Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Annual complaints performance and service improvement report 2025-26

Foreword from the Member Responsible for Complaints

I am pleased to present the annual report which looks at performance in relation to complaints, and service improvements as a result.

I welcome the Housing Ombudsman's review of our complaints policy, which highlighted only three recommendations which, for the most part, related to actions already embedded in our practices but not explicitly stated in the policy. The complaints policy is in the process of being updated to reflect the recommendations and our current practice.

Complaints is an area of work that is increasingly challenging for officers. The number of complaints has been increasing year on year for several years and, more recently, this has been due to the culture of welcoming complaints in order to learn from them, in addition to the introduction of the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code which required us to consider complaints at an earlier stage.

The introduction and accessibility of AI has added further pressures over the last year due to the lengthy and complex complaints produced using the technology. These complaints are difficult to address as they often use irrelevant or incorrect legislation and lose the personal aspect of the complaint, making it difficult to understand how a situation has impacted the individual. We continue to look at ways of addressing this challenge.

We look forward to the introduction of a complaints management system over the coming year which will remove much of the manual nature of processing complaints, but will also provide an improved interface for residents submitting complaints via the council's website.

Councillor Stuart Bray
Leader of the Council

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1. Introduction

1.1 The council has a positive complaints culture and recognises that complaints are a valuable way of gaining feedback and driving service improvements**.**

1.2 Corporate complaints are managed by Democratic Services. References within this report to the complaints team are references to the Democratic Services team. The team manages and co-ordinates corporate complaints and complaints about the council as landlord and is the link for the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

1.3 The council has a two-stage complaints process. Stage 1 complaints are usually investigated by the line manager of the officer who has been handling the case or is the subject of the complaint. At stage 2, complaints are investigated by an officer senior to or independent from the officer who completed the stage 1 investigation. As part of the stage 2 response, complainants are provided with the contact details for the relevant ombudsman, should they remain dissatisfied.

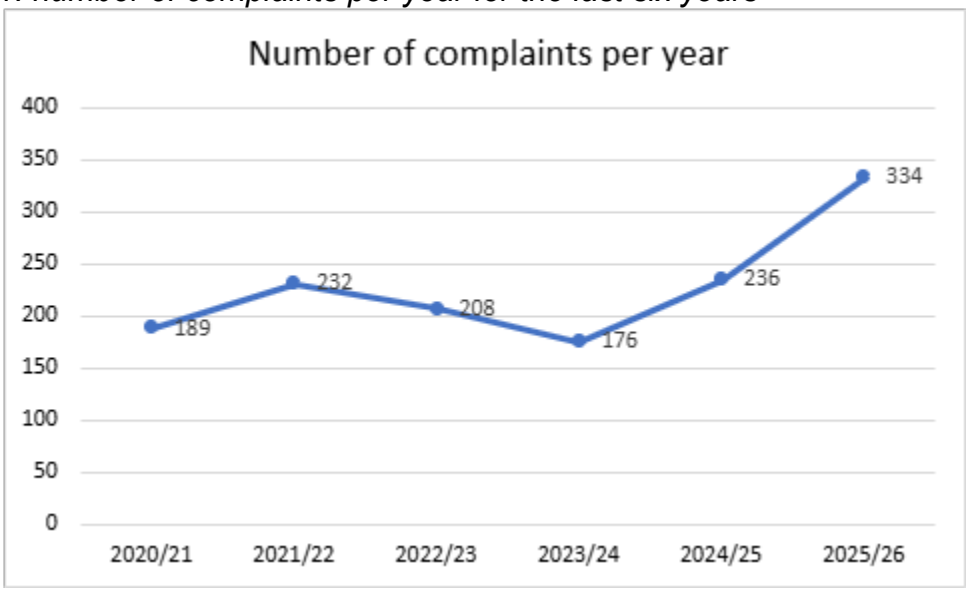
1.4 Complaints are invited via any method to ensure the process is accessible. For those accessing the information on the council's website, the website meets accessibility requirements, being consistently rated one of the top in the country by Silktide.

2. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance

2.1 Summary of all complaints received in 2025/26

The complaints team received and processed 335 complaints in 2025/26. This is an increase on previous years which can be attributed to cultural changes to invite complaints at an earlier stage in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code and the council's new complaints policy which was adopted in May 2024, and most notably over the last year due to the increasing use of AI - a trend seen nationally.

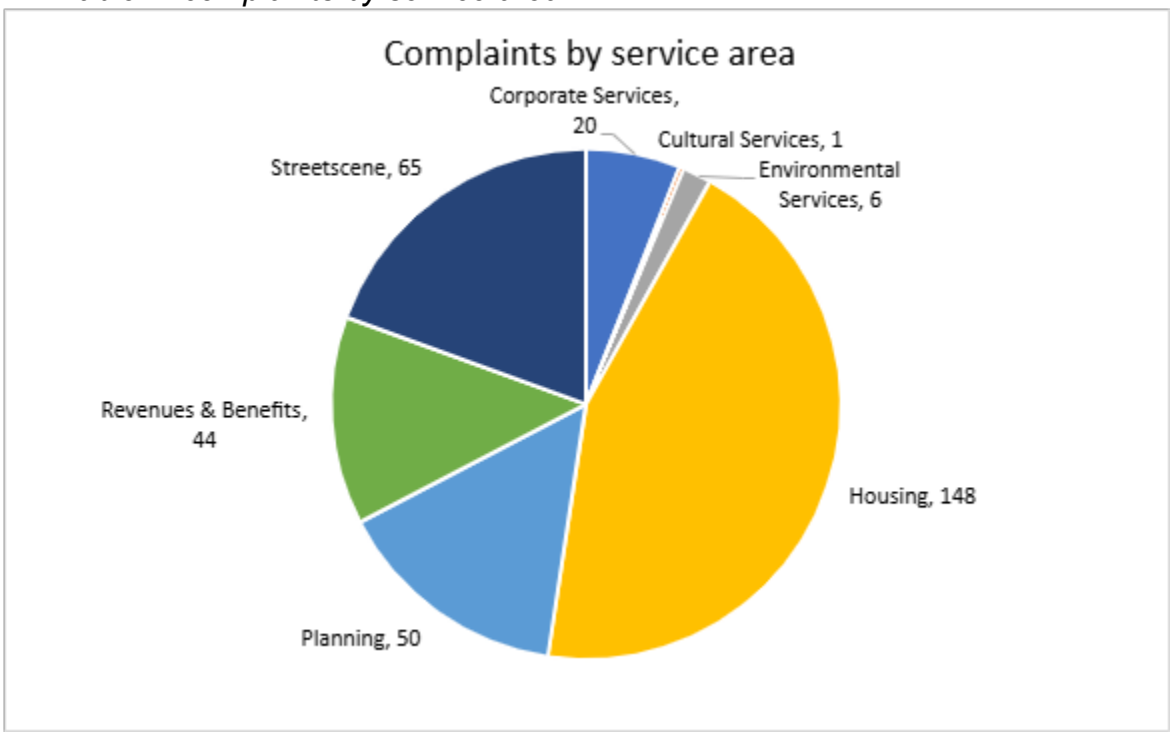
Table 1: number of complaints per year for the last six years



2.2 Complaints by service area

This is based on the service areas at the start of 2025/26, prior to the restructure in late 2025.

Table 2: complaints by service area

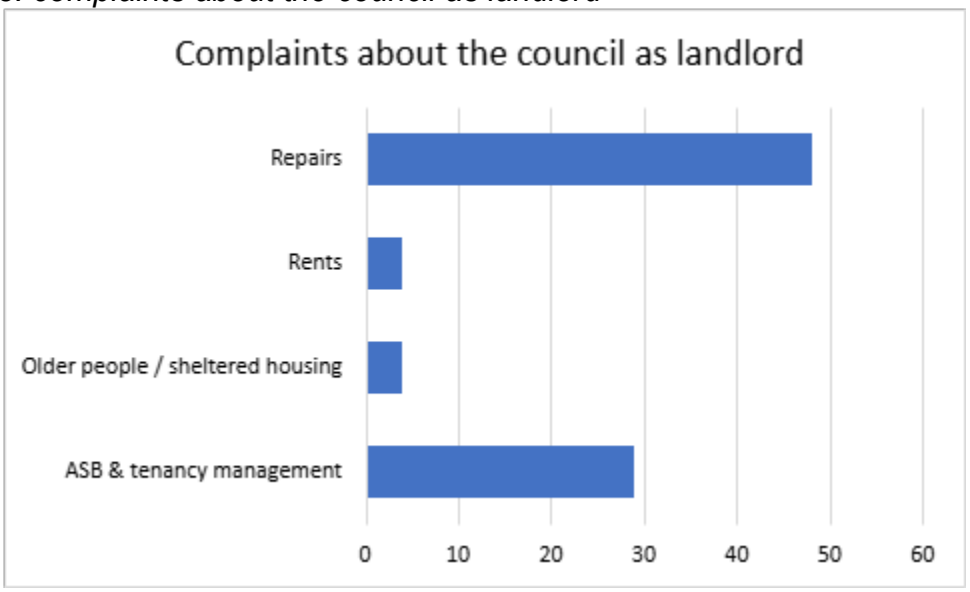


2.3 Complaints about the council as landlord

In 2025/26, the council as landlord received 85 complaints (of the 148 for Housing & Community Safety shown in table 2). This is a small increase on the 81 complaints received about the council as landlord in 2024/25.

These complaints received about the council as landlord can be broken down as follows:

Table 3: complaints about the council as landlord



2.4 Stage 2 complaints

88 complaints (of the total 334) were escalated to stage 2. Of the 85 complaints about the council as landlord, 23 were escalated to stage 2.

2.5 Performance in relation to complaint handling

Of the 334 stage 1 complaints, one was withdrawn and nine remain outstanding. One stage 2 complaint was withdrawn and nine remain outstanding. 86.8% of stage 1 complaints received a response within the stated 10 working days and 78.4% of stage 2 complaints received a response within 20 working days.

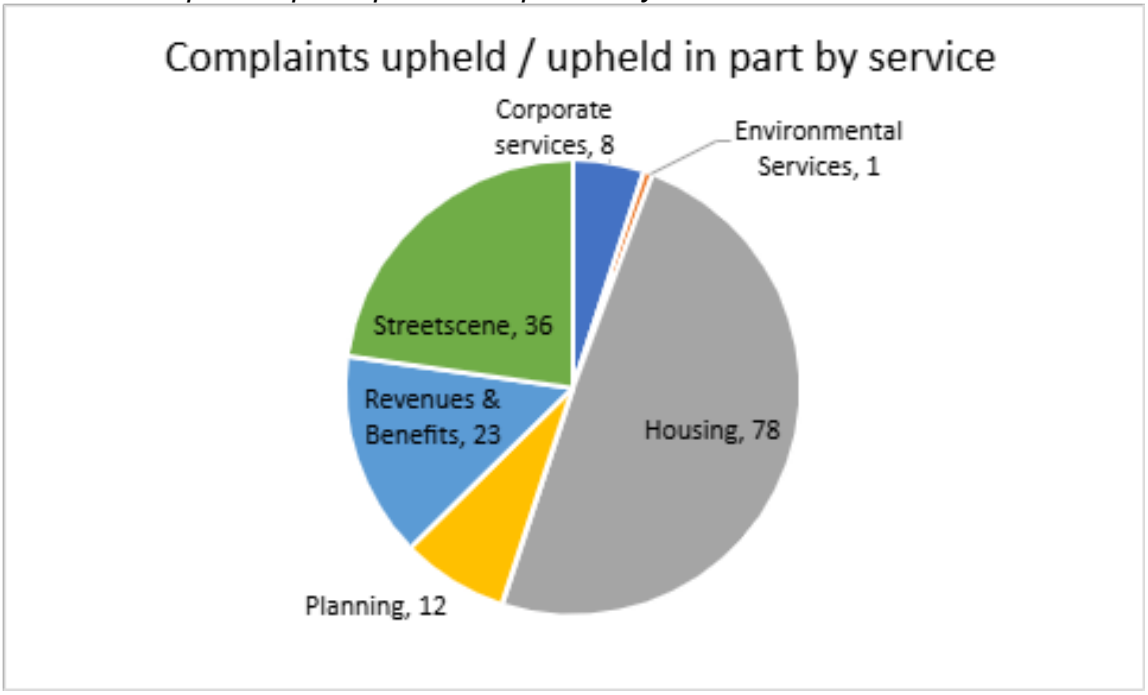
In relation to complaints about the council as landlord, 96.5% of stage 1 complaints received a response within the stated ten working days and 95.7% of stage 2 complaints received a response within 20 working days.

3. Analysis of complaints upheld or upheld in part

3.1 All complaints

Of the 334 complaints, 158 were upheld or upheld in part at stage 1 and / or stage 2. This equates to 47% which is similar to the 48% upheld/upheld in part in 2024/25. This shows that the council is keen to acknowledge where services could be improved and to use learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It should be noted that the outcome "upheld in part" covers complaints for which only one aspect has been upheld, which may not be the substantive part of the complaint.

Table 4: upheld / part upheld complaints by service area:



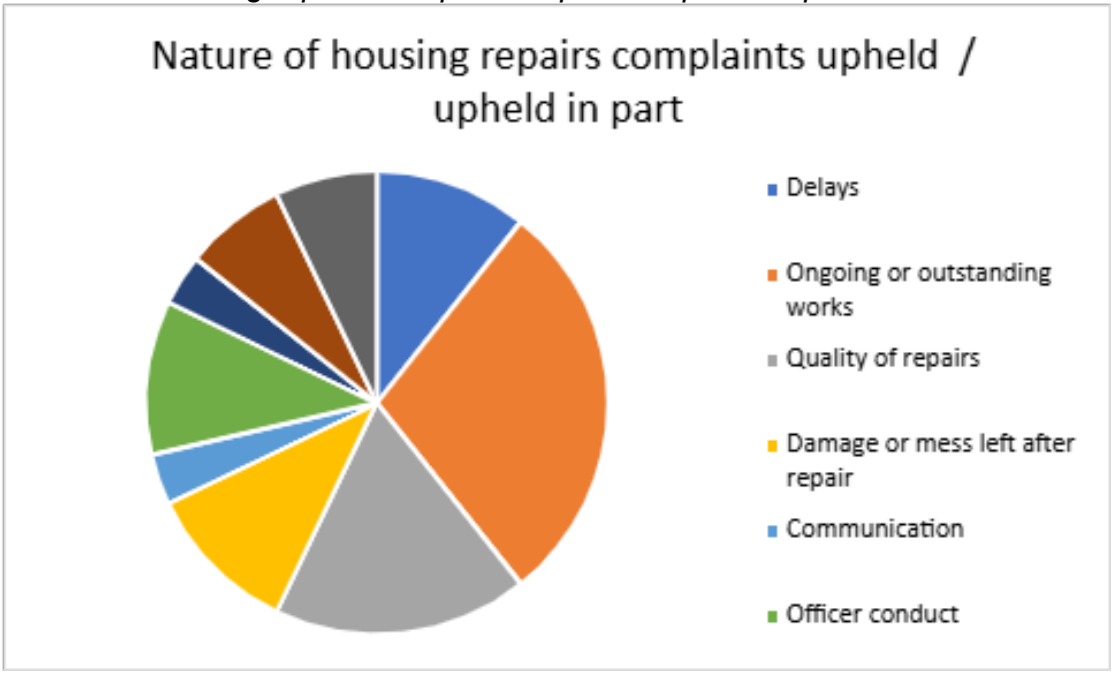
3.2 Of the 78 complaints upheld / upheld in part for Housing, 49 were complaints about the council as landlord. These are addressed separately in paragraph 3.3. The remaining 109 corporate complaints upheld or upheld in part fall into the following categories:

- Application of a policy or procedure: 21
- Communication: 15
- Complaint handling: 2
- Decision making: 3
- Delays: 8
- Equality, accessibility or reasonable adjustments: 3
- Service delivery / failure: 44
- Staff conduct / behaviour: 13.

3.3 Complaints about the council as landlord

There were 49 complaints about the council as landlord that were upheld or upheld in part. 15 complaints related to ASB & tenancy management, two related to older people / sheltered housing, three related to rents and 29 related to repairs. As the area with the most complaints, a breakdown of nature of housing repairs complaints that were upheld or upheld in part can be seen in table 5.

Table 5: housing repairs complaints upheld / upheld in part



4. Service improvements as a result of complaints

4.1 The following service improvements have been made as a result of corporate complaints:

- Following a complaint about the application of rate relief, the council agreed to undertake a full review of its approach to S44a rate relief and to develop a new policy
- The procedure for unlocking the room which holds the book of remembrance was amended and new notices containing a number to call if the room was locked were posted following a complaint about not being able to access to book at a time when it should have been available
- Processes have been reviewed to update addresses across systems within a service area
- As a result of a complaint about a direct debit for council tax being cancelled, new control measures with multiple checkpoints were implemented

- A commitment was made to review the wording of a particular statutory document relating to council tax and making communication clearer
- Receipt of a complaint about a regular occurrence provided managers with the evidence they needed to take action
- The information on council tax payment arrangement notices was reviewed as a result of a complaint that the resident was not aware that the requested direct debit had not been set up, resulting in council tax arrears
- Internal processes were reviewed to ensure consistency when requesting signed forms for council tax refunds
- Staff were reminded of data handling requirements following a breach of data protection
- Staff were reminded of the importance of keeping residents updated on their case and notifying them of delays in complaint handling
- Processes related to homeless applications were clarified following a complaint from someone who presented as homeless at the same time as applying to the housing register
- A complaint identified the need to escalate access issues sooner when they prevented doing essential works to public spaces for which the council was responsible
- The refuse & recycling service committed to reviewing footage more carefully in determining whether bins had been correctly presented for collection
- Following a complaint about the housing options service and support provided to a homeless person, commitment was given to improving communication between teams, providing more support and better information on charities that could support people who were sleeping rough and returning calls in a more timely manner
- The “Tell us once” process would be checked to ensure it was working effectively.

4.2 The following service improvements have been made as a result of complaints about the council as landlord:

- A tenant complained about damage to their flooring and white goods by the council’s contractor whilst undertaking repair work, and about not feeling respected by the operatives and the council’s contract supervisor during an inspection. It was agreed that future post-repair inspections would be carried out only by the council’s contract supervisor, without the presence of the contractor
- Following a complaint about damp and mould in a council property and the way the matter had been managed by the council as landlord, commitment was giving to reviewing processes when working with tenants who have significant health conditions or vulnerabilities. The experience of the complainant will be used in internal training
- Internal processes for sending important letters were updated following a complaint that receipt of a letter about rent arrears had been delayed, resulting in insufficient time to respond

- A complaint was received about removal of asbestos tiles not being in accordance with HSE guidelines. Whilst the majority of the complaint was not upheld as the guidelines had been followed and the type of asbestos was low risk and the tiles were not damaged or broken, further training was provided to those handling asbestos to ensure compliance
- Whilst a complaint from a tenant about the application of the ASB policy was not upheld, it was confirmed that the policy was being updated and the case would be used to inform the policy review
- Following a complaint about one of the council's contractors having breached data protection regulations, work was undertaken to review contractor GDPR compliance and reinforce training and guidance around secure data handling and information-sharing protocols
- A tenant complained about outstanding repairs and lack of communication. As a result of finding a failure in scheduling, delays in obtaining information which led to repeat visits and unhelpful comments made by operatives, the council reminded operatives of the importance of following the instructions provided, strengthened supervisory oversight, put measures in place to improve communication and professionalism, and ensured appointments are properly prepared for
- Waiting times for adaptation works to council properties were reviewed as a result of a complaint.

5. Compensation

5.1 Due to the condition of a council property on moving in, a tenant was refunded three weeks' rent and given £100 compensation to cover food costs whilst the tenant couldn't stay in the property.

5.2 Due to mess and damage caused during repairs work, a tenant was compensated £150 in recognition of the stress caused.

5.3 £200 compensation was awarded to a tenant in recognition of the anxiety and distress caused by not being provided with an asbestos report when signing their tenancy agreement.

5.4 An incident involving a refuse collection vehicle caused damage to a driver's wing mirror. The council paid £150 to cover the cost of repair.

5.5 Following a complaint about damage caused to a council property during repair work, the tenant was provided with a decorating pack to be able to repair the damage.

5.6 A tenant was reimbursed for the cost of flooring which had been damaged during repair works.

5.7 Transport costs of £360 were reimbursed and compensation of £50 for time and trouble was paid to a resident who had to move to alternative temporary accommodation and was told the cost would be covered by the council.

5.8 A planning application fee was refunded following a complaint about the way an application was handled.

5.9 £100 compensation was offered to a resident in recognition of distress caused by comments made in error.

6. Complaints refused

6.1 During 2025/26, two complaints were excluded in accordance with the exclusions listed in paragraph 2.1 of the complaints policy. The complaints were excluded for the following reasons:

(i) One complaint was excluded because it had already been through the complaints process
(ii) One complaint was excluded because legal proceedings had commenced.

7. Findings of the Ombudsmen

7.1 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

During 2025/26, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman dealt with 14 complaints about the council. Five were not at a stage that the Ombudsman could investigate and the remaining nine complaints were closed following assessment. No complaints were investigated, therefore no findings were issued.

7.2 The annual report of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman is attached.

7.3 Housing Ombudsman

During 2025/26, we were contacted about three complaints by the Housing Ombudsman and a further complaint had been received during 2024/25 and was concluded in 2025/26.

7.4 Maladministration was found as a result of one complaint which was concluded during 2025/26. An apology was issued and compensation of £620 was paid to the complainant.

7.5 The outcome of the remaining three complaints is awaited.

7.6 The annual report of the Housing Ombudsman has not yet been received.

8. Compliments

8.1 Compliments can be submitted via on online form or direct to an officer. 52 compliments were received in 2025/26, broken down as follows:

Corporate Services:	4
Cultural Services:	4
Environmental Services:	2
Housing:	25
Planning:	1
Revenues & Benefits:	1
Streetscene Services:	15

8.2 The key themes of the compliments were:

- Patience and customer care, caring approach
- Implementation of the food waste scheme
- Quality of support and advice provided
- Rapid response in an emergency
- Delivery of successful events.

9. Complaint handling codes

9.1 The Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code applies to any complaint about the council as landlord, it is statutory and came into force on 1 April 2024. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's code is guidance to which we must have regard. This code did not come into force until April 2026.

9.2 In pursuance of the new codes, the Ethical Governance & Personnel Committee approved a new complaints policy on 20 May 2024.

9.3 The Housing Ombudsman undertook its first review of our complaints policy towards the end of 2025/26. The report and recommendations are attached. The complaints policy has been reviewed and updated to incorporate the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations.

10. Self-assessment

10.1 Self-assessment is a requirement of the complaint handling codes. Our self-assessments against the codes are attached.

11. Review of actions outlined in 2024/25 annual report

11.1 Training for frontline staff who may take calls from complainants has been provided and a guidance note has been shared via the council's intranet.

11.2 A satisfaction survey for complaints about the housing service was launched.

11.3 A compensation policy for the housing service was approved in March 2026.

12. Future actions

12.1 A corporate compensation and remedy policy will be produced during 2026/27.

12.2 A reasonable adjustments policy will be produced.

12.3 The Persistent and Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour policy which operates alongside the complaints policy will be reviewed in 2026/27.

12.4 Work is underway to procure a complaints management system to support the team in processing complaints and to improve the experience for investigating officers. It is hoped that any new system will also improve the user experience for complainants.

13. Challenges

13.1 Complaints are becoming more complex in nature and the use of AI by complainants has resulted in complaints becoming lengthier and difficult to analyse. They often refer to outdated or incompatible legislation and do not reflect the impact of the matter complained about on the individual resulting in additional work to obtain missing information and to understand the human aspect of the complaint. There is also an impact on managers in responding to lengthy, complex AI-generated complaints which affects their ability to deal with their day-to-day workload.

13.2 There have been increasing instances of unacceptable behaviour from complainants over recent years. This includes being persistent or unreasonable in their demands, rude or threatening behaviour towards officers or making it very difficult to address their complaints in other ways. An updated policy relating to complainant behaviour will help to address this.

Appendices:
Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman’s annual letter (appendix A)
Housing Ombudsman’s policy review (appendix B)
Self-assessment against the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman’s complaint handling code (appendix C)
Self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s complaint handling code (appendix D)