

1. Appendix A Complaints Performance

- 1.1 This appendix provides details of complaints dealt with at Stage 1 Stage 2 and by the Local Government and Social care Ombudsman.
- 1.2 The Council has 5 indicators in the Council's Performance Management Framework for 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 which monitor overall performance by the Council in dealing with complaints: -
 - i. Total number of stage 1 complaints, by service
 - ii. % of S1 complaints exceeding 10-day response time
 - iii. Total number of stage 2 complaints, by service
 - iv. % of S2 complaints that exceed 20-day response time
 - v. Total number of complaints progressing to the Ombudsman

Data relating to these is included in the report below.

2. Performance activity in 2025/2026 – Stage One Corporate Complaints

Number of Stage One Corporate Complaints

- 2.1 A total of 155 contacts (service issues and complaints) were received in 2025/26. Of these, 112 formal complaints were progressed. Of those not progressed, 2 were withdrawn and 41 were invalid, mostly due to being a service request rather than a complaint
- 2.2 The table below highlights response times and shows that improvement is needed. Performance at Stage 1 is expected to further improve in 2026/27, as technical issues linked to the introduction of the new complaints management system early in 2025/26 have now been resolved. Any slow service response times are discussed with service and mechanisms out in place to address them.

Indicator	2025/26 target	Actual performance during 25/26
% of S1 complaints exceeding 10-day response time	15%	29%

Complaint outcomes – Stage one

- 2.3 The table below shows the outcomes of the Stage 1 complaints investigated in 2025/26 and preceding years for comparison.

Period	Upheld (inc. partially upheld)	Not upheld	% upheld	Total S1
2023-24	9	14	39%	23
2024-25	8	55	13%	63
2025-26	40	60	40%	100 (12 still in progress)

- 2.4 In 2025/26, 57 complaints were submitted through the online portal, compared with 8 in 2024/25. Many were service requests rather than valid complaints. Although most were recorded as invalid (41), some were incorrectly logged as upheld because of the technical issues early in the year. There were 13 which are therefore still included in the total figure as customers were issued with a response in line with the stage 1 complaints process saying their complaint was upheld.
- 2.5 The remaining complaints were received through other channels, often directly by the service or through the complaints email inbox rather than the portal. Overall, fewer than half of all contacts through the complaints system became formal complaints in 2025/26, and most did not identify service failure, despite the significant increase in complaint numbers.

Breakdown in complaints by service area for Stage 1 Complaints

- 2.6 The table below shows stage 1 complaints by service area.

Service Area	2024-25	2025-26
Assets	4	3
Commissioning & transformation	1	0
Committees	0	1
Community Safety	0	1
Corporate Governance	2	0
Council tax	5	10

Customer services	0	3
Elections	0	1
Environmental Health	11	17
Housing Options	18	14
Housing Benefits	1	0
Independent Living	1	1
KGE	0	1
Leisure	1	1
Neighbourhood Services	7	39
Parking	6	7
Planning DM/Enforcement	6	11
Sustainability	0	2
Total	63	112

Stage 1 complaints increased from 63 in 2024/25 to 112 in 2025/26. The biggest increase was in Neighbourhood Services, which rose from 7 to 39. However, 13 portal submissions were service issues rather than formal complaints. Some people submitted the same issue more than once, missed-bin reports were sometimes logged as complaints, and complaint recording has improved. These factors helped drive the increase.

Environmental Health complaints rose from 11 to 17, Council Tax from 5 to 10, and Planning DM/Enforcement from 6 to 11. Housing Options fell from 18 to 14. Most other service areas changed little or stayed broadly the same. Overall, more residents are now aware of the complaints portal and are using it for a wider range of enquiries.

3.0 Performance activity in 2025/2026 – Stage Two Corporate Complaints

Number of Stage Two Corporate Complaints

- 3.1 In 2025/26, Out of the 112 submitted complaints at Stage 1 the Council received 26 Stage 2 complaints.

Complaint outcomes – Stage two

- 3.2 The table below summarises Stage 2 complaint outcomes. The proportion of upheld cases has fallen steadily over the past three years, which is positive as it suggests that most Stage 1 responses were not found to be at fault.

Period	Upheld (inc. partially upheld)	Not upheld	% upheld	Total S2
2023-24	9	18	33%	27
2024-25	3	24	13%	27
2025-26	2	24	8%	30*

*4 were still in progress from 24/25 into 25/26

Breakdown in contact by service area for Stage 2 complaints

Table below shows stage 2 complaints by service area.

Service Area	2024-25	2025-26
Assets	1	2
Community Safety	0	0
Council tax	2	2
Customer services	0	1
Environmental Health	4	7
Housing	7	2
Independent Living	1	0
Leisure	0	0
Neighbourhood Services	3	7
Parking	3	2
Planning	4	5
Commissioning & transformation	0	0
KGE	0	0
Committees	1	1
Elections	0	1

Housing Benefits	1	0
Total	27	30

- 3.3. Stage 2 complaints increased slightly, from 27 in 2024/25 to 30 in 2025/26. The largest increases were in Environmental Health and Neighbourhood Services, both rising to 7 complaints.

Planning increased from 4 to 5, and Assets from 1 to 2.

Housing recorded the largest decrease, falling from 7 to 2 complaints, with smaller reductions in Parking, Independent Living and Housing Benefits. Several service areas had no Stage 2 complaints in either year. The overall distribution remained broadly similar across most services.

Stage 2 Complaint Response Times

- 3.4 The table below shows how many stage 2 complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days

Period		Stage 2 Complaints responded to within 0 – 20 working days	
	Number received	Number completed within target timelines	Percentage
2024-25	27	22	81%
2025-26	22	15	68% (32% breached)

- 3.5 In 2025/26, seven cases missed the 20-working-day response target. In each case, customers were told that additional time was needed to complete the investigation due to the complexity of the complaint, including cases involving more than one service area (2.7 in main report). This is being addressed by having a complaints officer in post to work more effectively with services and ensure information is provided for Stage 2 responses more promptly.

4.0 Performance activity in 2025/2026– Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Number of LGSCO Complaints

- 4.1 The Ombudsman reports on local authority figures based on the number of cases it receives in the reporting year; the number of decisions it makes in the reporting year (which may include cases ongoing from the previous year) and the Council's compliance with any recommendations.
- 4.2 A total of 24 contacts were received by the LGSCO in this period. Of these, only 3 were investigated, all of which were upheld. In comparison, 2024-2025, 11 complaints were dealt with by the LGSCO and 0 were investigated.

Year	Not dealt with	Not for LGSCO	Assessed and closed	Investigated	Upheld
2023/24	5	0	5	0	0
2024/25	11	4	7	0	0
2025/26	24	5	16	3	3

- 4.3 Complaints escalated to the LGSCO is generally increasing year on year across all Councils. A 33% increase was seen in 25/26. The LGSCO website reports on statistics for all Councils here: [Your council's performance](#). Appendix B show a comparison of statistically nearest neighbours (ONS data) and West Surrey, for the last 2 years. This shows that Spelthorne is not an outlier in terms of the number of complaints upheld by the LGSCO.
- 4.4 The LGSCO report that the number of complaints they received from all Councils in 25/26 has risen significantly and more sharply than at any other time over the past 10 years. The LGSCO in 24/25 saw a 16% increase but in 25/26 this figure has more than doubled to 33%. Also, the LGSCO state that the increase is not concentrated in one area, it is consistent across all services.
- 4.5 The LGSCO states that this situation is not unique to local government. Demand is rising across UK public sector Ombudsman bodies, and the LGSCO considers this part of a wider crisis of public confidence in public services. The pattern of complaints identified by the LGSCO is consistent and concerning. In areas such as special educational needs, housing and adult social care, the LGSCO reports the impact of systems under sustained and serious pressure.

Complaint Outcomes

- 4.6 The table below shows upheld complaints by service compared with the previous year. No complaints were upheld in 2024/25, compared with three in 2025/26. This reflects an increase in cases referred to the LGSCO, and one upheld case related to a complaint handled by the Council in 2024/25 but decided by the LGSCO in 2025/26.

LGSCO Complaint outcomes		
Service	2024/25	2025/26
Environmental Health	0	1
Housing	0	1
Council Tax	0	1

4.7 Table below shows the remedies and recommended actions from those upheld complaints:

Reference	Service	Subcategory	Remedy	Value of remedy
24020646	Environmental Health	Housing standards	Service improvements	£350
24008008	Housing	Temporary Accommodation	Apologise	£800
24020710	Council Tax	Outstanding debt	Apologise & service improvements	0

The value of remedial payments this year (£1,150) is an increase from the previous year when there were none.

Table below shows the Council's compliance to the LGSCO's recommendations

Outcomes recommended	Satisfied with the outcomes	Recommendations that were on time	Service improvements
3	3	2	2