

Report Template

Signing-off Sheet

Title of Report:	Annual Complaints Report		
Name of Meeting:	Audit and Risk Committee	Date of Meeting:	October 2026
This Report is currently listed on the Forward Plan: (Yes / No)			

	Name of consultee:	Clearance given: (Yes / No)
Required Consultees on Draft Report (these must be consulted or an explanation given i.e. not relevant)		
Cabinet Member(s):	CLlr Dominic Twomey	
Ward Members (for Ward related issues)	N/A	N/A
Departmental Finance (via financialimplication@lbbd.gov.uk)	Nurul Alom	Yes
Corporate Risk (via kevin.key@lbbd.gov.uk)	Natalia Monvoisin	Yes
Corporate Procurement (via ProcurementImplications@lbbd.gov.uk)	N/A	N/A
HR (via hrcabinetclearance@lbbd.gov.uk)	N/A	N/A
Legal Practice (via legalimplications@lbbd.gov.uk)	Dr Paul Field	Yes
Corporate Policy and Equality Impact (via Ce-Strategy@lbbd.gov.uk)	N/A	N/A
Property/Asset Management (via TBC)	N/A	N/A
Adults' and Children's Safeguarding (via elaine.allegretti@lbbd.gov.uk)	N/A	N/A
Public Health and Community Safety (via matthew.cole@lbbd.gov.uk) mailto: ACSimplications@lbbd.gov.uk	N/A	N/A
Community Safety (via tbc)	N/A	N/A
Net Zero (via neil.pearce@lbbd.gov.uk)	N/A	N/A
Other Consultees (including external bodies): (To be completed as appropriate)	N/A	N/A

Audit and Risk Committee

October 2026

Title: Annual Complaints Report	
Report of the Chief Executive Officer	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
Report Author: Danielle Bridge Customer Feedback Team Manager	Contact Details: Tel: 020 8277 2111 E-mail: danielle.bridge@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Natalia Monvoisin, Director of Customer Experience	
Accountable Executive Team Director: Fiona Taylor Chief Executive Officer	
Summary To meet our regulatory obligations, we compile an annual complaints report that reflects data collected throughout the financial year. This report offers a detailed summary of the Customer Feedback Team's activities, covering complaints, members' casework, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, and Subject Access Requests (SAR). The report plays a key role in evaluating the council's performance against targets for complaints and members' casework. It also supports continuous improvement by identifying service gaps and outlining actions taken to enhance delivery and responsiveness. Additionally, legislation requires a separate annual report for Care and Support services. This ensures transparency and reinforces the council's commitment to accountability across all service areas.	
Recommendation(s) The Audit and Risk Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Customer Feedback Team is responsible for overseeing and managing all complaints, members' casework, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, Subject Access Requests (SARs), and Data Protection queries. This report outlines overall performance across these areas, with a focus on individual service areas and any recurring issues that require attention.

- 1.2 We currently utilise a case management system, which has been in place since January 2016, which enables the team to log, monitor, and track all submitted casework efficiently.
- 1.3 The council operates several key information governance processes, all coordinated by the Customer Feedback Team. These include:

Complaints – The council encourages residents to raise concerns through our two stage corporate complaints process. Stage one aims for a response within 10 working days. If unresolved, a stage two review can be requested within 28 working days, with a target response time of 20 working days.

Further to this should the complainant be dissatisfied they can escalate the complaint to the relevant Ombudsman either the Housing Ombudsman or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Their annual report is attached.

Our target is to respond to 90% of complaints within these timeframes.

In addition to this process, there are certain services where there is a statutory complaints process that has to be followed and these are for complaints regarding Social Care, Schools, Councillors and Reports of Fraud.

Members' Casework – MPs and councillors can submit casework on behalf of residents. These are subject to a 10-working day response target, with a 90% performance benchmark.

Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulations – Under the FOI Act, the council must provide access to held information, subject to exemptions. The statutory response time is 20 working days, with a 95% compliance target set by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Subject Access Requests – In line with GDPR, individuals can request access to personal data held by the council. The council must respond within one calendar month, with a 90% performance target.

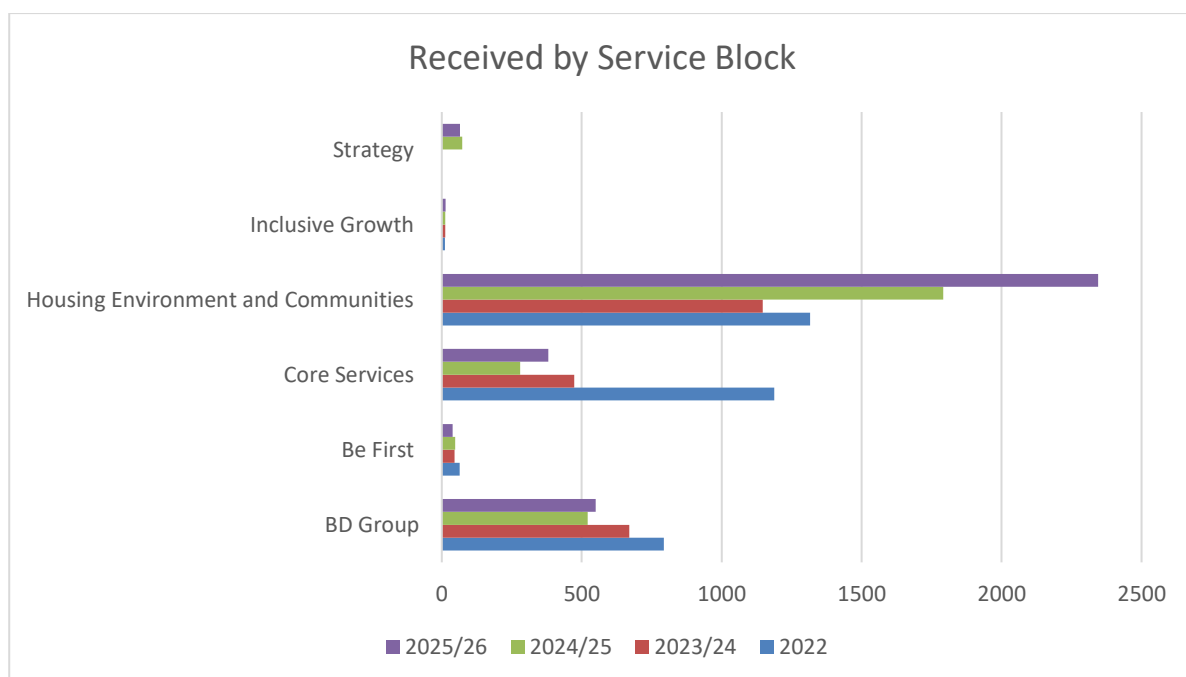
2. Corporate Complaints

- 2.1 When reviewing the data presented in this report, it is important to consider the wide range of services the council delivers to residents and to view the volume of complaints in that broader context.
- 2.2 The following data outlines the number of complaints received by each service area. Please note that this does not include People and Resilience services as we are required under legislation to produce separate reports for these areas which are contained as an appendix.
- 2.3 In 2025/26, the total number of complaints increased by 18% compared to 2024/25. While an increase of this nature could be interpreted negatively, it should also be viewed in the context of improved resident awareness and confidence in using the complaints process. This suggests that residents are more willing to have their voices heard, providing valuable insight to shape service delivery and drive improvement.

However, this increase may also reflect underlying pressures within key service areas, including demand growth, process inefficiencies, or gaps in communication and timeliness. It therefore remains important to analyse complaint trends alongside performance data to ensure that rising volumes are not masking avoidable service issues, and that learning is translated into measurable service improvements.

- 2.4 79% of complaints were responded to within the target timeframe, this falls short of the corporate set target of 90%, highlighting an area for focused improvement. Comparing our performance year on year we remain within the same range +/- 5%.

Complaints Received			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
BD Group	670	521	550
Be First	46	48	39
Core Services	473	280	381
Housing Environment and Communities	1,147	1,792	2,345
Inclusive Growth	12	12	14
Strategy	N/A	73	65
Total	2,901	2,872	3,394



- 2.5 The tables below identify the outcome for complaints resolved in this period alongside how each service block performed in this area. Upheld complaints continue to provide a good basis for the council to consider how we can improve our services offered. You will note that the figures below differ from our overall complaints total. This is due to at the time of reporting a number of complaints remaining open therefore no outcome can be provided.

Complaint Outcomes		
Upheld	857	27%

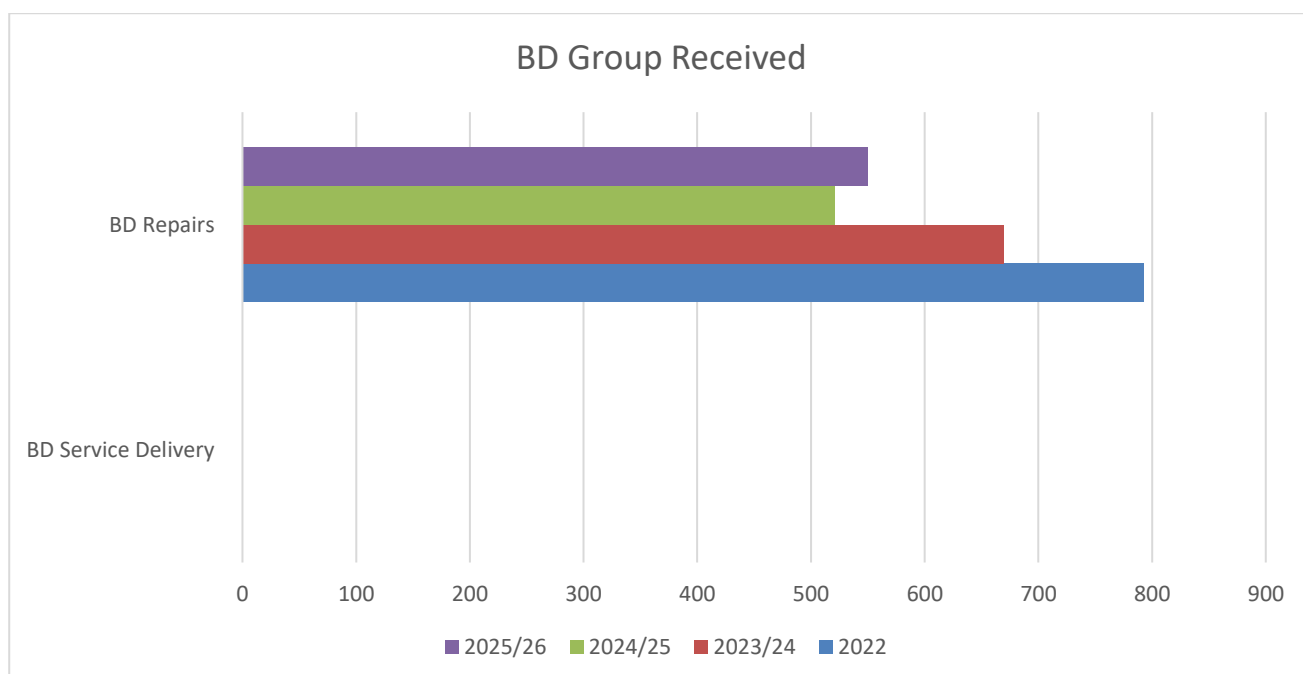
Not Upheld	1,411	45%
Partly Upheld	759	24%
Resolved at first point of contact	79	3%
Withdrawn	51	2%
Total	3,157	

Directorate Performance by %						
	% In Time	Upheld	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Resolved	Withdrawn
BD Group	59%	29%	20%	39%	1%	1%
Be First	28%	5%	49%	10%	8%	0%
Core Services	89%	24%	46%	18%	6%	1%
Inclusive Growth	71%	14%	64%	14%	0%	0%
HEC	82%	25%	46%	19%	2%	2%
Strategy	88%	34%	22%	37%	2%	2%

- 2.6 In 2025/26, 27% of complaints were upheld a decrease from 28% in 2024/25 this remains below the 50% mark. While the decrease is modest, it still reflects that in many cases, investigations do not uncover evidence of service failure.
- 2.7 The council remains committed to using feedback from complaints to drive service improvements. We have implemented a Customer Focus Board which is placing a magnifying glass on how we are delivering our services and how we can improve to further reduce the number of complaints made. The Customer Feedback Team are also directly working with service areas to assist in identifying areas of improvement and how these can be rectified. Later in this report, we will explore the specific lessons learned across each service.

3. BD Group

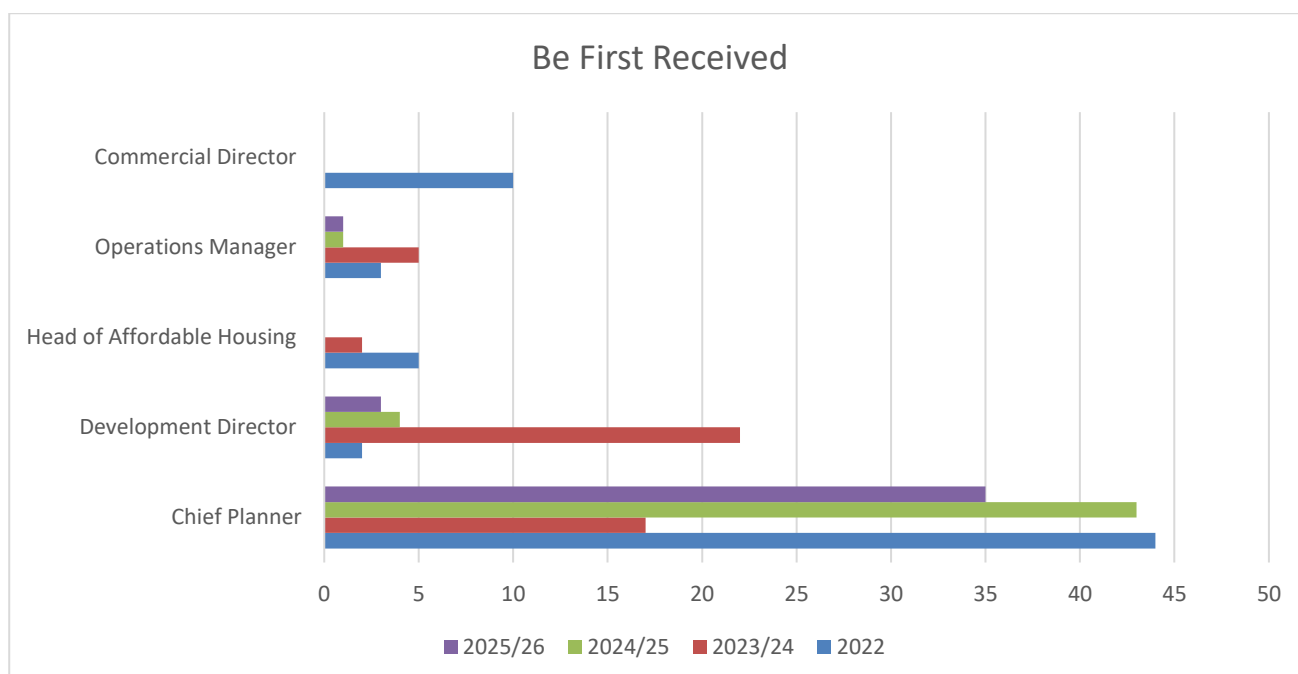
Stage 1 Complaints Received BD Group			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
BD Service Delivery	0	0	0
BDMS	670	521	550
Total	670	521	550



- 3.1 BD Group offers both paid services to our schools in Borough including catering and cleaning as well as repairs and maintenance. BD Group are responsible for the repairs within the council's housing stock.
- 3.2 Delays, repeat visits and unclear ownership in repairs and maintenance led to prolonged unresolved issues and reduced resident confidence.
- 3.3 Damp and mould complaints highlighted a lack of root-cause resolution and poor communication, with issues frequently recurring.
- 3.4 Communication failures were a consistent driver of dissatisfaction, particularly where residents were not kept informed or had to repeatedly chase.
- 3.5 Delays and poor follow-up had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable residents, increasing concerns around safety, wellbeing and trust in services.
- 3.6 Further review of this area is contained within the separate annual report for Housing contained as an appendix. The learning and review of this area of complaint is contained within the separate annual report for Housing Services contained as an appendix.

4. Be First

Stage 1 Complaints Received Be First			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Chief Planner	17	43	35
Development Director	22	4	3
Head of Affordable Housing	2	0	0
Operations Manager	5	1	1
Commercial Director	0	0	0
Total	46	48	39

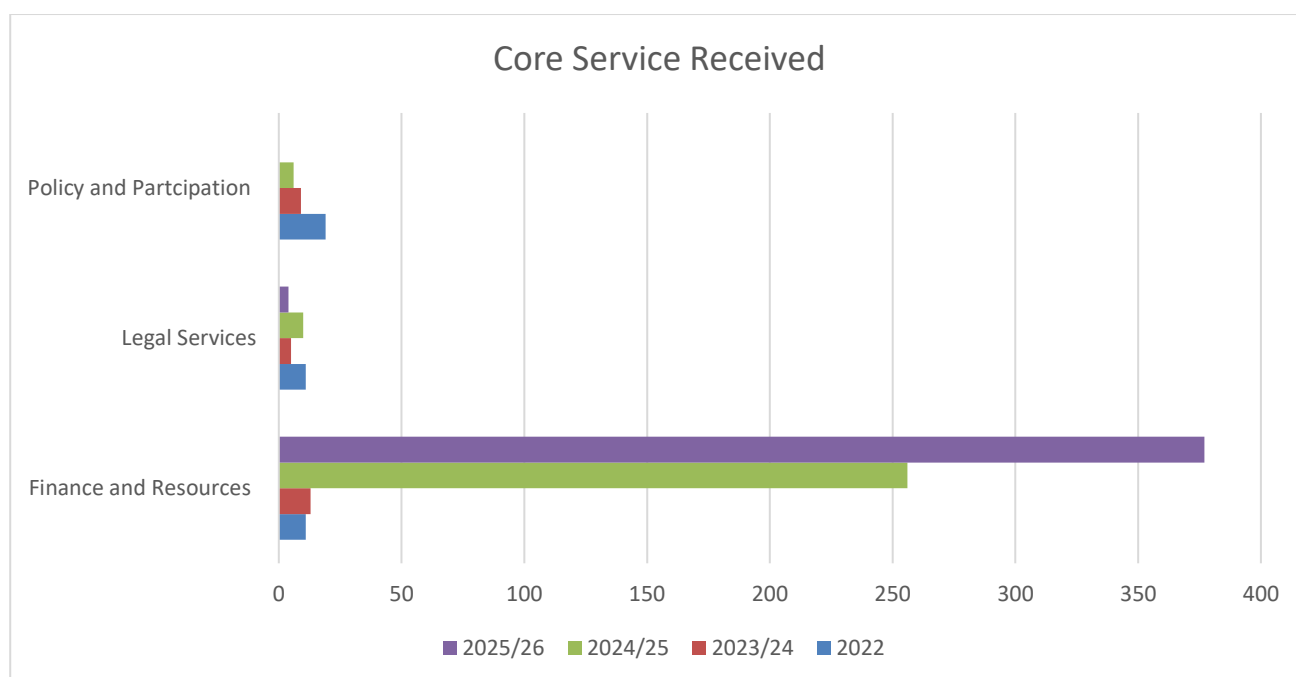


- 4.1 Be First delivers a range of place-based services on behalf of the Council, including planning and development management, building control, highways and transport schemes, regeneration, and land and asset-related functions. Complaints received during the year reflect the high-profile and statutory nature of these services, particularly where decisions directly affect residents or generate significant public interest.
- 4.2 The Chief Planner service continues to generate the highest volume of complaints within Be First. This is largely due to its direct engagement with residents on planning applications, objections, enforcement matters, and transport-related schemes. Common themes include delays in communication, lack of consultation, and dissatisfaction with how objections are considered, particularly in cases involving retrospective applications or perceived impacts on residential amenity.
- 4.3 Complaints relating to transport and highways remain prominent. These frequently concern the design, implementation, and communication of traffic management measures, including School Street zones, parking restrictions, signage changes, and road safety schemes. A recurring issue is insufficient advance communication and meaningful consultation, leading to confusion about restrictions, access arrangements, and enforcement. School Street schemes in particular continue to drive complaint volumes due to their direct impact on residents' access, parking, and daily travel.
- 4.4 Building Control and regeneration-related complaints commonly focus on delays, post-warranty defects, and clarity around responsibility where multiple organisations or contractors are involved. While overall complaint volumes in some Be First services remain relatively low, performance challenges have been identified, particularly around timeliness, consistency of communication, and management of resident expectations. We have been working with Be First to embed learning and deliver a more responsive service to complaints. Part of this was supporting with access to Icaswork so that not only could they track the cases received but also gain a picture of the service improvements required.

- 4.5 Be First are working closely with the Local Authority complaints team to increase the performance which has been reported as well as increasing the learning which can be taken from our complaints.

6. Core Services

Stage 1 Complaints Received Core Services			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Finance and Resources	13	256	377
Legal Services	5	10	4
Policy and Participation	9	6	0
Total	473	280	381



- 6.1 Core Services delivers high-volume statutory and income-related functions that have a direct financial impact on residents and businesses. Review of complaints indicates that issues are not spread evenly across services but are concentrated within a small number of transactional areas. The areas which are mentioned are Council Tax, Benefits and Rent all of which are directly resident facing services. The themes identified largely reflect pressure points within systems and processes, rather than isolated service failure.
- 6.2 Core Services took responsibility for Welfare and Debt within 24/25 and this is behind the clear increase in this service area.
- 6.2 Council Tax continues to generate the highest number of complaints within Core Services. The majority relate to billing disputes, disputed liability periods, and delays in applying discounts and exemptions. Complaints frequently arise where changes in circumstance are reported but not actioned promptly, leading to continued billing or recovery action. These cases are more likely to escalate where enforcement activity progresses before corrections are made.

In response, a targeted Council Tax improvement programme is underway, informed directly by complaint themes and wider customer contact data. This is

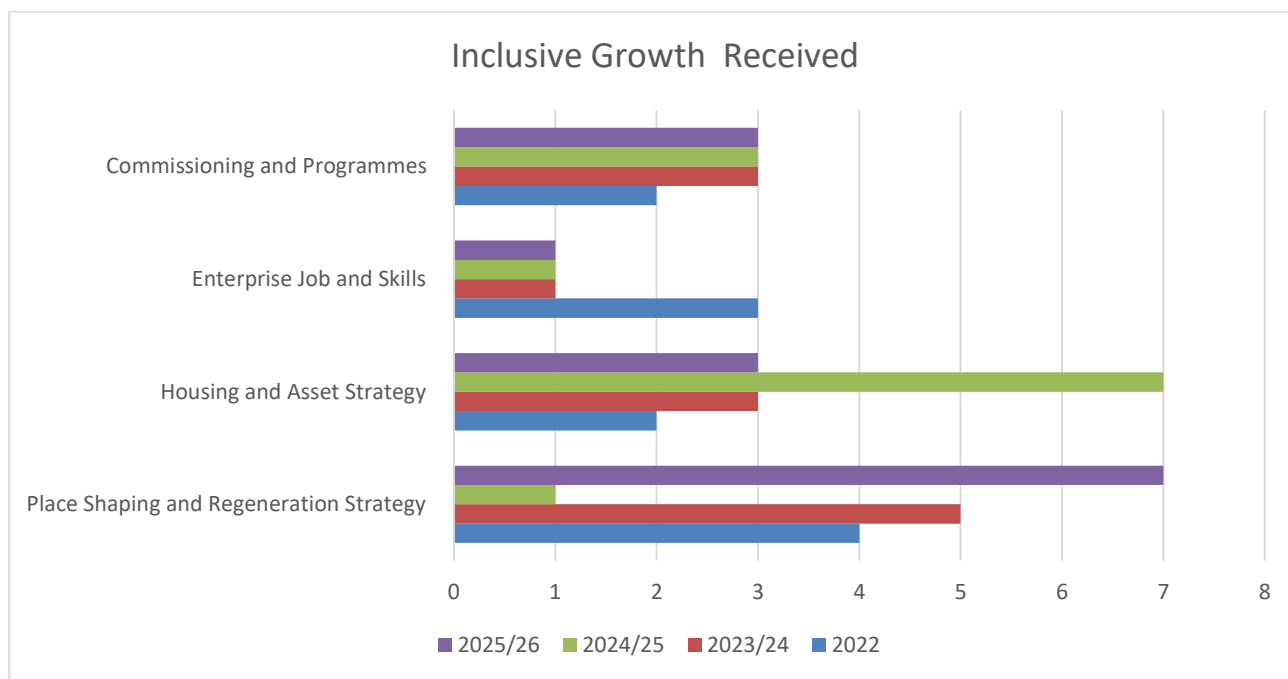
focused on improving the timeliness and accuracy of account updates, strengthening coordination between customer contact and back-office processes, and reducing avoidable escalation through clearer communication and earlier resolution. The use of insight from complaints and demand data is enabling the Council to address root causes, streamline processes, and improve the overall customer experience in this high-volume service area.

- 6.3 Delays in communication remain a consistent theme across Core Services. Complainants often report repeated attempts to make contact without receiving timely updates. Lack of clear progress information, particularly when automated correspondence continues to be issued, contributes to frustration and a perception that enquiries are not being addressed.
- 6.4 Complaints relating to payments and refunds commonly involve delays in issuing credits, misallocated payments, or refunds being offset against future liabilities. Recovery-related complaints highlight the tension between automated enforcement processes and slower dispute resolution, particularly where accounts remain under review.
- 6.5 Cases involving vulnerability, including health issues, disability, bereavement or caring responsibilities, feature prominently within escalated complaints. While outcomes are often constrained by legislation, dissatisfaction is frequently linked to how decisions are explained and the extent to which individual circumstances are acknowledged.
- 6.6 As in previous years, many complaints relate to matters governed by national legislation, limiting the Council's discretion. Review indicates that dissatisfaction is more commonly associated with communication, timing and process, rather than the legality of decisions themselves.
- 6.7 Learning from complaints continues to inform improvement activity across Core Services. The themes identified reinforce the importance of timely communication, clearer case progression, and better alignment between customer contact, account updates and recovery processes to reduce avoidable escalation.
- 6.8. A cross-council change programme has been established to address inefficiencies in key processes identified through complaint and contact insight. The programme provides structured oversight, prioritising high-impact areas where poor processes are driving avoidable demand, delays and customer dissatisfaction. Through this approach, services are being supported to redesign processes, clarify ownership, and embed more consistent, customer-focused ways of working, with progress tracked through regular performance review and accountability at senior level.

7. Inclusive Growth

Stage 1 Complaints Received Inclusive Growth			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Place Shaping and Regeneration Strategy	5	1	7

Housing and Asset Strategy	3	7	3
Enterprise Job and Skills	1	1	1
Commissioning and Programmes	3	3	3
Total	12	12	14

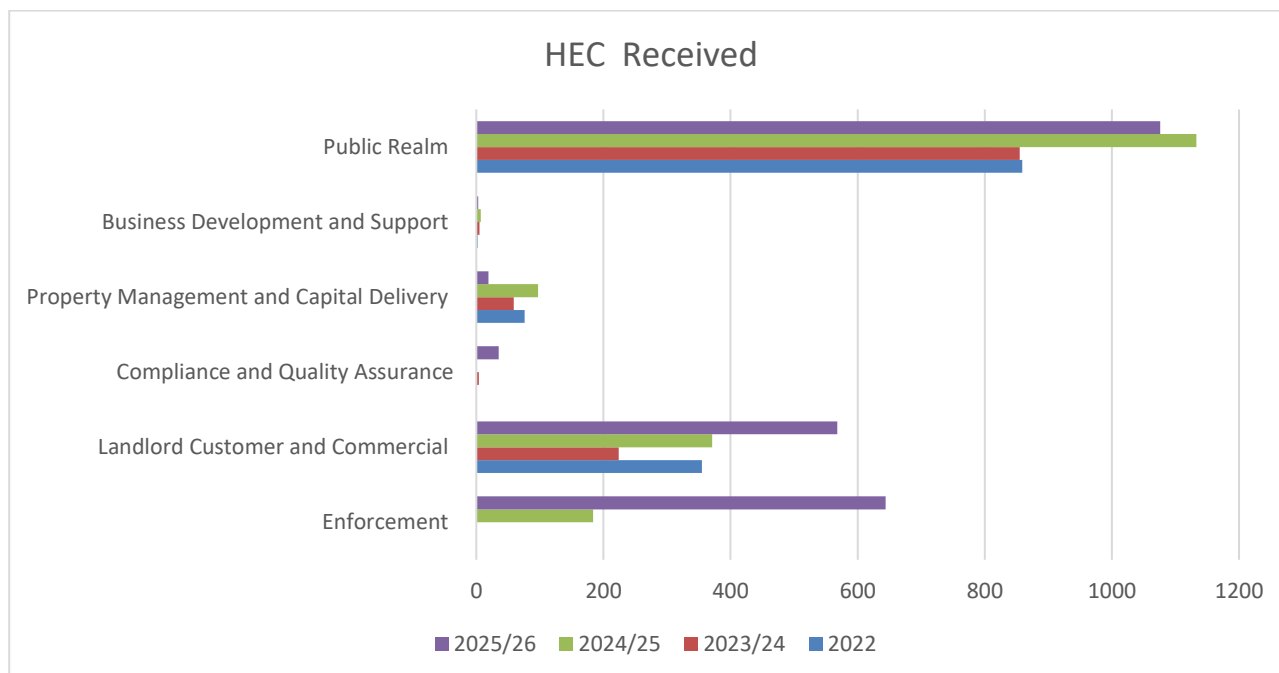


- 7.1 Complaints within Inclusive Growth are relatively low in volume but tend to involve complex issues with a higher potential for escalation. Themes identified through review commonly relate to delivery delays, quality concerns, and clarity of responsibility, particularly where services are delivered through programmes, projects, or external partners.
- 7.2 A recurring driver of dissatisfaction is uncertainty and lack of timely communication, especially where works are postponed, funding constraints affect delivery, or responsibilities sit across multiple parties. In these cases, complaints are more likely to arise from unmet expectations or lack of clear updates, rather than service failure alone.
- 7.3 Overall, learning from complaints highlights the importance of early expectation-setting, clear ownership, and proactive communication, particularly for longer-term or multi-agency activity where outcomes may be constrained by funding, contractual or regulatory factors.

8. Housing Environment and Communities (HEC)

Stage 1 Housing Environment and Communities			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Enforcement	0	184	644
Director of Housing	224	371	568
Compliance and Quality Assurance	4	0	35

Property Management and Capital Delivery	59	97	19
Business Development and Support	5	7	3
Public Realm	855	1,133	1,076
Total	1,147	1,792	2,345

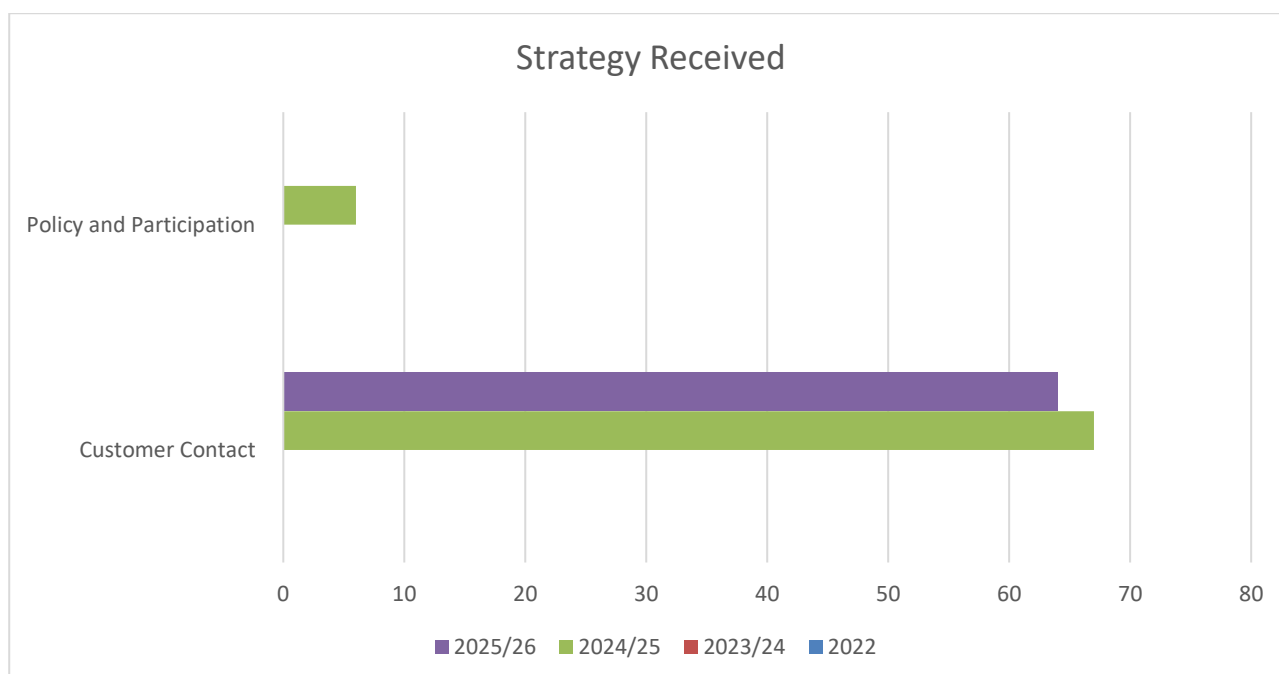


- 8.1 The Housing, Environment and Communities (HEC) directorate delivers a wide range of high-impact, resident-facing services, including homelessness prevention, housing allocations and temporary accommodation, alongside core environmental and regulatory functions. Complaints within this directorate frequently arise at points where residents are experiencing heightened vulnerability, uncertainty or distress, and expectations of support, clarity and responsiveness are correspondingly high.
- 8.2 You see a substantial increase in the numbers of complaints within in Enforcement this is due to an in year structure change in which Parking Services were moved from Public Realm to Enforcement to compliment the nature of work undertaken in this service area.
- 8.3 A substantial proportion of complaints relate to housing-related services, particularly homelessness assessments, allocation processes and temporary accommodation. These complaints often focus on communication, timeliness, consistency of advice and staff interaction, rather than the application of statutory thresholds alone. Residents regularly describe feelings of uncertainty or anxiety where updates are delayed, information changes, or decisions are not clearly explained, which can amplify dissatisfaction even where procedures have been followed correctly.
- 8.4 Alongside housing, complaints also remain concentrated within refuse and recycling, parking enforcement and other visible frontline services. Within waste and recycling, recurring themes include missed or incomplete collections, assisted collection concerns and perceived lack of resolution where problems reoccur. The cumulative impact of repeat service issues, particularly where hygiene or accessibility is affected, is a common driver for escalation.

- 8.5 Parking-related complaints continue to reflect frustration with penalty charge notice processes, perceived inconsistency in advice, and limited scope to resolve complex cases at first point of contact. These concerns are often heightened where enforcement intersects with disability, caring responsibilities or financial hardship, reinforcing the importance of clarity, empathy and accurate information.
- 8.6 Unclear service responsibility and teams passing issues between each other delayed resolution and reduced resident confidence in the service.
- 8.7 Communication failures drove escalation, with residents reporting poor updates, unclear ownership and repeated chasing with no progress.
- 8.8 Dissatisfaction often stemmed from lack of transparency rather than delays themselves, leaving residents feeling ignored or “in limbo.”
- 8.9 Housing and estate complaints highlighted ongoing issues with cleanliness, safety, antisocial behaviour and unresolved environmental concerns.
- 8.10 Across the directorate, complaint learning consistently points to the central role of clear communication, realistic expectation-setting and continuity of case handling, particularly within services that residents may need urgently or rely on daily. Where residents feel listened to and kept informed, acceptance of outcomes is higher, even in challenging circumstances.
- 8.11 Further information is contained within the appendix Housing Complaints Report which evidences themes and potential learning insights.

9. Strategy

Stage 1 Complaints Received Strategy			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Customer Contact	0	67	64
Policy and Participation	0	6	1
Total	0	73	65



- 9.1 The Director of Strategy portfolio incorporates a significant number of front-facing, high-volume services, meaning resident experience is shaped primarily by accessibility, responsiveness and staff interaction. Review of complaints indicates that dissatisfaction is most commonly driven by how residents experience contact with the Council, rather than disagreement with decisions or policies. The Director of Strategy is still a relatively new Directorate and the reason that the numbers showing are not in the same region as others included in the report.
- 9.2 A dominant theme is difficulty accessing services through telephone and digital channels, including long waiting times, call disconnections, complex menus and limited alternative contact options. These barriers are particularly impactful for residents who are elderly, disabled, neurodiverse, have mental health needs, or require reasonable adjustments. Where residents feel unable to speak to a person or progress an issue, frustration escalates quickly and often results in formal complaint.
- 9.3 While some complaints reference concerns about staff conduct, tone and empathy, particularly within contact centre and out-of-hours environments, it is important to recognise that all calls are routinely monitored and quality assured. This, combined with ongoing coaching and support for officers, ensures that communication standards and the overall customer experience remain a key priority.
- Feedback of this nature is used constructively to reinforce expectations around respectful, empathetic engagement, particularly in high-pressure or distressing situations. It highlights the importance residents place on feeling listened to and understood, and continues to inform targeted coaching and service improvements to strengthen consistency and quality of interaction across all channels.
- 9.4 Across the portfolio, complaints continue to highlight inconsistency in advice and communication, with residents reporting conflicting information, repeated requests for the same details, and uncertainty around ownership of issues. This can

contribute to a perception of disjointed service delivery.

In response, improvements are being progressed through enhanced digital channels, including clearer, more accessible information and better signposting to reduce reliance on repeated contact. This is being supported by a broader Information and Guidance Improvement Plan, aimed at strengthening consistency of messaging, clarifying service ownership, and improving the quality and accessibility of information across all customer touchpoints.

- 9.5 Overall, learning from complaints reinforces the need for accessible contact routes, consistent and compassionate communication, and proportionate flexibility for vulnerable residents, particularly within high-demand frontline services where resident anxiety is already elevated.
- 9.6 Throughout this reporting period services in Strategy have utilised technology advancements to provide a more consistent service for our residents based on feedback provided. An example of this is the planned launch of WhatsApp within the next three months as a recognised and trusted customer channel. This will provide residents with a more accessible, convenient and responsive way to engage with the Council, helping to remove barriers to contact and improve overall inclusivity. The introduction of WhatsApp also supports greater consistency in service delivery, enabling more structured, trackable interactions and clearer communication.

As part of a wider approach to digital enablement, it will help standardise responses, reduce repeat contact, and ensure residents receive timely, accurate information through a channel that reflects how they increasingly choose to communicate.

10. Review (Stage 2)

Reviews Received			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
BD Group	39	26	48
Be First	0	4	4
Core Services	17	5	12
Housing Environment and Communities	60	91	157
Inclusive Growth	1	0	0
Strategy	0	0	1
Total	117	131	222

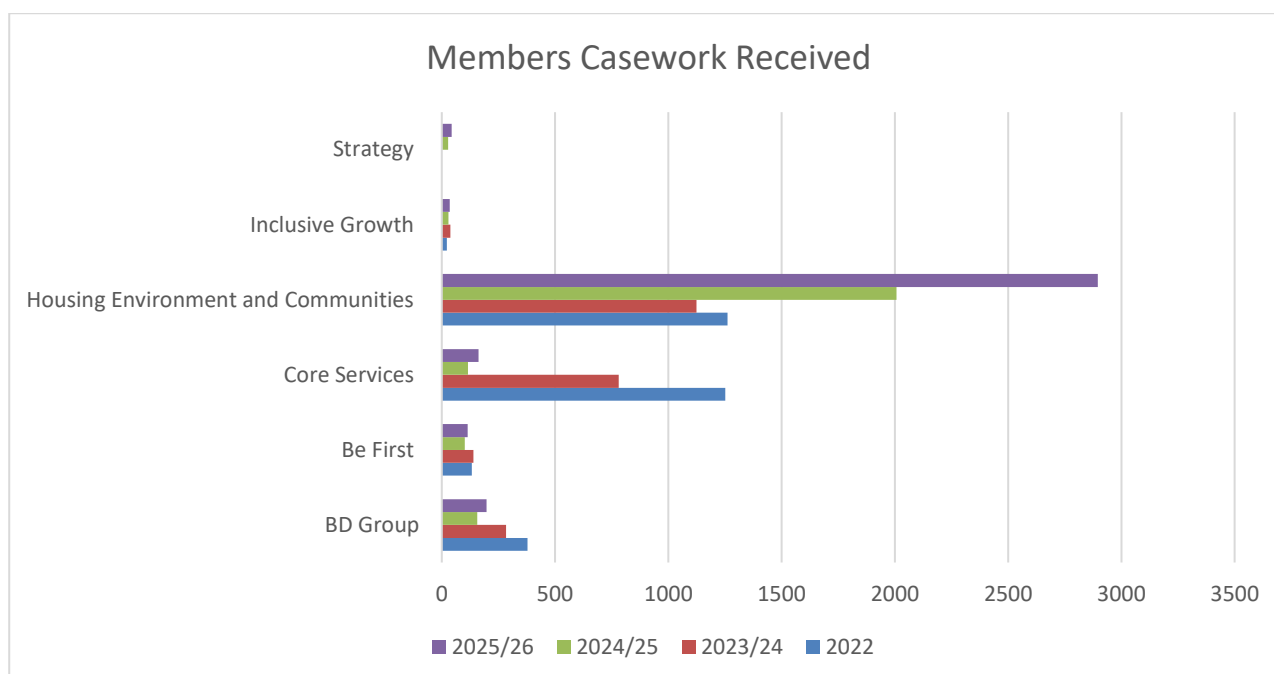


10.1 The council is committed to conducting thorough and well-evidenced investigations into all complaints received. While we aim to resolve matters to the satisfaction of the complainant at the first stage, residents retain the right to request a further review if they remain dissatisfied. This review stage is managed by the Customer Feedback Team and represents the final internal step before a complainant may escalate their concerns to the relevant Ombudsman.

10.2 In 2025/26, 7% of complainants requested a further review of their case. This relatively low percentage suggests that the majority of residents are satisfied with the responses provided. Where reviews were requested, common themes included a lack of clarity in the proposed actions and incomplete responses to all issues raised. In such cases, residents were justified in seeking further consideration of their concerns.

11. Members Casework

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
BD Group	283	157	197
Be First	139	102	114
Core Services	781	116	162
Housing Environment and Communities	1,124	2,008	2,896
Inclusive Growth	38	30	35
Strategy	0	28	43
Total	3,199	2,480	3,447

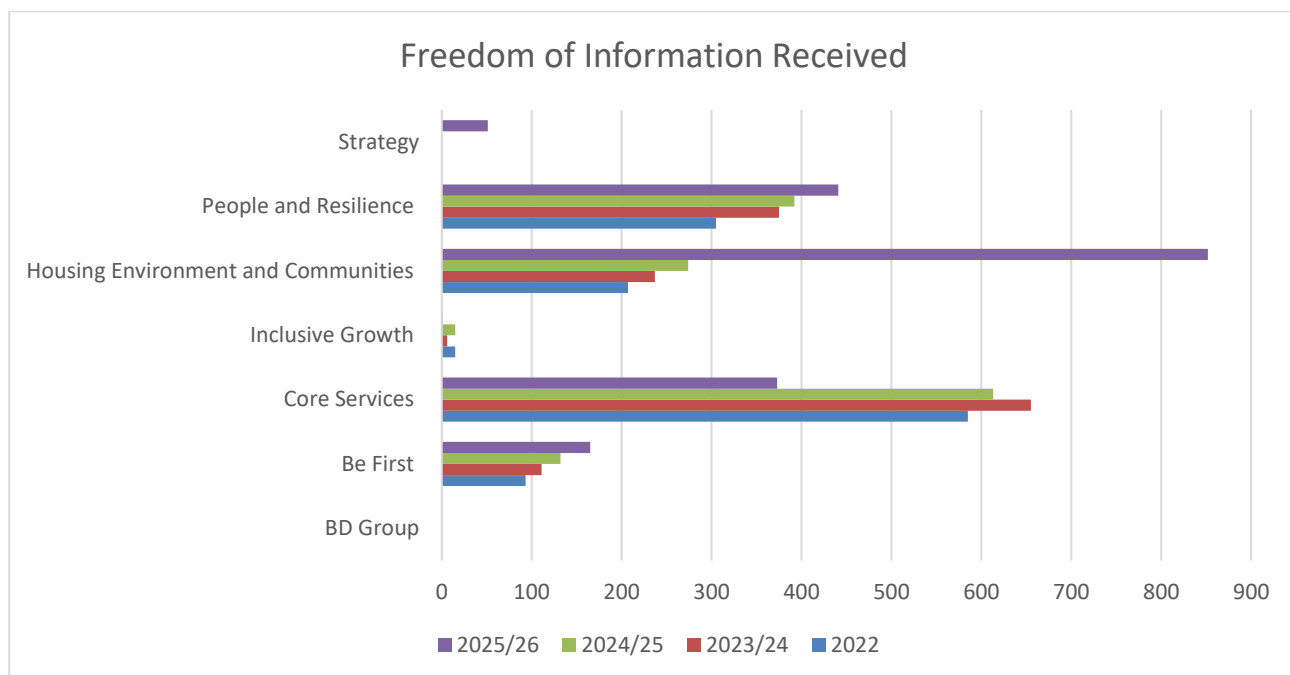


- 11.1 We have an established casework system in place to manage queries and concerns raised by Councillors and Members of Parliament. The council aims to respond to 90% of these cases within 10 working days.
- 11.2 A review of the casework submitted by members evidences that a large portion mirrors the complaints which are submitted via the formal complaints process. There is one substantial difference, and this relates to Housing Allocations and Homelessness Prevention. In this particular area residents will often seek the support of elected officials to secure housing aligned with their needs.
- 11.3 Importantly, the learning derived from complaint investigations is being used to inform and improve responses to member enquiries, helping to address root cause and reduce repeated issues.
- 11.4 In 2025/26 there was a 39% increase in the volume of member casework received this is in part due to the local elections. For the performance within target, we achieved 81%, falling short of the council's corporate standard but increased on last year (76%) despite the larger numbers.
- 11.5 Prior to this reporting period, we had seen a year-on-year reduction in the volume of direct casework submitted by Members. The increase this year is partly attributable to the local election currently taking place. In addition, as noted in the complaints section, residents are increasingly aware of how to raise issues with the Council so they can be addressed. This should be viewed positively, as it reflects our commitment to listening to residents' voices and making improvements in response to their feedback.

12. Freedom of Information

Freedom of Information/EIR Requests Received			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
BD Group	0	0	0
Be First	111	132	165

Core Services	655	613	373
Inclusive Growth	6	15	1
Housing Environment and Communities	237	274	852
People and Resilience	375	392	441
Strategy	0	0	51
Total	1,598	1,670	1,883



- 12.1 In accordance with guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office, the council publishes all responded Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EiR) requests on its website. These can be accessed via the disclosure log at: <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/transparency-and-information-requests/freedom-information>
- 12.2 During 2025/26, we recorded a 13% increase in the number of FOI requests received.
- 12.3 As in previous years, the highest volume of FOI requests continues to be directed toward Housing Environment and Communities and the People and Resilience service, which together account for 69% of all requests. Housing Environment and Communities hold a vast amount of front facing resident services and as these have a direct impact we note that the residents will seek additional information. This is similar with People and Resilience, residents, those using the services, those wishing to open a service to compliment People and Resilience will often seek information.
- 12.4 Of the FOI and EiR requests received, 84% (1,588 out of 1,883) were completed within the statutory timeframe.
- 12.5 We are continuing to work closely with service areas to improve performance in this area and ensure full compliance with the standards set by the Information Commissioner's Office.

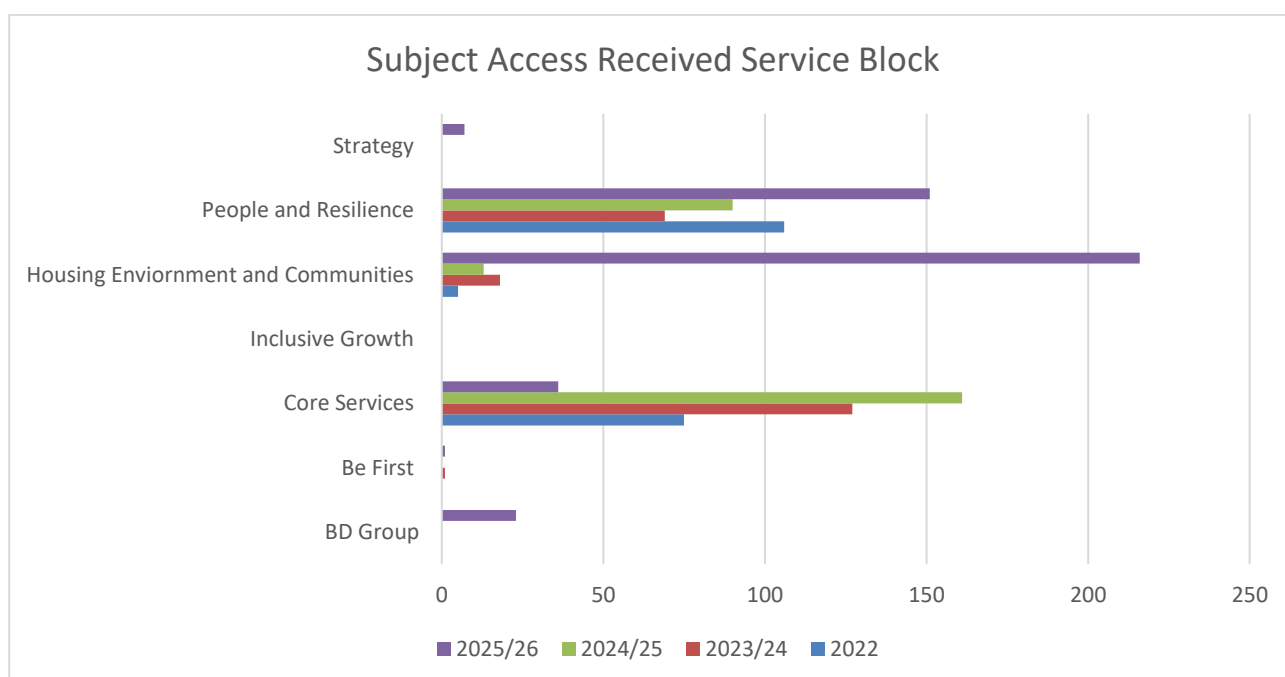
12.6 Work is underway with the Innovation Team to transform how residents access information, making it easier to find what they need independently through improved digital channels. This includes bringing together statutory returns, previously disclosed FOI responses, and published information into a more coherent and accessible online offer.

Enhancements to the Council's web pages are focused on improving usability, accessibility and overall user experience, with clearer navigation, better signposting and more consistent presentation of information. Alongside this, an information and guidance improvement approach is being implemented to ensure content is accurate, easy to understand and aligned across services.

These changes are intended not only to reduce demand for FOI requests, but to strengthen transparency and accountability by making information readily available and accessible to all residents, key principles underpinning the FOI and EIR frameworks.

13. Subject Access Request

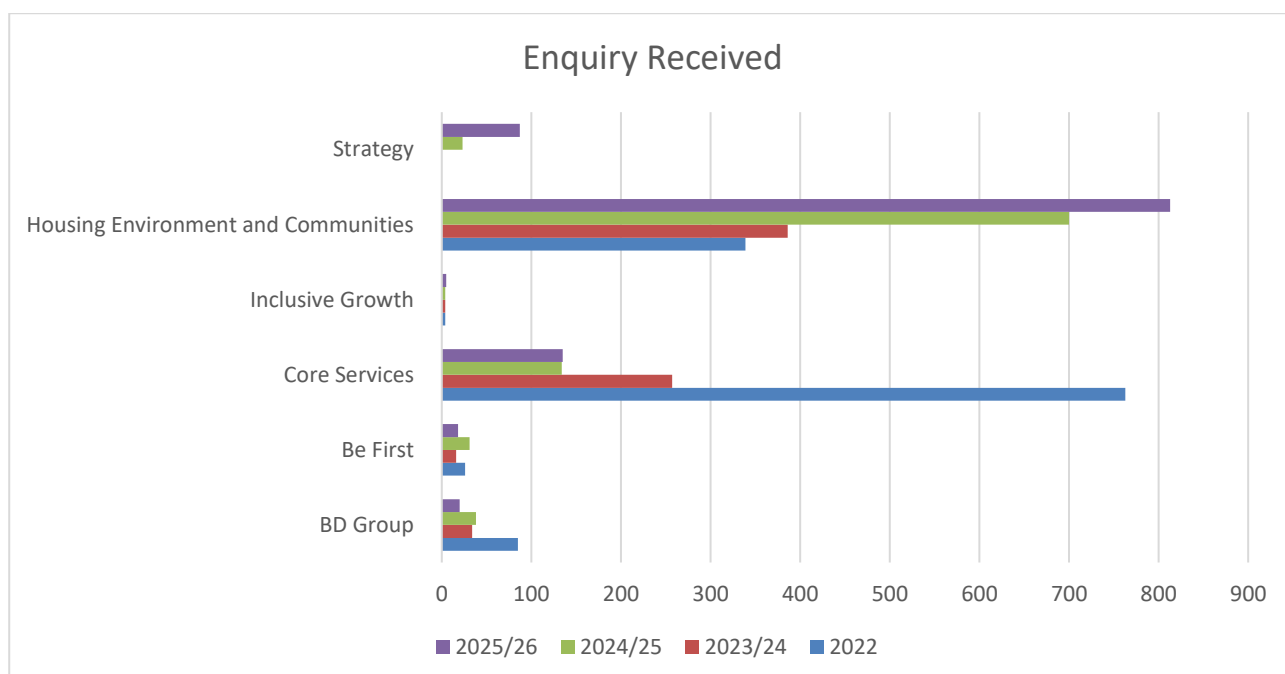
Subject Access Requests Received			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
BD Group	0	0	23
Be First	1	0	1
Core Services	127	161	36
Inclusive Growth	0	0	0
Housing Environment and Communities	18	13	216
People and Resilience	69	90	151
Strategy	0	0	7
Total	254	286	434



- 13.1 During the reporting period, the council has experienced a 51% increase in Subject Access Request (SARs). This is consistent with previous years, the majority of these requests continue to originate from People and Resilience and CCTV.
- 13.2 Of the SARs received, 74% were completed within the statutory timeframe. This marks a decline from the previous year's completion rate of 76%.
- 13.3 Children's Social Care remains the most complex subject area with large volume files to redact which are complex and sensitive. Added to this we have seen an increase in SARs for internal staff which in terms of volume are far larger than Children's Social Care. We have dealt with cases in increase of 30,000 emails which are required to be considered.
- 13.4 Work is being undertaken with IT Innovation to ascertain programmes and tools which can help reduce the impact of Subject Access Request and how these particular requests can be completed more effectively. We also are working directly with LOTI where they are supporting with innovation across numerous Local Authorities.
- 13.4 It is also important to note that the team managing SARs for Children's Social Care also supports with disclosure requests. In 2025/26, a total of 2,519 disclosure requests were processed. These requests involve the sharing of information with partner agencies such as the Police, Courts, Probation Services and CAFCASS.

14. Enquiries

Enquiries Received			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
BD Group	34	38	20
Be First	16	31	18
Core Services	257	134	135
Inclusive Growth	4	4	5
Housing Environment and Communities	386	700	813
Strategy	0	23	87
Total	697	930	1,078



- 14.1 Not all contacts are considered complaints in the first instance, often they will be the first point of contact from residents and stakeholders requesting support or fall outside of the established process. Enquiries typically include requests for information, clarification of policy, or expressions of dissatisfaction that are more appropriately addressed through alternative channels.
- 14.2 A substantial proportion of these enquiries are redirected to other services or external bodies. For example, challenges to Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) are not handled through the corporate complaints process but are instead managed through statutory appeals procedures. Nevertheless, these cases are logged within the complaints management system to ensure a complete record of resident contact and to support transparency and accountability in service delivery.
- 14.3 During the reporting period, 35% of all logged enquiries related to Parking Services. This reflects the high level of public interaction with this service and the complexity of the regulatory framework governing parking enforcement. While many of these cases are ultimately redirected, they provide valuable insight into areas where communication and public understanding could be improved.
- 14.4 The Council remains committed to capturing and analysing enquiry data to identify trends, improve service responsiveness, and ensure that residents are signposted to the correct resolution pathways. This approach supports a more efficient use of resources and helps to manage expectations by ensuring that residents receive timely and accurate information from the appropriate service area.

15. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Nurul Alom Head of Finance Corporate

- 15.1 To improve performance further we may require additional resource as not responding within timeframe can have a financial impact through fines imposed by Ombudsman's or needing to pay compensation for complaints upheld.

- 15.2 Additionally, financial investment will be required for digital development as the advancement of AI rises this will support the Customer Feedback Team, particularly with cumbersome administrative tasks such as larger redactions and potentially first line logging. Allowing the team to spend more time developing root cause analysis and supporting services with continuous improvement initiatives and improve productivity across the Council.

16. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr Paul Field Principal Solicitor

- 16.1 There is a statutory requirement for the Council to have a complaints process in relation to certain established services, for example, Children's Services under the Children Act 1989 and Adult Social Care services under the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009. These must have an annual report.
- 16.2 In terms of independent review there is the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman under the Local Government Act 1974; and the Housing Ombudsman, under the Housing Act 1996. They are independent and responsible for dealing with complaints about local authorities that there has been maladministration causing injustice or a service failure. The Housing Ombudsman is responsible for dealing with social housing complaints and can make various determinations which include maladministration, severe maladministration and service failure and will provide a decision which will include recommendations the council will be required to implement. If there are failings in services then these must be reported to the Council.
- 16.3 Finally, under the Localism Act 2011 the Council shall make arrangements regarding complaints about Council Members allegedly breaching the Members Code of Conduct. Such matters will now be reported to the new Standards Committee.

17. Other Implications

17.1 Risk Management

The increase in complaint volumes and performance against response targets presents a number of risks, including reduced customer satisfaction, reputational impact, and potential escalation to the Ombudsman.

Ongoing demand pressures, particularly in high-volume services, may also affect the Council's ability to meet statutory timescales, with associated financial and compliance implications.

These risks are actively managed through strengthened performance monitoring, targeted service support, and the use of complaint insight to drive improvement, alongside oversight from the Customer Focus Board and continued investment in digital and process enhancements to improve consistency, communication and overall customer experience.

17.2 Contractual Issues - None

17.3 Staffing Issues

Effective management of complaints handling relies on clear service ownership and accountability across the organisation. Work is ongoing to ensure that services are consistently mapped, with accountable officers identified for each area, supported by appropriately resourced teams. This is complemented by the dedicated Customer Feedback Team, which provides oversight, quality assurance and coordination across services.

Current staffing levels within the Customer Feedback Team are not yet at optimal capacity, reflecting the increase in demand across complaints, FOI and SAR activity. Work is underway to review and strengthen resource levels to close this gap, ensuring the team is appropriately resourced to meet demand, maintain performance standards and continue driving improvement activity.

17.4 Corporate Policy and Equality Impact – Being evidence led and using data well to drive improvement form a key part of the council's corporate plan. The council uses data in relation to complaints, FOIs and Member case work to identify issues and put in place steps to improve performance. We recognise the value of learning from complaints and are ensuring this is embedded in our approach. Whilst we don't currently have a breakdown of complaints data by demographics, this is an area we are exploring to ensure we can draw out more insight and help tailor or responses to our resident's needs.

17.5 Safeguarding Adults and Children - None

17.6 Health Issues - None

17.7 Crime and Disorder Issues - None

17.8 Property / Asset Issues - None

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- None

List of appendices:

- Statutory Social Care Adult Report
- Statutory Social Care Children Report
- Housing Ombudsman Updated Self-Assessment
- Housing Complaint Report