

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee	Dated: 30 June 2025
Subject: Housing Complaints Update	Public report: For Information
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community & Children's Services	
Report author: Anna Donoghue, Information, Performance and Quality Assurance Manager	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee with a comprehensive summary of housing complaints data for 2024/25. Additionally, it includes information regarding the actions undertaken by the Housing Complaints and Customer Feedback Team, as well as the team's objectives for the year 2025/26.

The team has updated its name to 'Housing Complaints & Customer Feedback' to encourage residents to share broader feedback that does not necessarily constitute a complaint. This includes compliments and recognition of good practices within the service.

Appendices 1 and 2 are documents required by the Housing Ombudsman for annual reporting.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

The Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report for 2023/24, published in June 2024 set ambitions for 2024/25, including:

1. In compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code we now have a Member Responsible for Complaints. This role will be undertaken by the Chair of the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee (HMASC). They will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the Housing Service complaint handling performance.
2. The Assistant Director of Housing will act as a 'Senior Lead Person' responsible for complaints handling, assessing any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. For 24/25 the Complaints Learning Panel will be chaired by the Assistant Director.
3. Housing Complaints Reports will be submitted to each HMASC committee from April 2024 outlining performance and key information on complaints.
4. We will be procuring a new Repairs and Maintenance Service Provider with a rigorous tender process and improved contract management.
5. Recruitment of key roles, including a new Head of Repairs and Head of Major Works who are due to join in Autumn 2024.
6. Improvements in tracking and monitoring of complaints received.
7. Further training for staff on complaint handling.

Current Position

Since the publication of the Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report in June 2024, the Housing Complaints & Customer Feedback Team has implemented changes in accordance with the above ambitions:

1. Since June 2024, Members Responsible for Complaints have received a weekly update on active complaints from the Information, Performance and Quality Assurance Manager. They also receive a monthly update containing details regarding outcomes of complaints, key complaint themes and complaint handling performance data.
2. The Assistant Director acts as a Senior Lead Person responsible for complaints handling. The Assistant Director chairs a two-monthly Complaints Learning Panel where key issues and themes are discussed, and any complex or serious cases are interrogated. A twice-yearly meeting has also been set up to discuss and track the implementation of lessons learned, and complaints performance data is assessed in detail.
3. A decision was made by Housing Management to deliver a Complaints Report to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee on a biannual basis. It was agreed that a quarterly update would be too frequent and would not capture significant changes in data between each report.
4. The new Repairs & Maintenance Contract with Chigwell commenced on 1 April 2025. The Head of Repairs & Maintenance utilised insights from customer feedback and complaints during the mobilisation of the new contract to prevent the recurrence of previously identified issues.

5. The Head of Repairs & Maintenance and the Head of Major Works were recruited in 2024. Both have made significant progress within their respective service areas.
6. The Housing Complaints & Customer Feedback Team have streamlined their tracking of formal complaints via an enhanced Excel Spreadsheet and now use an active Power BI dashboard to access live complaints statistics.
7. Officers and Team Leaders attended a training session by the Housing Quality Network (HQN) on Complaints Handling. Teams have been signposted to the available training from the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Alongside the outcomes of the ambitions set for 2024/25, the following changes were also implemented across Housing:

1. Significant improvements were made in the timescales for acknowledging complaints, with 98% of complaints being acknowledged within the statutory timescale from quarter 2 onwards.
2. The Housing Complaints & Customer Feedback Team introduced more specific categorisation for complaints received in order to allow for closer monitoring of trends and patterns in complaints data.

Ambitions

In the Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report for 2024/25, the following ambitions were set for 2025/26:

1. To improve the tracking of Member and MP enquiries raised on behalf of residents (please see Appendix 4 - Procedure for Member and MP Enquiries).
2. To improve the tracking of 'informal' requests to the Housing Complaints & Customer Feedback Team.
3. To acknowledge 100% of complaints within 5 working days.
4. To enhance the monitoring of our Lift Servicing and Consultancy contracts, with regular meetings and additional administrative support within the Compliance Team.
5. The Housing Complaints & Customer Feedback Team will regularly attend contract management meetings to provide feedback to our key contractors.
6. To review and develop customer service across Housing. This includes empowering our staff with training, streamlining our operations and developing and reviewing our policy and procedures.
7. To implement the Civica CRM module.
8. The Tenancy Audit Project launching in 2025 will help develop detailed profiles for our residents to tailor services to their needs, such as language preference and accessibility requirements.
9. A template and procedure will be implemented for communications to residents regarding communal outages and communal repairs.
10. Under the new Chigwell Repairs & Maintenance contract, Chigwell will contact customers directly to make the first appointment for non-emergency repairs within 2 working days. They will issue an SMS reminders 24 hours before the appointment is due and another when the operative is on route.

11. The Housing Complaints & Customer Feedback Team will introduce clearer expectations and standards for staff investigating complaints and writing responses.
12. We are reviewing the Housing Complaints Compensation Policy in line with customer feedback and findings from our complaints data.

Key Data

1. Housing Complaints Statistics 2024/25:

Key data contained in Appendix 5 – Housing Complaints Performance Statistics 2024/25

2. Group Compensation Payments:

In 2024/25, there have been instances where compensation has been offered to a group of residents, such as where there has been a lengthy communal outage impacting multiple households. The Housing Complaints and Customer Feedback Team have worked with Heads of Service, using information from complaints, to make decisions regarding group compensation payments.

In 2024/25, residents were offered **£26,250** in either rent or service charge rebates following lift outages and communal lighting outages. This compensation was offered on a discretionary basis.

The Housing Compensation Policy is currently being updated with guidance relating to compensation offerings for communal lift outages. Housing Management have used guidance from other local authorities and the Housing Ombudsman Service to update the Compensation Policy.

Block	Amount Compensated per Household	Amount Compensated Total	Date	Info
Kinefold House	£150 (additional £100 for those registered with a PEEP)	£11,750*	28/02/2025	Both lifts at Kinefold House continuously were out of service for approx. 3 weeks towards the end of 2024.
Centre Point	£100 (additional £100 for those registered with a PEEP)	£7,500	28/02/2025	Both Centre Point Lifts were continuously out of service for approx. 2 weeks in December 2024.

Eric Wilkins House	£250 (additional £100 for those registered with a PEEP)	£4000	24/03/2025	The lift in Eric Wilkins House was out of service from July 2024 – March 2025.
Otto Close	£100 for all households	£3000	28/02/2025	Communal lighting outage from November 2023 which remains unresolved.

*In 2024/25, there was an administrative error in which 8 properties at Kinefold House were compensated for lift outages despite not having access to the lifts. These residents were written to with an explanation of the administrative error but were not required to pay back the amount compensated.

For all other blocks relating to lift outages, only households above the ground floor who had access to the lifts were compensated. Additional compensation was offered to residents with limited mobility/disabilities that were registered with the City of London for a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. In communications with residents regarding this compensation, guidance was provided as to how to apply for a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan.

3. Complaints Learning Panel Outcomes

At the most recently held Complaints Learning Panel in March 2025, relevant Heads of Service discussed lessons learned from complaints resulting in service improvements. Some examples of which are detailed below:

Out of Hours Service:

A resident experienced difficulties with the Out of Hours Service over the Christmas Period (December 2024). Following this, the Head of Repairs and Maintenance immediately began work to review the service to ensure that necessary changes were implemented for a significant improvement under the new Repairs & Maintenance contract. The Head of Repairs & Maintenance wanted to ensure under the new contract that:

- The communications process between the Out of Hours call handlers, contractors and internal team were improved.
- The Out of Hours call handlers were equipped to deal with various scenarios, capturing and catering to resident vulnerabilities where appropriate.

Repair Target Timescales:

Multiple complaint cases contained examples of repairs not being completed within the appropriate timescale. Under the new Repairs & Maintenance contract, repairs priorities have been streamlined. Repairs will now be categorised as emergency (24

hours) or non-emergency (20 working days) allowing the contractor to make decisions on prioritisation of these repairs within each priority.

Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessments:

As part of a Housing Ombudsman investigation, we were asked to provide a 'Damp & Mould self-assessment'. The City of London did not have this self-assessment in place and therefore were instructed to carry out this self-assessment. It was completed in November 2024.

We were also advised to review our Adaptations procedure, which is currently being reviewed.

Following these suggestions, work has begun on carrying out self-assessments against all of the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Reports. A copy of the self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code is available under appendix 2.

Parking Waiting List:

Following a complaint related to the parking waiting list, the Income Manager reviewed and noticed that there were some spaces which had not been let out for a number of months. The Income Manager now requests that Rent Officers review the parking waiting list ahead of their 1-1 meetings to ensure that spaces are not being left empty, and the waiting list can progress quicker.

Corporate & Strategic Implications – [*Please state 'none' if not applicable instead of deleting any of the sub-headings below*]

Strategic implications – None

Financial implications – None

Resource implications – None

Legal implications – None

Risk implications - Housing Complaints have a direct impact upon the reputation of the City of London's Housing Division. By the time residents get to the point that they want to make a complaint, they may have already experienced a service failure, and therefore it is important that we get it right through the complaints process. There is also a reputational risk in terms of the cases that are investigated by the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman post annual reports and occasionally mention specific landlords for severe maladministration practices.

Equalities implications – None

Climate implications – None

Security implications – None

Conclusion

Members are asked to note this report containing information on the Housing Complaints and Customer Feedback Team's service in 2024/25 and ambitions for 2025/26.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report (2024/25)
- Appendix 2 – Annual Complaints Self-Assessment
- Appendix 3 – Previous Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report (2023/24)
- Appendix 4 – Procedure for MP and Member Enquiries
- Appendix 5 – Housing Complaints Performance Statistics 2024/25

Anna Donoghue

Information, Performance and Quality Assurance Manager
(Housing Complaints & Customer Feedback Team)

T: 020 3834 8967

E: anna.donoghue@cityoflondon.gov.uk