



Eastbourne Borough Council’s Annual Complaints and Service Improvement report considered by LET (Listening to Eastbourne Tenants 19th August 2025)

1. INTRODUCTION

This the Annual Complaints Report to LET (Listening to Eastbourne Tenants), as the Governing body for Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC), satisfies the annual compliance requirements, specifically Section 8 - ‘self-assessment, reporting and compliance’ and Section 9 - Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement of the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code.

The Code requires landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge. This must be reported to the landlord’s governing body and published on the website alongside the governing body’s response to the report and submitted to the Housing Ombudsman.

This annual report meets the requirement under the following sections.

Section 2 - the annual self-assessment against this Code – appendix 1.

Section 3 complaint handling performance a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord’s complaint handling performance.

Section 4 – Housing Ombudsman case report including landlord’s performance from the Ombudsman. – appendix 2

Section 5 - service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints.

This report has been reviewed by Cllr Peter Diplock as Member Responsible for Complaints and is being recommended for approval by LET. Subject to any amendments and feedback on this report together with Appendix 1 this will form Lewes District Council’s published annual report for 2024 / 25 on complaints.

2. SELF ASSESSMENT

Appendix 1 of this report provides our annual assessment against the complaints handling code.

2.1 Areas of the Code identified as *partial* compliance in 2023/24

The following areas were identified last year as partial compliance the reference numbers relate to the self-assessment section of appendix 1

The following items have been reviewed and are reassessed for 2024/25 as compliant

3.3 complaints numbers	Work has been done to both communicate and report on the complaints process through regular reports to LET on the numbers of complaints received.
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	Benchmarking has identified that complaint numbers are relatively high compared to other landlord- the Housing Ombudsman notes this is not necessarily an indication of poor performance but further work is required to understand the complaints numbers
8.3 Review of self assessment following restructure	The self assessment was reviewed as part of the transition of governance from EHL to EBC / LET.
9.7 working with (Member Responsible for Complaints) MRC and regular reports to Governing bodies	These were implemented in 24/25 and will continue to be refined in conjunction with LET and the MRC.

These items remain partially compliant although work is already underway to address these issues.

5.10 Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review	Record keeping has improved and the data collection exercise has collected enhanced data on our tenants. Tenant Scrutiny identified that staff updated and used data to make reasonable adjustments but further training could support this. A Reasonable Adjustment policy, translation and transcription policy have been drafted and a vulnerability policy is planned. Until these improvements are finalised and embedded in service delivery this area is assessed as partial. A formal review of the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Report on Attitudes, Respect and Rights will be reviewed and service changes implemented during 25/26.
5.12 A full record must be kept of the complaint, ... include the original complaintall correspondence with the resident, ... other parties, .. relevant ..documentation e.g. reports/ surveys	Maintaining records on internal systems has improved over the year and training has been provided particularly to Property Service teams in relation to this. With complaints processing moving to Customer First this will be an area for this team to review. Issues arising will be shared with Homes First teams
6.15 extension of time	Extending the time to respond to a complaint is permitted when there is good reason e.g. more complex cases. This has been used during 2024/25 but the complaints recording system does not enable such cases to be flagged, without retaining a separate log. We cannot review them for consistency nor report on the number of extensions provided as part of our TSM data.
7.2 Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified	This has been identified as part of the Tenant Scrutiny review of complaints processing and a new Compensation and Remedies policy has been drafted as a co-design piece with tenants

9.1 / 9.2 / 9.3 Service improvements	Whilst we can identify several improvements made over the year the systematic review, recording and reporting on customer feedback is work in progress
9.8 standard objective for all relevant employees or third parties for collaboration / responsibility and professional standards in complaints handling	Implemented in August 2024 and will be reviewed during 2025. The Tenant Scrutiny review of complaints processing has also recommended reference to this is made in the new repairs contract work

3. COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE

Performance this year was impacted due to staffing issues and was reported to TOLD. Going forward the complaints processing has been reviewed and with effect from August 2025 new processes have been introduced to

- Mitigate against staff shortages by broadening responsibility for complaint responses
- Separate the processing element of complaints handling from the response / service actions
- Improve accountability and empower staff operationally to respond and identify service improvements

This will be piloted for three months

3.1 Analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance

Table one highlights the numbers of complaints received and closed during 2024-25 along with a breakdown of how many of the cases closed were upheld / partially upheld or not upheld. Complaints have been categorised as **Property Services** (repairs, asset and major works and estate services such as gas safety), **Neighbourhood Housing** (retirement housing, rents and ASB) and **Leasehold Services**.

Of note the number of cases received versus the number of cases closed will not be exactly the same as cases closed this year could have been received at the end of March 2024 equally there will be cases received at the end of March 2025 which are not due for completion.

Over the past 12 months we have not refused to investigate any complaints.

Table one

Stage 1 Complaints	Property Services	Housing management related (rent / ASB / retirement / estate services)	Leasehold Services	Total
Stage 1 Complaints received 2024/25				
stage 1 complaints received	155	64	4	223
Stage 1 Complaints closed 2024/25				

stage 1 complaints closed	170	51	5	226
Complaints upheld	73	34	1	108
Complaints partly upheld	37	13	0	50
Complaints not upheld	60	4	4	68

Stage 2 Complaints	Property Services	Housing management related (rent / ASB / retirement / estate services)	Leasehold Services	Total
Stage 2 Complaints received 2024/25				
stage 2 complaints during 24/25 including legacy cases	50	17	1	67
Stage 2 Complaints closed 2024/25				
No of stage 2 complaints closed	34	15	1	50
Complaints upheld	13	1	0	14
Complaints partly upheld	12	1	0	13
Complaints not upheld	9	13	1	23

Table two below identifies how many cases were closed within the complaints handling code timescales during 2024/25. Improved reporting instigated from April 2025 now provides a more accurate picture of complaints handling timescales.

Table two

Stage 1 Complaints (S1)	Complaints closed	Complaints closed on time	%
Of the S1 complaints closed in 2024/25	226	50	22%
Stage 2 Complaints (S2)	Complaints closed	Complaints closed on time	%
Of the S2 complaints closed in 2024/25	50	13	26%

3.2 Satisfaction with complaint handling

Acuity survey our tenants in relation to complaints – as part of our monthly transactional surveys following closure of a formal complaint. These are more

detailed questions relating to the complaints process. Acuity annual report ‘The trend over time continues to show fluctuations in all areas related to complaint handling.’

Tenants are also surveyed as part of our quarterly Tenant Satisfaction Perception surveys, asking tenants if they have made a complaint in the last 12 months and if they have what their overall satisfaction score was. In 2024 /25 whilst satisfaction is not where would like it to be overall satisfaction increase from 20% in 2023/24 to 22% in 2024/25. During 2025/26 further analysis of this feedback will be undertaken, as it is not clear how many of these are formal complaints following a failure of service or service requests which are yet to be actioned.

4. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

In Eastbourne 2024/25 there was no Housing Ombudsman Landlords report as there were only 2 findings during the year.

EBC To be redacted from final report		Received	Current position	Outcome
202418573	Property Management	27-Mar-25	Awaiting	
202205946	Property Management	15-Apr-25	Awaiting	
202427010	Property Management	15-Apr-25	Awaiting	
202427422	Property Management	02-Feb-25	Closed 25/26	
202413774	Tenancy Management	10-Jan-25	Awaiting	
202312984	Housing	24-May-24	Closed 25/26	
202330568	Housing	28-May-24	Closed 25/26	
202322173	Property Management	11-Mar-24	Closed 24/25	No maladministration
202232743	Property Management	Dec 23	Closed 24/25	apology service action compensation £800

5. SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

5.1 Complaints handling improvements 2024 / 25

Last year we identified four key service improvement areas relating to complaints handling. Changes in complaints handling from August 2025 following the successful pilot with the property services team will further support these four service improvement areas. In addition whilst relatively new we have developed a mechanism for recording complaint themes alongside a log of service improvements.

closing complaints on a ‘promise of action’ with a clear timeline and internal monitoring to ensure completion of this to improve complaint closed within timescales	This has been implemented within Property services as part of the initial pilot during Q4 this will be rolled out to all teams
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establishing the 'owner' of the issue upon receipt of the complaint and placing ownership on that individual to directly to resolve the issue.	The new process will support 'local' accountability and free up the customer feedback team to focus on monitoring through active review of transactional and perception survey feedback and reporting to service areas on service improvements and identifying themes
Improving accountability and monitoring and reporting to service areas	
clarity and responsibility for keeping the complainant informed of progress	

5.2 Specific service improvements 2024 / 25

Damp and mould Our tenant Scrutiny team reviewed complaints about damp and mould alongside current policies and practices to improve the response to damp and mould concerns. Customer Journey mapping helped the team further understand complaints about damp and mould resulting in

- policy and training for property services teams
- annual gutter clearance programme for blocks of flats and a number of other recommendations currently being implemented.

Communal areas responsibility and accountability for monitoring communal areas has moved back into Neighbourhood Housing (from Neighbourhood First) ensuring that the quality of cleaning and gardening on our estates is regularly reviewed and issues addressed.

Estate pop up – the annual pop was a success but following feedback the new Estates team will be working with tenants to develop a plan of local walk abouts.

Contacting officers

- Property Services teams now have direct dial numbers and calling cards
- Housing teams have created area specific email contact addresses published in newsletters and on the website e.g. hampdenparkeast.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk (removing the zone addresses)

Job titles

Complaints and feedback resulted in staff job titles changing to improve contact and transparency e.g. Senior Caseworker / is now Housing Officer

Grounds maintenance performance

Complaints and feedback resulted in tenants being invited to comment on the new contract proposals as part of re-tending the contract

5.2 General improvements identified for 2025/26

- Responding to the Tenant Scrutiny review on Complaints processing
- Policies on Making Reasonable Adjustment / Translation Transcription and Interpreting / Vulnerability / Compensation and remedy / Decant policy
- Training staff on the above policies and specifically on Housing Ombudsman guidance on Record Keeping, Attitudes and Respect and Damp and Mould
- Updating tenant information – the customer insight collected via the Acuity tenant data collection project will be used to further understand complaints themes