

**CABINET - 12 SEPTEMBER 2025****CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS  
ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the Council's Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
2. The Annual Report includes information on complaint handling performance for cases managed under the Corporate Complaint Procedure and includes trends, themes, and matters of general importance.
3. The Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024-2025 is appended to this report.

**Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that the Cabinet notes the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024-2025.

**Reasons for Recommendation**

5. To ensure good governance and oversight of complaint handling performance and responsiveness.

**Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

6. The Scrutiny Commission will consider the Annual Report at its meeting on 8 September 2025, and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. Leicestershire County Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure requires the production of an annual report pertaining to cases managed under the Corporate Complaints Procedure (paragraph 6.1 'Publishing complaints data'). Annual reports are available on the Council's website.

8. Additionally, statutory complaints processes set out requirements for reporting annual performance and this is mirrored in recommended reporting arrangements set out in the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code, 'Organisations should produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge' (paragraph 8.1 of the Complaint Handling Code).<sup>1</sup>

### **Resource Implications**

9. There are no resource implications arising from this report.
10. The Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on this report.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

11. None.

### **Officer(s) to Contact**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/information-for-organisations-we-investigate/complaint-handling-code/complaint-handling-code?chapter=9>

## **PART B**

### **Background**

12. The Council manages and coordinates complaints using one of three policies and associated processes, these are:
  - a) Children's Social Care Complaints Policy (statutory).
  - b) Adult Social Care Complaints Policy (statutory).
  - c) Corporate Complaints Procedure (complaints relating to other services provided by the Council where there is no access to a statutory complaint procedure).
13. An annual report is produced for each policy, with complaints managed under the Corporate Complaints Procedure as the primary subject of this report. However, please note the attached Annual Report does include some figures in relation to statutory case volumes for completeness.
14. The Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report is considered by the Scrutiny Commission in line with its function to scrutinise the Council's performance and good governance practice. The Annual Report has also been considered by the Cabinet since 2022.
15. The annual reports relating to the two statutory processes are considered at their respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees in September of each year.
16. The Council's Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report is produced by the Complaints and Information Service. It includes information on complaints handling performance, trends, key themes and matters of general importance pertaining to complaints managed under the Corporate Complaints Procedure, compliments, as well as wider case information.
17. The Annual Report also provides information on operational definitions and the analysis methodology for clarity and ease of interpretation.

### **Headlines (2023-24 comparative data is in brackets)**

#### **Demand/Volume**

18. For 2024/25:
  - a) A total of 1,287 corporate complaints were received – a 12% decrease (1,470) from 2023/2024.
  - b) The Children and Family Services and Environment and Transport departments consistently present as the top two departments in terms of volume due to Special Educational Needs Assessments (SENA) and School and Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport related complaints.

- c) A total of 67 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) enquiries were received – a 20% decrease (84) from 2023/2024.

### Performance

19. The five service areas with the highest volume of closed complaints in 2024/2025 were:

- SENA (446 cases closed)
- School and SEN Transport (132 cases closed)
- Child Protection (120 cases closed)
- Drainage (73 cases closed)
- Child in Need (51 cases closed)

The Annual Report highlights work within the SENA service to continue to improve communication and the duration of the needs assessment.

### Stage 1 response times

20. During 2024/2025, the percentage of complaints responded to within 10 and 20 working days decreased from the previous year. However, 93% were responded to within 40 working days, which is the maximum recommended response time by the ombudsman. This is an improvement from 2023/2024 (90%). There remain some pressures particularly around SEN complaints which has affected overall response timescales.

21. The breakdown is as follows:

- 44% of all complaints received a response within 10 working days.
- 71% received a response within 20 working days.
- 93% received a response within the maximum 40 working days.

### Escalation to stage 2 and response times

22. If a complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of stage 1, they may request further consideration of their complaint. Such requests will be considered under stage 2 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure.
23. In 2024/2025 75 complaints escalated to stage 2 (a 6% decrease from 23/24), this escalation profile has, positively, had a decreasing trajectory since 2022/2023 (see below for figures). This means fewer complainants have requested a stage 2 review year on year.
- 2024/2025 75 escalations
  - 2023/2024 80 escalations
  - 2022/2023 82 escalations

24. Of stage 2 complaints, 51% received a response within 20 working days. This has decreased from 2023/24 (61%).

### **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Enquiries**

25. The LGSCO received 122 enquiries in 2024/2025 compared to 104 in 2023/2024 (a 17% increase).

### **Decisions Upheld**

26. A total of 40 (33%) of the 122 enquiries received by the LGSCO were investigated, with 33 of the 40 upheld; an uphold rate of 83%. The average uphold rate for similar authorities, as reported by the LGSCO, is 89% for 2024/2025. Adjusted for the County Council's population, this is 4.5 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. The average for similar authorities (as reported by the LGSCO) is 5.3 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents, demonstrating above average performance.
27. For comparison, the 2023/2024 dataset, showed 83% of complaints were upheld, with an average of 85% in similar authorities, giving 4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents, with an average of 4.5 for the County Council.

### **Upheld Cases**

28. Most upheld cases related to SENA (15) and financial assessment (10) for care and support.
29. It is worth noting that in the LGSCO's Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2024-25 report it said, 'Education and Children's complaints, and in particular the growing issues with special educational needs provision, made up 27% of the cases we received during the year, and made up 48% of cases we upheld. We found fault in more cases this year, with 91% upheld. We continue to maintain the view that urgent change is required to national policy on support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and we await the Government white paper, now expected in Autumn 2025.'

### **Public Reports and Compliance**

30. The LGSCO monitors remedies being carried out by the Council where fault has been found and remedial actions proposed. Failure to carry out remedies within agreed timeframes is recorded as non-compliance.
31. Cases that raise serious issues, highlight matters of public interest, or cases of non-compliance can lead to the LGSCO issuing a Public Report.
32. The LGSCO did not issue any public reports against the Council during 2024/2025, and the Council complied with all recommendations made by the LGSCO.

### **Remedy Payments**

33. The Council continues to have regard to the LGSCO's guidance on remedies, and this has prevented several complaints escalating through appropriate local settlement offers.
34. Financial payments made across Corporate Complaints decreased by £6,109 (22%) from £27,222 in 2023/2024 to £21,113 to 2024/2025. Whilst this is positive, it should be cautioned that this figure does not include redress offered by the Council at the local stages of its procedure.

### **Compliments**

35. The number of compliments received in 2024/2025 was 393. This is a 7% decrease (422) from 2023/2024.
36. The Adults and Communities and Environment and Transport departments have consistently presented as the top two departments receiving compliments throughout the reporting periods shown in the Annual Report (page 10).
37. From a service perspective, Libraries, Heritage and Museums (a service within the Adults & Communities Department) received 57% of the 393 received in 2024/25. This service has received the most compliments in the last three reporting periods, reflecting the value residents place on this provision.
38. The Complaints and Information Service continue to encourage the recording of compliments.

### **Conclusion**

39. Complaints can be valuable in helping to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld, but also sometimes in cases where no fault was found but the opportunity to improve services is identified.
40. Remedial action typically consists of both individual redress (e.g., apology, carrying out overdue work) and wider actions, such as a review of a process. Page 23 of the Annual Report highlights examples of action taken and a selection is included within this report:
  - New system implemented for efficient payments and staff training provided on process for issuing refunds.
  - Blue badge process reviewed, and new process implemented.
  - New designated bus stop in response to complaint regarding location.
41. Occasionally issues will emerge that need to be addressed over and above the original complaint. The Complaints and Information Team will always seek

to look at the “bigger picture” to ensure that residents receive the best possible service from the Council.

### **Equality Implications**

42. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Human Rights Implications**

43. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Background Papers**

Corporate Complaints Procedure

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/corporate-complaints-policy-2023.pdf>

Report to the Cabinet on 13 September 2024 - Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2023/24

<https://cexmodgov01/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=7509>

### **Appendix**

Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024-2025

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