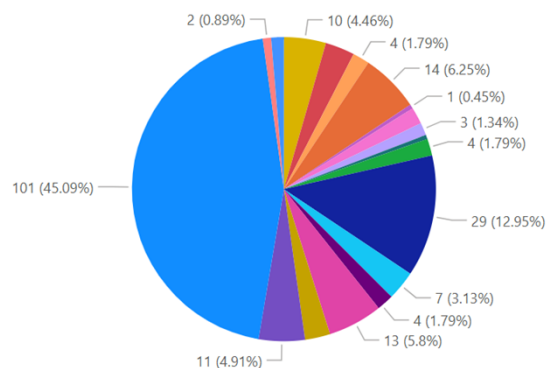
Appendix 3 - 2024/2025 Stage One complaints - summary of themes and actions taken/service improvements (224)

Service	Themes	Actions taken/service improvements
Operations (131) Upheld - 63 Not upheld - 27 Partially upheld – 11	Waste/recycling (101) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missed bin Missed bins (assisted collection) Garden bin subscription related Return of bins after collection Contaminated/rejected bins Crew behaviour Damage to property Bulky waste process Bin replacement 	Reminder/instruction to crews Monitoring of collection Amended advice to customers re Sat collections. Process amended to improve notes between Ops and Customer Services Updating of information on website Site visits by manager System error reported to supplier Collection point moved Liaison with Insurance Offer to amend payment data Advice to customer Map, memo and advice to crew Offer of assisted collection Process improvements for payment collection System improvements for garden bin process
Upheld - 5 Not upheld – 4 Partially upheld – 1 Non-HDC - 1	Street scene (11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Damage to property Delay in carrying out maintenance Damage to grassed area Maintenance of grassed area 	Reminder to team re communication with residents Improvements in street cleansing schedules
Upheld - 2 Not upheld - 4	Parking (6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking fine Issues with parking machine Signage at car park Use of car parks at One Leisure 	Planned collaboration with One Leisure Refund issued
Upheld - 4 Not upheld - 5 Partially upheld – 4	Other (13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faulty lift Issue regarding market trader Maintenance of water course DD process for garden bins 	Improvements made by maintenance company, regular review of contractor, weekly checks of lifts Site visit, liaison with resident

Service	Themes	Actions taken/service improvements
Partially Upheld - 2 Not upheld - 3	Housing Needs (5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues relating to temporary accommodation (X 2) Emergency housing options Issues relating to Home Link application Issues relating to process for validating homelessness 	Apology for delay in response Reminder to staff about information that should be included in correspondence Reminder to staff about ensuring customers aware of personal details needed to be provided to accommodation provider
Community (10) Upheld - 1 Not upheld – 5 Partially upheld - 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way ASB complaints handled Way Environmental Health complaint handled Way in which license application handled Delays in response Way in which noise nuisance complaint handled Way in which noise & odour complaint handled Complaint about employee behaviour Delays in handling Disabled Facility Grant Disagreement with Licensing Decision 	Reminder to team to ensure communication and response times are met Process reviewed; website updated Priority offer of recording equipment Reminder to team to ensure communication and response times are met Advice and reminder to staff Offer to undertake further monitoring Discussion with Team / Officer on ensuring expectations are better managed
Leisure and Health (4) Upheld - 2 Not upheld - 1 Partially upheld - 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility within the gym Booking system Condition of changing rooms Complaint about staff member 	Gym kit layout discussed with supplier Case management system corrected Monitoring of facilities Regular review of teaching standards
Finance and Corporate Services (6) Insurance, Estates, Elections Finance Upheld - 2 Not upheld – 4	Insurance (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delays in response Estates (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention of deposit Elections (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration after deadline Postal votes Ballot papers Finance (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorrect rental payments 	Updated confirmation letter template to ensure that electors understand the legal deadlines for registration Double checking of accounts, process in place to ensure to repeat of issue

Service	Themes	Actions taken/service improvements
Other (2) Upheld – 1 Partially upheld - 1	Building Control (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delays in response 	Process reviews, training, implementing quality assurance

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Higher level complaints themes:

- Dissatisfaction with council employee behaviour – 12
- Dissatisfaction with site facilities – 8
- Dissatisfaction with customer service received – 146
- Failure to respond – 22
- Other - 36

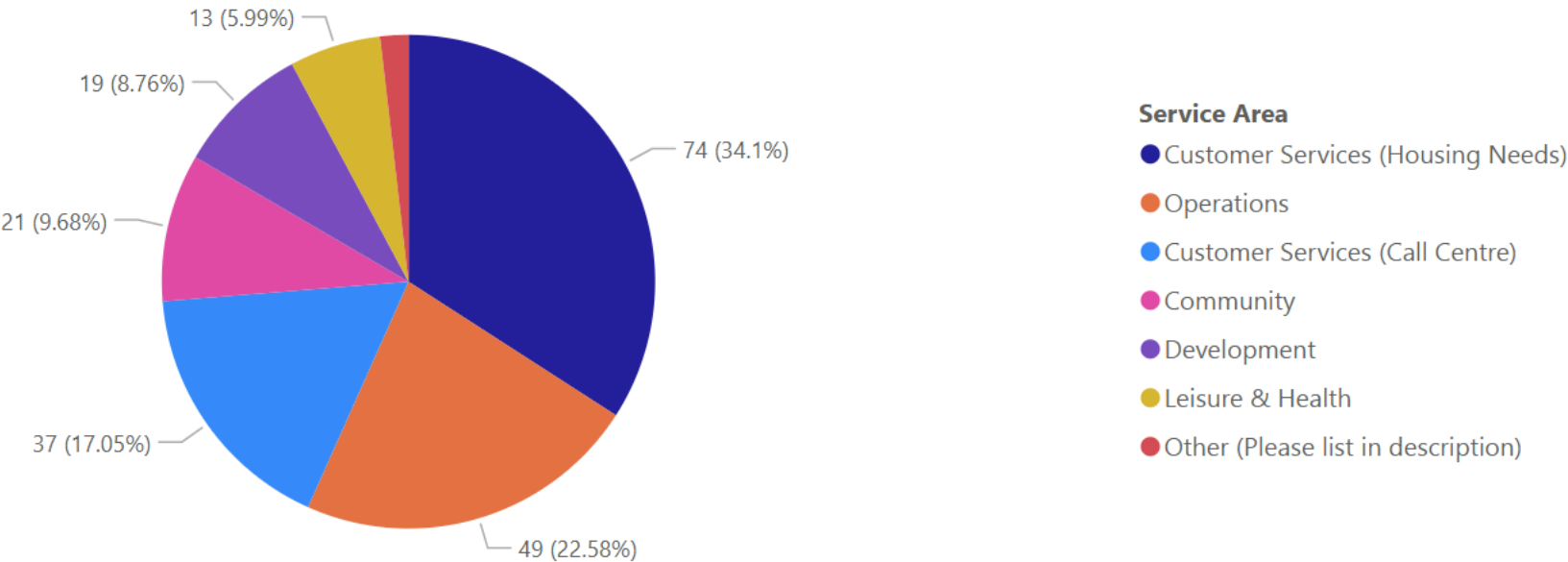
Appendix 4 - 2024/25 Stage Two complaints – summary of themes and actions taken/service improvements (43)

Service	Themes	Actions taken/service improvements
Development & Growth (16) Not upheld - 8 Partially upheld – 2 Not upheld – 4 Not upheld - 2	Planning Applications (10): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way planning application handled Dissatisfaction with decision Delays in decision How neighbour objections considered Planning Enforcement (4): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way in which planning enforcement case handled Complaint about staff member Development/Other (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way in which planning enforcement/noise nuisance case handled Reinstatement of hedging 	Opportunity to provide further clarity New systems to be put in place to ensure that any accepted amendments are uploaded and made public (regardless of assessment of 'material' or otherwise) Opportunity to provide further clarity
Operations (16) Partially upheld (2) Not upheld - 1 Upheld - 2 Not upheld – 6 Partially upheld - 5	Ops/Other (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grounds maintenance issues Market stall issue Street scene (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grounds maintenance issues Waste/recycling (13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missed bins Return of bins to collection point Garden waste subscription service Crew behaviour 	Opportunity to provide further clarity Review of process Opportunity to provide further clarity Telephone call with customers Opportunity to provide further clarity Amendment to route plans and crew guidance Liaison with external agencies Monitoring, site visits and guidance for crews
Customer Services (6) Not upheld (1) Upheld (1)	Customer Services (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How customer handled at reception/flooding issues Information regarding garden bins 	Refund offered

Service	Themes	Actions taken/service improvements
<p>Upheld - 1 Not upheld – 2</p> <p>Partially upheld - 1</p>	<p>Council Tax (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision regarding council tax premium Dissatisfaction with address used for correspondence Decision about council tax liability <p>Benefits (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of communication 	<p>Reassurance re payment plan & advice to team re importance of updating account details Further clarity provided to customer</p> <p>Opportunity to provide further clarity, apology for miscommunication and review of discretionary housing payment application.</p>
<p>Community (3)</p> <p>Not upheld – 1 Partially upheld - 2</p>	<p>Environmental Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing decision Way noise nuisance complaints handled 	<p>Opportunity to provide further clarity Offer of noise nuisance recording again to assist with on-going issue Case review</p>
<p>Leisure and Health (1)</p> <p>Not upheld - 1</p>	<p>Leasing issue</p>	
<p>Finance and Corporate Services (1) Not upheld - 1</p>	<p>Estates (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition of unit/deposit 	<p>Opportunity to provide further clarity</p>

Appendix 5 - Compliments

COMPLIMENTS BY SERVICE



2024 indicates Corporate year 2024/2025

Service Area	2024	Total	2024/25	2023/24
Community	21	21	217 Compliments	206 Compliments
Customer Services (Call Centre)	37	37	224 complaints	206 complaints
Customer Services (Housing Needs)	74	74	<div>Staff compliments staff on: to guide customers through difficult situations with empathy and problem-solving giving support to those experiencing homelessness and complex personal struggles effort and dedication towards preventing homelessness support for care leavers support with resolving debt issues</div>	
Development	19	19		
Leisure & Health	13	13		
Operations	49	49		
Other (Please list in description)	4	4		
Total	217	217		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for people experiencing domestic violence • Partnership working to resolve issues around housing needs for clients.
Operations (49)	<p>Residents complimented staff on the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great job clearing verges • Hard work and skills of refuse/recycling crews • Kindness shown when returning bins • Professionalism and politeness shown by crew • Great job done by road sweeper and street cleansers • Prompt removal of fly tipping • Kindness and flexibility shown by bulky waste collection crew • Speed in which missed bins collected and fallen tree removed.
Customer Services/Call Centre (37)	<p>Residents complimented staff on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance in getting council tax query resolved • Assistance in arranging assisted collection • Showing compassion and support when customers are going through hardship • Support when using online forms was a barrier • Support to link account to online portal • Support for ordering additional bin • Positive customer experience when providing housing advice • Skills at calming tense situations and reassuring customers.
Community (21)	<p>Residents complimented staff on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation for guidance and professionalism during an inspection • Prompt removal of fly tipping and updates • Resident felt listened to and supported during a tough time • Problem solving and proactive support to resolve anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance • Support during licensing process • Prompt response to queries and processing of licensing application.
Development (19)	<p>Residents complimented staff on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put us at ease with a professional yet friendly approach, and gave valuable time and guidance • Kind and supportive team, felt heard and understood

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their can-do attitude and practical approach turned a complex application into something achievable, offering clear solutions to the challenges we faced • Speedy response and great service • Team members were thorough and gave residents a clear, helpful update • The customer thanked the officer for their support and reassurance during a difficult time. They said the outcome restored their trust in local government and the process.
Leisure & Health (13)	<p>Residents complimented staff on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation and support • A brilliant job building strong relationships with the children • Created a fun, engaging and learning environment • How good the country park looked and how well managed it is • In-depth understanding of the park and its habitats.
Other (4)	Compliments around gratitude for park facilities, flower beds and staff kindness.

Appendix 6 LGO Neighbouring Authority Statistics

Cambridgeshire Councils	Detailed investigations decided (by outcome) 2024/25	Uphold rate <i>Average uphold rate (decisions per 100,000 residents).</i>	Complaints and enquiries (Decided)
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	Not upheld	Upheld		2024/25
Huntingdonshire (*population 180,800)	0	1	0.5% (1.1)	17
South Cambridgeshire (*population 162,000)	0	1	0.6 (1.1)	10
Cambridge City (population 145,700)	0	0	N/A	15
Fenland (*population 102,500)	2	0	0% (1.1)	11
East Cambridgeshire (*population 87,700)	0	1	0% (1.1)	7
Cambridgeshire County Council	5	18	2.6% (5.3)	79

A number of cases will have been received and decided in different business years; this means the number of complaints and enquiries received will not always match the number of decisions made.

In 2022-23 the LGO changed their investigation processes, contributing towards an increase in the average uphold rate across all complaints, therefore advisable to consider comparing individual council uphold rates against the average rate rather than against previous years. * [Cambridgeshire Insight – Population – Census 2021 – First Results](#)