

**BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Meeting of the Standards Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Customer Service Compliments, Comments and Complaints Report and Annual Summary 2023/24**

**Report of the Monitoring Officer**

<b>Classification</b>	This report is Public
<b>Contact Officer(s)</b>	Lesley Botham Customer Service, Complaints and Standards Manager

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- To provide information on the Council's performance in relation to its customer service standards, Compliments, Comments and Complaints.
  - To provide information on the effective management of complaints and customer requests which is central to excellent customer service and which the Council can use to improve its services.
  - To provide information on the number of compliments, comments, and complaints for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
  - To provide an Annual Summary on the above.
  - To make Elected Members aware of performance in relation to Customer Service Standards and the effective management of complaints.
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**REPORT DETAILS**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make Elected Members aware of performance in relation to the effective management of complaints.

**2. Details of Proposal or Information**

**2.1 Compliments, Comments and Complaints**

Compliments

In total **203** written compliments were received during 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Compliments were received from customers who appreciated excellent service.

Comments

The number of written comments received for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 was **33**, 100% were acknowledged and passed to the respective department within the target time of 3 working days, for consideration when reviewing their service.

## Complaints

### Frontline resolution (stage one)

The number of Frontline Resolution complaints received by the Contact Centre service; in total **265** complaints were recorded from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

**93%** of which were responded to within our customer standard of 3 working days.

### Formal Investigation (stage two)

The number of Formal Investigation complaints and M.P. enquiries received by department was **103** formal complaints for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. **213** M.P. enquiries were also received during this same period.

**98%** Formal complaints and **98%** M.P. enquiries were responded to within our customer service standard of 15 working days, for which the target was 97%.

### Internal Review (stage three)

The number of stage three complaints received for the period by department. These are complainants who have already made a stage two complaint and still feel dissatisfied.

During 2023/24, **27** stage three complaints were received of which, **100%** were responded to within the standard of 20 working days.

## Ombudsman

By way of background information, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) upheld 80% of complaints submitted to them in 2023/24 (up from 74% in 2022/23) with the average being 63% for similar authorities.

For 2023/24, 2 complaints were received, and none were investigated by the LGSCO due to no evidence of fault, and information provided insufficient or speculative.

Housing Ombudsman (HO) - 1 complaint was received regarding the Council's handling of alleged anti-social behaviour but was it was decided by the HO that they have no legal jurisdiction to investigate the matter.

## **Summary for 2023/24**

The following table provides a summary of performance for compliments, comments, and complaints for 2023/24, with comparative data from previous years.

**Appendix (1)** provides a summary of performance by % of compliments, comments and complaints received for each service area and responses within timescale.

## Volume and Performance

<b>Volume by type</b>	<b>2023/24 Total</b>	<b>2022/23 Total</b>	<b>2021/22 Total</b>	<b>2020/21 Total</b>
Compliments	<b>203</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>228</b>
Comments	<b>33</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>97</b>
M.P. enquiries	<b>213</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>28</b>
Stage 1 Complaints (S1)	<b>265</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>217</b>
Stage 2 Formal Investigation Complaints (S2)	<b>103</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>175</b>
Stage 3 Internal Review Complaints (S3)	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>780</b>
% Comments acknowledged within standard (target 3 working days)	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
% Stage 1 responded to within standard (target 100%)	<b>93%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>Data not recorded</b>	<b>Data not recorded</b>
Average response in days (target 3 working days)	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Data not recorded</b>	<b>Data not recorded</b>
% Stage 2 responded to within standard (target 97%)	<b>98%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>94%</b>
Average response in days (target 15 working days)	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>
% Stage 3 responded to within standard (target 100%)	<b>100%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>94%</b>
Average response in days (target 20 working days)	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>

When comparing 2023/24 to the previous year of 2022/23, the following is noted:

- There were more written compliments received.
- We have received slightly more comments.
- We have received slightly less frontline resolution (S1) complaints.
- Slightly less formal investigation (S2) complaints and M.P. enquiries were received.
- The same amount of internal review (S3) complaints were received.

The above would appear to indicate that the Council has an easy to access complaints system, as recommended by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman Service.

A separate report is submitted for Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman Service complaints.

## Complaints Feedback

Whilst there were no real trends leading to service improvements during the 2023/24 financial year, we agreed to deal with 'general enquiries' from the MPs office where appropriate as opposed to escalating through the complaints process.

There has been a reduction in the average response time and an increase in the percentage of complaints meeting their 'responded within timescale' target. Therefore, it is acknowledged positive improvements have been made to the administration of complaints and that service areas have been proactive in investigations which have enabled the Complaints Officer to produce a response for the complainant within timescales.

A revised Compliments, Comments, and Complaints Policy which was approved and implemented in April 2024, may have had an impact on performance due to the reduction in response timeframes and requirements by the LGSCO & HO. In addition, the Social Housing Regulator identified an error within the Policy at paragraph 4.14, there is no longer a timeframe of 8 weeks elapsed time before the HO will investigate. A Delegated decision is to be submitted for approval to amend the Policy in the future.

A first Self-Assessment and Annual Complaint Handling / Service Improvement Report was submitted to the HO in June 2024, a copy for reference is at (**Appendix 2 and 3**).

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 To note the overall performance on Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints.

### **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 None

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Standards Committee note the overall performance on Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints for 2023/24.

Approved by Councillor M Dooley Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing

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<b>Finance and Risk</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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Details:

Details:

Whilst there are no direct financial implications with regard to the report, the Council is at risk of recommendations or decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman if complaints are not handled well. In cases of maladministration, financial penalties can be imposed by the Local Government Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

**Legal (including Data Protection)**      Yes       No

**Details:**

The Council is at risk of recommendations or decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman and, in the case of complaints about Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Environmental Information requests, the Information Commissioner's Office can issue decision notices and impose significant fines. There are no Data Protection implications.

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

**Staffing**      Yes       No       **Details:**

Not applicable as the report is to keep Elected Members informed.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

**Equality and Diversity Impact and Consultation**      Yes       No

**Details:**

Any complaints linked to E&D issues are dealt with in line with our policies.

On behalf of the Information, Engagement and Performance Manager

**Environment**      Yes       No

Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal/report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment. *(Please speak to Richard Winter, Climate Change Officer, for advice)*

**Details:**

Any complaints linked to environmental issues are dealt with in line with our policies.

**DECISION INFORMATION**

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards, or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:  <b>Revenue - £75,000</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Capital - £150,000</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> <i>(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</i>	No

<b>District Wards Significantly Affected</b>	All
<b>Consultation:</b> <b>Leader / Deputy Leader</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Executive</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>SLT</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Relevant Service Manager</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Members</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Public</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes  Details:

<b>Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, and Environment.</b>
Increasing customer satisfaction with our services Improving customer contact and removing barriers to accessing information Actively engaging with partners to benefit our customers Promoting equality and diversity and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people

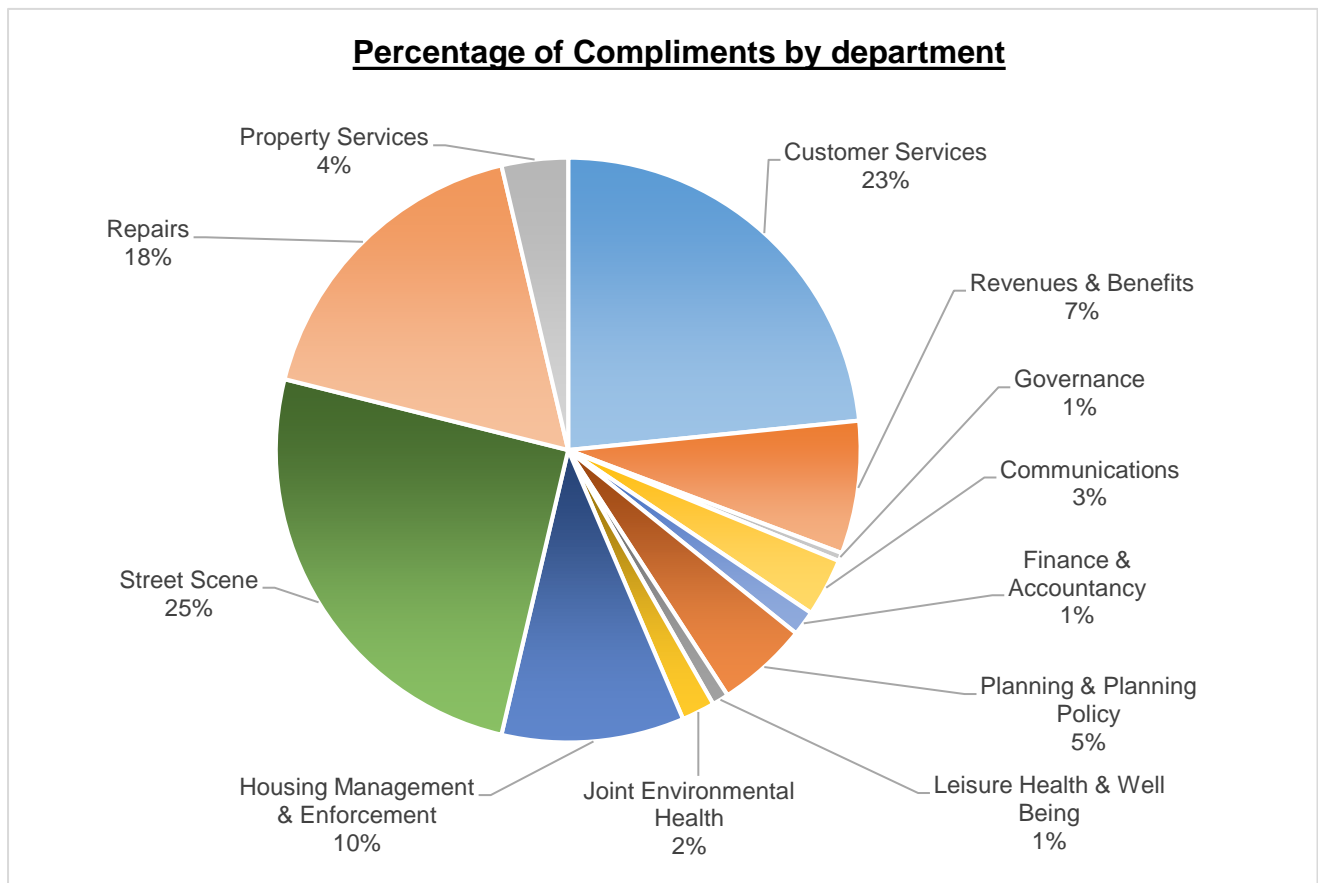
<b>DOCUMENT INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	Compliments, Comments and Complaints for 2023/24: - A. Compliments by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24 B. Comments by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24 C. Frontline resolution complaints (S1) by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24 D. Formal Investigation complaints (S2) by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24 E. M.P. Enquiries by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24 F. Internal Review complaints (S3) by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24 G. Ombudsman complaints summary for 2023/24
2	Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code – Self
3	Assessment 2024 Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code – Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2023-2024

<b>Background Papers</b>
None

**Appendix 1. Compliments, Comments and Complaints for 2023/24**

**A. Compliments by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24**

<b>A - Compliments 1/4/23 - 31/3/24</b>		
<b>Services Directorate</b>	Customer Services	51
	Revenues & Benefits	16
	Governance	1
	Communications	7
	Finance & Accountancy	3
<b>Strategy Directorate</b>	Planning & Planning Policy	11
	Leisure Health & Well Being	2
	Joint Environmental Health	4
	Housing Management & Enforcement	22
	Street Scene	55
<b>Dragonfly Development Ltd</b>	Repairs	38
	Property Services	8



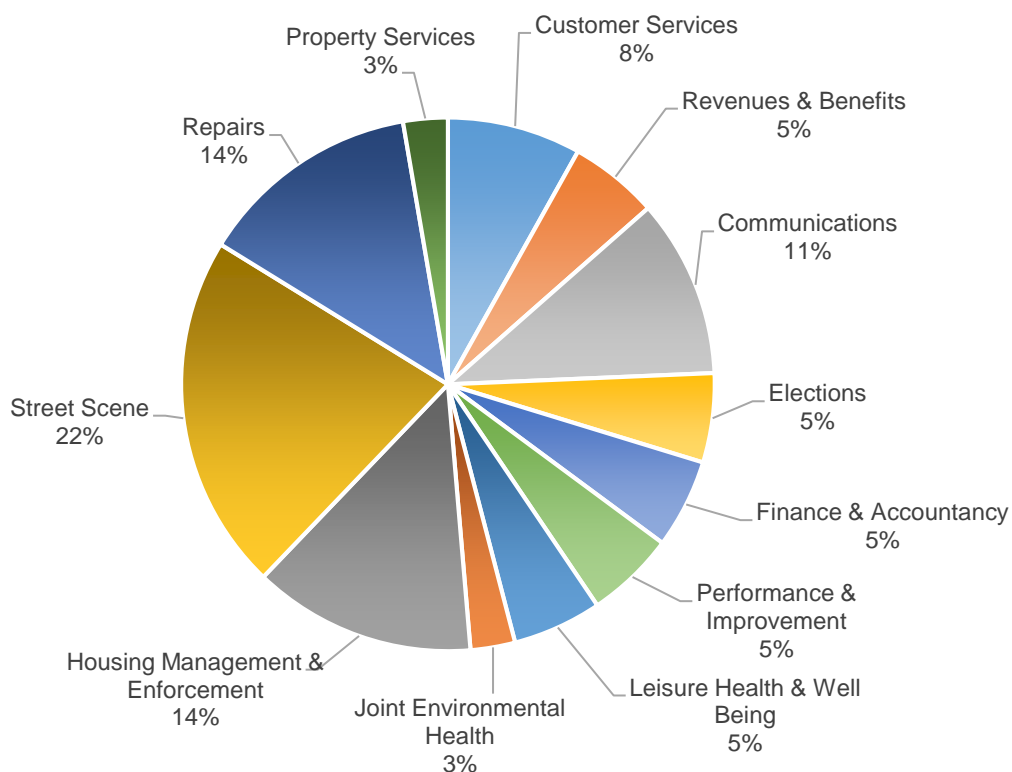
<b>Compliments Included:</b>	
Customer would like to thank the Council's Communications team; they are very appreciative to have the support of the Council promoting and sharing events and information. It helps them connect all together, it is really an invaluable service. It bridges the 'gap' between the Council and residents/businesses.	Communications.
Customer would like to thank the Customer advised for their help with their housing application. The advisor was wonderful and listened very well.	Contact Centre
Customer has complimented the Customer Advisors. They said it's easy to get the help needed, staff are always very friendly, helpful and nothing is too much trouble. No bad attitudes.	Contact Centre
Customer would like to pass on their commendation the Outreach worker who has been out to their property to help them. The worker was very kind, helpful and went above and beyond for them and they were very happy for the help received.	Environmental Health
Customer would like to thank the ranger for fitting the safe and secure system at their property as they felt really vulnerable with anti-social behaviour teenagers around. They are amazed that the council do this and were also really happy with their advice.	Housing
Would like to thank the Planning Officer for their quick work and has commented that the way the application has been managed is the best they have experienced from a local authority in some time.	Planning
Customer would like to thank the Business Centres Manager and the Business Estate Officer for providing an exceptional experience during the tenancy. Their dedication and care were evident from day one, and they consistently went above and beyond to ensure the needs were met. From prompt communication to resolving any issues efficiently, their professionalism and attention to detail were truly commendable.	Property Services
Would like to thank the operative who fixed their radiators this morning, they were lovely, chatty, respectful, and overall, just amazing.	Repairs
Customer would like to pass on their compliments to the two plumbers who attended their property for work to be carried out. They were polite, did a good job and cleaned up after themselves. Superb is the word they wish to use!	Repairs
Customer would like to thank the Recovery section for always being so understanding and helping them to pay off their balance. They are very grateful for everything the team has done for them. Customer teared up on the phone as the Council have always been so lovely.	Revenues
Customer would like to thank the recycling coordinator as they went above and beyond their duties, they were helpful, listened and solved the customers problems in one visit. Customer commented that they are an invaluable asset to Bolsover District Council.	Street Scene
Wanted to thank the Refuse member of staff who assessed their broken bin. Their manner was lovely, and they explained both options (repair or replace). They are very happy with the service, and they were very attentive. They also made the customer feel at ease.	Street Scene



## B. Comments by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24

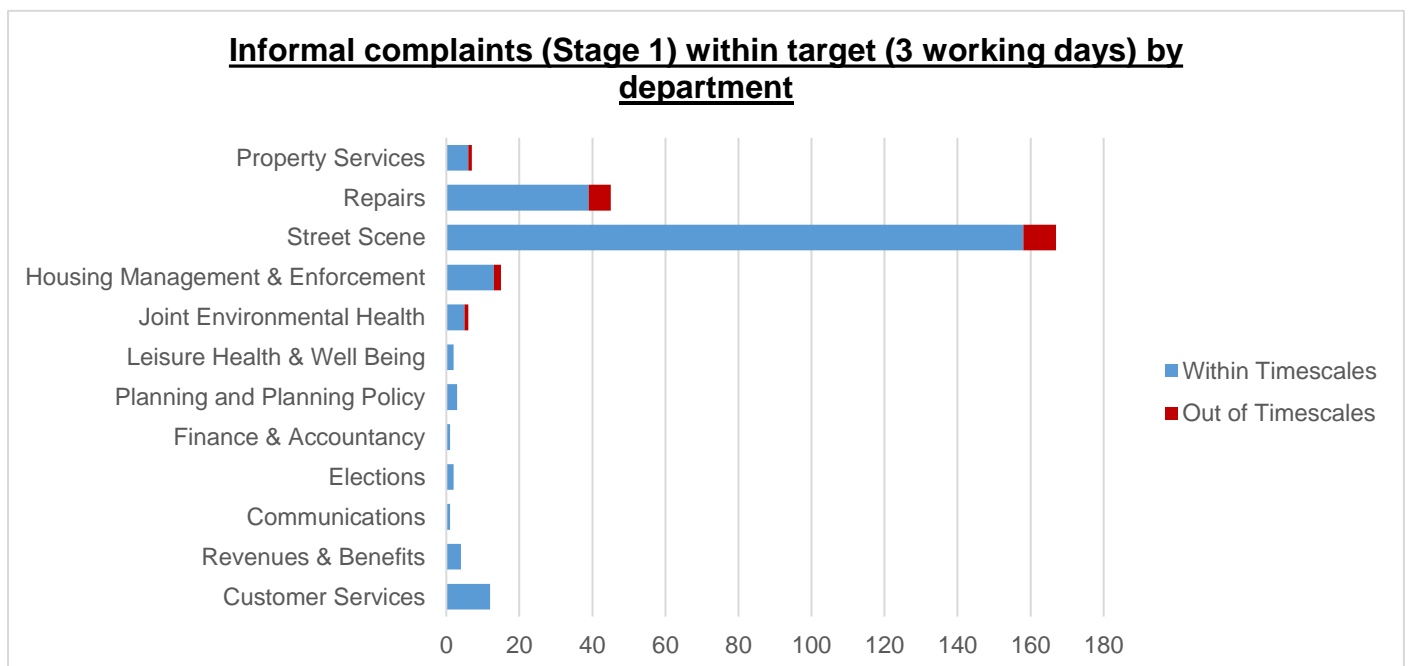
B- Comments 1/4/23 - 31/3/24		Number
<b>Services</b>	Customer Services	3
	Revenues & Benefits	2
	Communications	4
	Elections	2
	Finance & Accountancy	2
<b>Strategy</b>	Leisure Health & Well Being	2
	Joint Environmental Health	1
	Housing Management & Enforcement	5
	Street Scene	8
<b>Dragonfly Development Ltd</b>	Repairs	5
	Property Services	1

**Percentage of Comments by department**



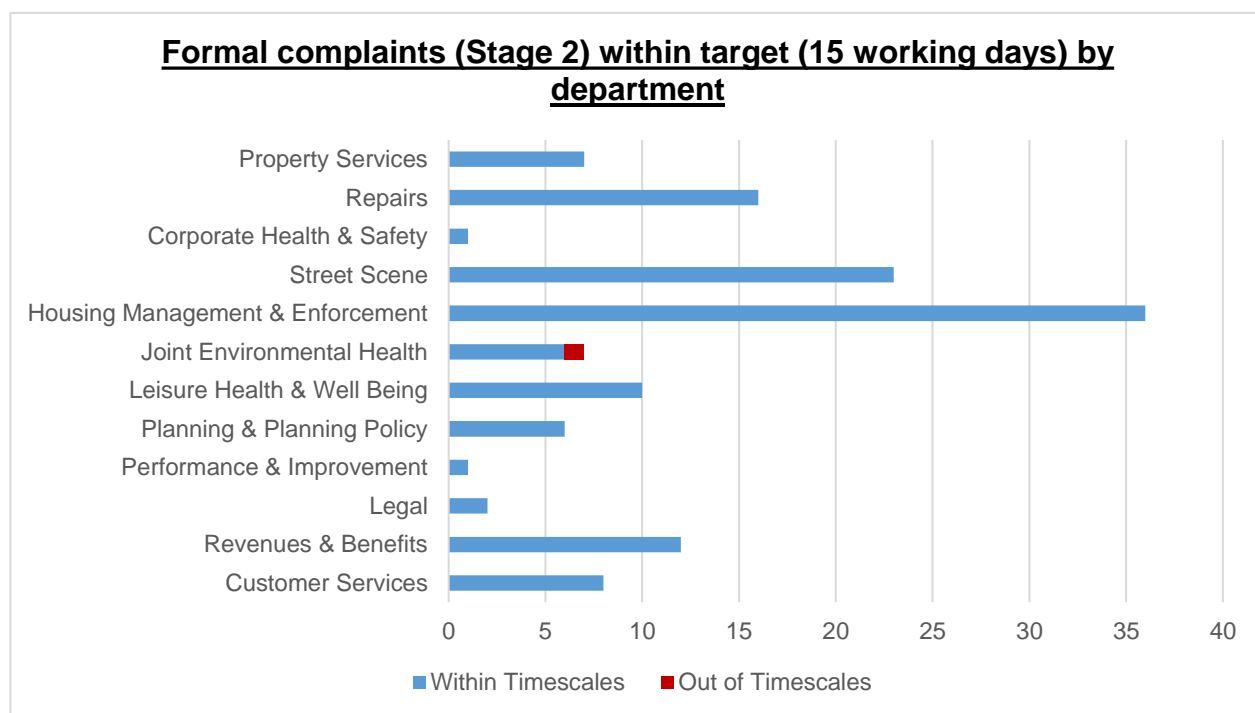
**C. Frontline resolution complaints (S1) by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24**

<b>C - Frontline Resolutions (Stage 1) complaints via Contact Centre 1/4/23 – 31/3/24</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>Within Timescale (3 working days)</b>	<b>Out of Timescale</b>
<b>Services</b>	Customer Services	12	12	0
	Revenues & Benefits	4	4	0
	Communications	1	1	0
	Elections	2	2	0
	Finance & Accountancy	1	1	0
<b> </b>				
<b>Strategy</b>	Planning and Planning Policy	3	3	0
	Leisure Health & Well Being	2	2	0
	Joint Environmental Health	6	5	1
	Housing Management & Enforcement	15	13	2
	Street Scene	167	158	9
<b> </b>				
<b>Dragonfly Development Ltd</b>	Repairs	45	39	6
	Property Services	7	6	1



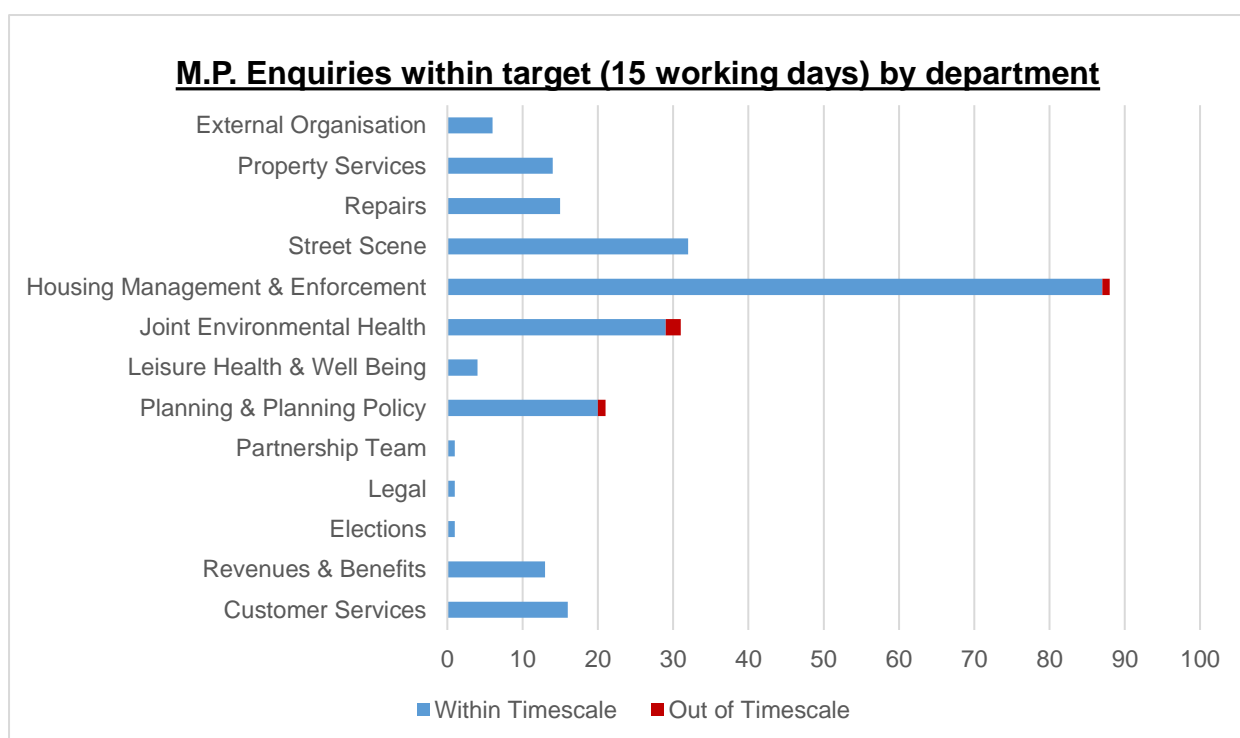
## D. Formal Investigation complaints (S2) by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24

D - Formal Investigations (Stage 2) complaints 1/4/23 – 31/3/24		Number	Within timescale of 15 working days	Out of Timescale
Services	Customer Services	8	8	0
	Revenues & Benefits	12	12	0
	Legal	2	2	0
	Performance & Improvement	1	1	0
Strategy	Planning & Planning Policy	6	6	0
	Leisure Health & Well Being	10	10	0
	Joint Environmental Health	7	6	1
	Housing Management & Enforcement	36	36	0
	Street Scene	23	23	0
	Corporate Health & Safety	1	1	0
Dragonfly Development Ltd	Repairs	16	16	0
	Property Services	7	7	0



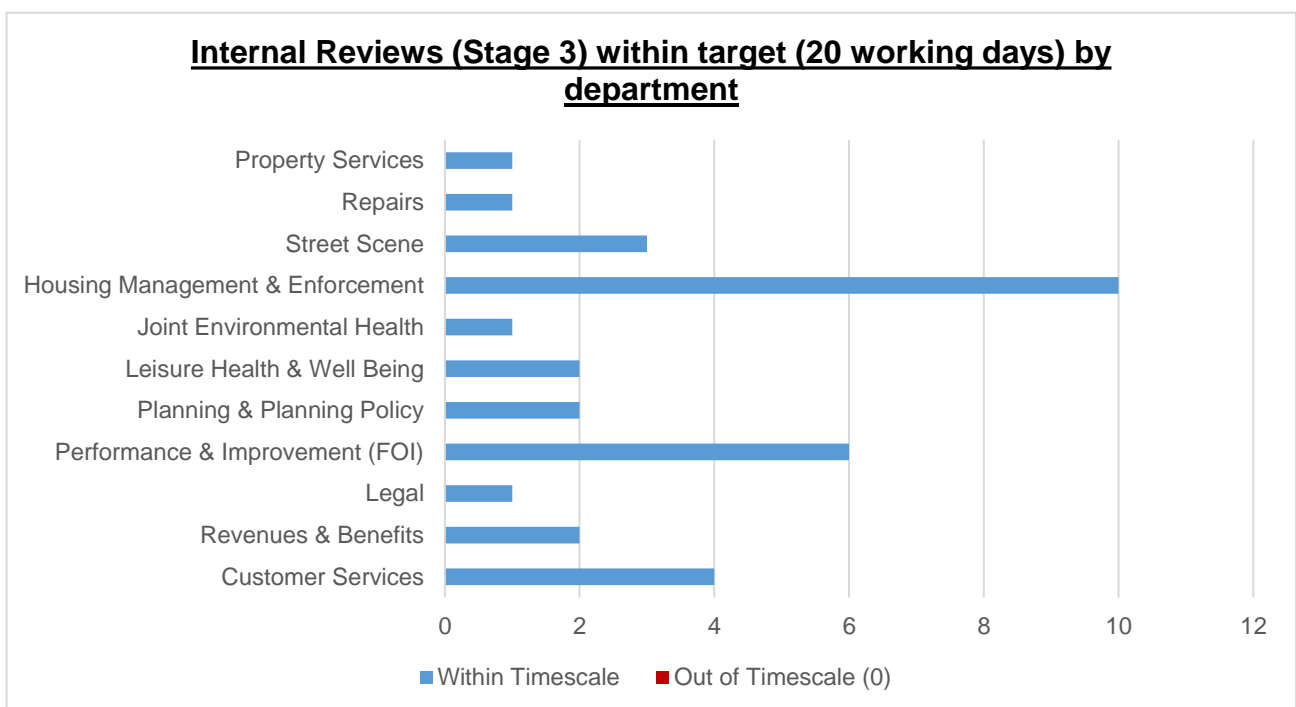
## E. M.P. Enquiries by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24

E - M.P. Enquiries 1/4/23 – 31/3/24		Number	Within timescale of 15 working days	Out of Timescale
Services	Customer Services	16	16	0
	Revenues & Benefits	13	13	0
	Elections	1	1	0
	Legal	1	1	0
	Partnership Team	1	1	0
Strategy	Planning & Planning Policy	21	20	1
	Leisure Health & Well Being	4	4	0
	Joint Environmental Health	31	29	2
	Housing Management & Enforcement	88	87	1
	Street Scene	32	32	0
Dragonfly Development Ltd	Repairs	15	15	0
	Property Services	14	14	0
External Organisation		6	6	0



**F. Internal Review complaints (S3) by department 1/04/23 – 31/03/24**

F - Internal Reviews (Stage 3) complaints 1/4/23 – 31/3/24		Number	Within timescale of 20 working days	Out of Timescale
<b>Services</b>	Customer Services	4	4	0
	Revenues & Benefits	2	2	0
	Legal	1	1	0
	Performance & Improvement (FOI)	6	6	0
<b>Strategy</b>	Planning & Planning Policy	2	2	0
	Leisure Health & Well Being	2	2	0
	Joint Environmental Health	1	1	0
	Housing Management & Enforcement	10	10	0
	Street Scene	3	3	0
<b>Dragonfly Development Ltd</b>	Repairs	1	1	0
	Property Services	1	1	0



### G. Ombudsman complaints summary for 2023/24

G – Ombudsman’s Summary	Ombudsman	Date Received	Departments Involved	Date Decision Letter Received	Ombudsman Decision
Mrs X says the Council failed to follow due process when assessing her neighbour's planning applications for a boiler flue as it did not properly consider the impact of the smoke of residential amenity.	LGSCO	24/07/2023	Environmental Health Planning	17/08/2023	We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's consideration of planning applications for a boiler flue. It is reasonable to expect the complainant to have contacted us sooner. Updated letter 7/9/23 We will not investigate Mrs X's complaint because there is not enough evidence of fault in the way the Council handled the planning applications, and the claimed injustice does not directly flow from the alleged fault.
Mr X complained about the conduct of a councillor which Mr X said could result in sensitive information being available to the public under freedom of information rights. Mr X is unhappy that the Council decided not to progress the complaint.	LGSCO	Not given	Councillors	08/11/23	The injustice Mr X claims from his complaint is speculative and not sufficient to justify our further involvement. In addition, the concerns Mr X raises about data security are best dealt with by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) which is the UK’s independent regulator in respect of data protection matters.

<p>The complainant (Miss R) complains about the Council's handling of alleged antisocial behaviour being perpetrated by her neighbour. She says this is causing her to feel unsafe in her home and wants the Council to remove its tenants.</p>	<p>HO</p>	<p>19/02/24</p>	<p>Housing</p>	<p>27/03/2024</p>	<p>The Housing Ombudsman deals with these types of complaints. We cannot by law investigate the issues Miss R raises and the restriction I outline at Paragraph 2 (above) applies. We cannot investigate this complaint as we have no legal jurisdiction to do so.</p>
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**LGSCO\* Local Government Ombudsman**  
**HO\* Housing Ombudsman**