



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee Agenda

8 September 2026

Time: 10.00 am

Location: Council Chamber

Members: Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

Councillors Darby, Dodds, G Harrison (C), Lindridge, Napper, Nelson, Roy, Scarborough, Wallace, Wiley and Young (VC)

Parish Council Co-opted Member:

C Robson (Dalton Piercy Parish Council)

M Ireland (Elwick Parish Council)

1. Apologies for absence

2. To receive any declarations of interest by members

3. Minutes

- 3.1 To receive the Minutes and Decision Record in respect of the meeting held on 24 June 2026 (previously published and circulated).

4. Budget And Policy Framework Items

- 4.1 Budget Monitoring Report 2026/27 – Quarter 1 – *Director of Finance, IT and Digital*

CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire alarm or a bomb alarm, please leave by the nearest emergency exit as directed by Council Officers. A Fire Alarm is a continuous ringing. A Bomb Alarm is a continuous tone. The Assembly Point for everyone is Victory Square by the Cenotaph. If the meeting has to be evacuated, please proceed to the Assembly Point so that you can be safely accounted for.



5. Key Decisions

- 5.1 Housing Management Services Complaints Policy: Annual Performance Monitoring Report – *Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)*

6. Other Items Requiring Decision

No items

7. Items for information

- 7.1 Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2025-26 – *Monitoring Officer*
7.2 Corporate Procurement Report on Contracts – *Director of Finance, IT and Digital*

8. Any other business which the chair considers urgent

For Information

Date of next meeting – 26 November 2026 in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool.



FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

8th September 2026

Report of: Director of Finance, IT and Digital
Subject: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT–2026/27
 QUARTER 1
Decision Type: Budget and Policy Framework

1. Council Plan Priority

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- that is connected, sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects its community. (Organisation)

2. Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of:

- i) General Fund forecast revenue outturn for 2026/27;
- ii) Reserves position and forecasts;
- iii) Housing Revenue Account forecast outturn for 2026/27;
- iv) Corporate Income Collection Performance; and
- v) Capital Programme Monitoring 2026/27.

3. Background

- 3.1 The cost pressures reported to Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee throughout 2025/26 have continued into the 2026/27 financial year, but have increased. The significant financial pressures being experienced by the Council are from inflationary and on-going increased demand, areas of income shortfall and significant pressures within both children and adult social care services.
- 3.2 The approved budget for 2026/27 was set, inclusive of challenging savings targets to be delivered during the financial year. These totalled £6.235m, with £3.000m of this relating to savings to be achieved through Children's Social Care demand and cost reductions. In addition use of £1.047m of the revenue Budget Support Fund reserve was also approved for 2026/27.
- 3.3 With regards to the general economy, inflation has begun to fall since March, with the latest published data recording the Consumer Price Index at 2.9% for July 2026. Volatility of inflation rates is likely to continue during 2026, linked to the impact on energy and fuel markets from the Iran conflict and other on-going geo-political events.
- 3.4 The current 2026/27 forecast revenue outturn position for the Council is outlined below.

4. General Fund Revenue Outturn 2026/27

- 4.1 The forecast outturn position for 2026/27 is an overspend of £5.680m. As noted above the budget was set utilising £1.047m of reserves to balance the budget. As such the inherent overspend is actually £6.727m. The position by service area is detailed in **Appendices A to G**, with further commentary on variances set out from section 4.3 onwards.
- 4.2 The in-year forecast overspend outlined in this report and wider financial position of the Council will necessitate urgent, in-year, corrective action to be taken. The escalation of spend efficiency measures and further savings plans, additional recruitment protocols and other spend restrictions, have been immediately put in place, alongside action to mitigate the social care financial position where possible.
- 4.3 As shown in the table below and has been the case in recent years, the financial position within Children's Services is of serious concern given the significant level of overspend. An overspend is also forecast for Adult Services, continuing the trend from 2025/26. Underspends in other areas have provided some limited mitigation for the major social care cost pressures the council continues to experience.

Department	Q1 Forecast Outturn - Overspend/ (Underspend)
	£'000
Adult Services & Public Health	965
Children's Services	6,360
Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services	420
Housing, Growth and Communities	(200)
Finance, IT and Digital	(95)
Legal, Governance and HR	(25)
Office of the Chief Executive	65
Corporate	(1,810)
Total Forecast Budget Overspend	5,680

Adult Services and Public Health

- 4.4 The projected outturn position is a net departmental overspend of £0.965m, which represents 2.1% of the net budget.
- 4.5 This overspend mainly relates to packages of care for Older People and Working Age Adults arising from historic demographic pressures and increased demand (an ageing population and young adults with increasingly complex needs), greater costs and increased income budgets. A budget pressure will be included within the 2027/28 MTFP.
- 4.6 The forecasts will be closely monitored during the year as the winter period can result in increased demand, and therefore costs. A Financial Recovery Plan was developed and implemented during last financial year by the Adult Social Care senior management team with budgets, expenditure and income continuing to be closely monitored throughout the year.
- 4.7 Public Health services are fully funded by the specific ring-fenced Public Health Grant which from 1st April 2026 also now includes the Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant and Local Stop Smoking Services and Support Grants. There is a forecast underspend at year end, which, in line with the grant conditions, will be transferred to the ring-fenced Public Health reserve for use on identified future public health services.

Children Services

- 4.8 The Children's Service forecast outturn of a £6.360m is comprised of a forecast overspend of £6.550m for Children's Social Care partially offset by a small Education Services forecast underspend of £0.190m.
- 4.9 The 2026/27 budget setting process provided additional specific resources of £6.500m into Children's Social Care, given their significant and on-going cost

and demand pressures. This is in addition to normal inflationary budget increases.

- 4.10 In recognition of the quantum of financial resource directed to Children's social care delivery in 2026/27 and recent years, alongside the council's wider deteriorating financial position, the department were tasked with reducing the recurring overspend, and a £3.000m savings agreed for 2026/27. Several key initiatives were identified across the service, each designed to address different aspects of the care system, the implementation of social care reforms, whilst importantly continue to improve outcomes for children and families.
- 4.11 However, at the time of setting the budget it was noted that the budget for 2026/27 does not allow for any demand growth in Children in our Care numbers or additional cost associated with complexity. As such both the savings requirement and potential for further growth in numbers posed a real financial risk.
- 4.12 Notwithstanding the significant net budget increase of £3.500m in to Children's Social Care, the forecast outturn position at this stage in the financial year is a forecast overspend of £6.550m. Arguably this is comprised of the non-achievement of the £3.000m savings and a forecast further £3.550m of additional cost pressures beyond that.
- 4.13 As noted above, a major reason for the forecast overspend is the non-achievement of the £3.000m saving, which is predominantly targeted at external placement cost reductions. In addition, the other main emerging areas of overspend are; social work staffing linked to increased social worker demand across a number of areas, supported accommodation with some current high cost placements, allowances and fees for kinship carers and care leavers and escalating legal costs associated with care proceedings.
- 4.14 Children in our care (CiOC) numbers continued to rise throughout the whole of 2025/26, to 382 by the end of the financial year. This figure rose further to the end of quarter 1 of 2026/27 to 383, and by the beginning of August 2026 reached 386. Overall Hartlepool's Children in Care numbers per 10,000 children, continue to be well above regional and national averages. This is because of a number of factors including: increasing levels of need, family pressures, increasing complexity of need in adolescents, and the cumulative impact of poverty and associated impact.
- 4.15 With regard to those children requiring external provider placements, the current top 25 highest cost external residential placements are costing in the region of £230,000 per week, which equates to c£12m per year. The average cost of the 54 external placements (at 31st July 2026) was £7,345 per week, with a range of £3,900 to £14,700 per week. As at 31st July 2026 there were 8 placements costing £10,000 or more per week reflecting the complexity of their needs and the bespoke nature of the support required to keep them safe.

- 4.16 Safeguarding referrals into the Council's Children's Hub have continued to be at the elevating levels experienced through 2025/26. Referrals for quarter 1 of 2026/27 were 20% up on the same period last year. These statistics demonstrate the escalating demand for children's safeguarding services, placing increasing pressure on social worker capacity and ultimately an increasing number of children being brought into the care of the local authority. Also, inherent within this is that further placements are required to be made with external providers in order to meet the individual needs of the young people coming into care.
- 4.17 As noted above, total CiOC numbers are continuing to increase. The current level of 386 children is a 12% rise since quarter 1 of 2025/26. Within the overall numbers quoted for CiOC it is important to note that this is not a fixed cohort of children. The most costly area, External Residential placements, has seen a number of children positively move on from these placements since the budget was set, equating to a c£2.197m cost decrease in this area. Unfortunately, and driven by new demand or the breakdown of other placement types, this has been replaced by £2.220m of new placements (10) into External Residential placements during the same period.
- 4.18 Some children also positively return home, and some children move into special guardianship order (SGO) or child arrangement order (CAO) arrangements within the wider family group. Children moving into SGO and CAO arrangements, are no longer classified as 'within our care' and as such provide a reduction in CiOC numbers. It is important to note that financial support payments are still provided by the Council in these circumstances. This is another area of budget pressure given the high volume of these arrangements.
- 4.19 To mitigate these cost pressures, 6 key strands of activity are progressing and are being overseen by Senior Management. The activity strands are focused around: edge of care support, prevention and early help, fostering and placement planning, reunification, care leavers support and corporate parenting.
- 4.20 The Council opened a new in-house children's home in January 2026, with the possibility of further new homes in the future. In addition, further local capacity will shortly become available from a local charity in their opening of a children's home in the town, providing more local, lower cost capacity. Any further developments in this area will help reduce our exposure to the significant fees being charged by the external care provider market.
- 4.21 The Council is progressing its own local fostering drive and is also included in a large-scale regional recruitment initiative delivered by 'Foster with North East'. In addition, increased staffing resources have been provided during recent months aimed at reducing the need for care proceeding through intervention support. The Edge of Care team are providing support to families who are at risk of having children enter the care system. Increased respite support also continues to be provided.

- 4.22 Local case reviews continue to be carried out to ensure care is being provided at the correct level, whilst also challenging costs. Further activity to maximise partner contributions to care costs, where appropriate, is also in place.
- 4.23 Regionally, in the medium-term, partnership working is being developed to maximise regional economies of scale and tackle current care market failures. Following successful pilots elsewhere in the country supported by the Department for Education, the North East Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) is entering the mobilisation and foundation phases of development and are currently recruiting to key posts in the RCC structure. Further development work will continue with North East councils over the coming months.
- 4.24 From national government's perspective 'The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme' was published during 2025. These changes centre around implementing: "Family Help and multi-agency child protection reforms" that make greater use of Family Group Decision Making. The roll-out of these reforms represents a significant step forward in delivering on the government's mission to provide children with the best start in life and break down barriers to opportunity." The delivery of the reform requirements is progressing with appointments to key posts underway and partnership working arrangements put in place.
- 4.25 The 2026/27 budget position is of significant concern to the council's financial position. Internal activity to manage demand and costs in social care continues as documented above. In addition advice and guidance is being sought externally from professionals and government officials to offer an independent perspective on practice and potential improvement areas.

Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services

- 4.26 The forecast outturn for the department is an overspend position of £0.420m. The main areas of emerging budget pressure generating the forecast overspend are noted below.
- 4.27 The Passenger Transport service is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.140m which is mainly due to increased running costs, particularly in relation to 3rd party provider costs and fuel. The impact of the September 2026 cohort of SEND children is not fully known at this stage, so the forecast may vary as part of future updates.
- 4.28 The £0.160m forecast overspend for Sustainable Transport is driven by changes in Concessionary Fare usage linked to demographic changes and regionally led contract negotiations with bus operators. Following a period of underspending in this area a saving was taken from this budget in the 2025/26 financial year.
- 4.29 The £0.200m forecast overspend in Facilities Management is fully linked to the school meals service and shortfalls in income.

- 4.30 The Public Protection service is forecasting an overspend of £0.130m, due to forecast shortfalls in licensing income levels.
- 4.31 A forecast underspend of £0.150m on salary abatement across the department, is supporting the above position, alongside a number of areas of smaller forecast over and underspend.

Housing, Growth and Communities

- 4.32 The forecast outturn for the department is an underspend of £0.210m.
- 4.33 The forecast overspend of £0.450m within the Inclusive Growth area mainly relates to historic income pressures across Cemeteries and Crematoria and the Borough Hall and Town Hall Theatre. In addition, there are income pressures relating to Carlton Adventure and the temporary closure of Brierton Community Sports Centre for capital improvement works. Work is being undertaken in each of these areas to explore options for increasing income or delivering services differently.
- 4.34 The £0.640m favourable variance in Housing and Community Services mainly relates to the receipt of increased grants supporting the Housing service and staffing vacancies, and grant contributions supporting the Employment and Skills service.

Town Centre Crime & Safety Project – TVCA Funding Bid

- 4.35 The Hartlepool Town Centre Crime & Safety Project is a £1.800m project designed to create a safer, more welcoming, and vibrant town centre that supports economic growth, business confidence, and community pride. The project seeks £1.300m of grant funding from the Tees Valley Investment Zone (TVIZ), supported by £500,000 of match funding from the Council. The proposal has been developed jointly with key partners including the Council, Cleveland Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), businesses, community organisations, and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA).
- 4.36 The project is scheduled to run to March 2029 and match funding detailed within the application is to be provided through existing officer time and Pride in Place complementary activity.
- 4.37 A further update on the success or otherwise of the bid will be reported as part of a future update. Given the need to progress quickly with delivery, should the application be successful, approval is sought for grant acceptance within section 9 of the report.

Mill House Leisure Centre Demolition

- 4.38 Following the opening of the Highlight Wellbeing Hub, the Mill House Leisure Centre is now fully vacated and surplus to requirements. An application for Prior Approval has been submitted to Hartlepool Development Corporate, as

Local Planning Authority, and demolition is planned to take place during autumn 2026.

- 4.39 Demolition is deemed the most appropriate course of action given the holding costs associated with the building and on-going incidents of break-ins and associated anti-social behaviour at the site.
- 4.40 The cost to demolish the buildings and fully clear the site is estimated to be £0.500m. This will be fully funded from a £0.500m reserve earmarked for this purpose as part of the 2025/26 outturn.

Finance, IT and Digital

- 4.41 The current forecast outturn is an underspend of £0.095m. This is owing to favourable variances from staffing vacancies and staff not being at the top of their grade, which is offsetting a pressure in income generation and additional printing and postage.

Legal, Governance and HR

- 4.42 The current forecast outturn is an underspend of £0.025m. Favourable staffing vacancies, arising from vacant posts and staff not being at the top of their grade, are offsetting pressures relating to income generation and additional supplies and services expenditure.

Office of the Chief Executive

- 4.43 The current forecast outturn position is an overspend of £0.065m. The overspend predominantly relates to income shortfalls in reprographics.

Corporate Areas

- 4.44 The current forecast outturn position is an underspend of £1.810m. Interest income generated from the investment of the council's reserves continue to provide a vital revenue stream to support the overall budget position. Interest of c£1.800m above the budget is forecast to be generated during 2026/27, with the council taking advantage of continued high rates of interest.
- 4.45 The 2026/27 pay award for National Joint Council (NJC) staff, which covers the majority of council employees, was agreed at the end of August at an increase of 3.3%. The agreed pay award of 3.3% is higher than the 3.0% increase provided for through the 2026/27 budget setting process. A pressure of £0.300m has been included in the outturn position for the additional 0.3% increase.
- 4.46 The national pay award for Chief Officers has been accepted at 3.3%, with payments backdated to April 2026 made to Chief Officers in July.
- 4.47 A net underspend from additional grant income and other favourable variances are supporting property related cost pressures.

Virements

- 4.48 During the financial year it is necessary to amend budgets to allocate resources held corporately or reflect changes in structures or activity.
- 4.49 Budget adjustments carried out during quarter 1 between the corporate budget and service area budgets in respect of the agreed chief officer pay award, and for other team and service structure changes.

Budget Savings Monitoring

- 4.50 The 2026/27 budget included the implementation of £5.852m * of approved savings plans for year. A number of plans have already been delivered in full or are planned to progress during the coming months, which is positive for this stage in the financial year given the demands and pressures services have experienced. Directors continue to take action to mitigate any issues with implementation or where plans are unable to be taken forward.

- **£1.550m (27%)** of the savings have been fully realised in-year.
- **£1.252m (21%)** of savings where good progress is being made, with a good prospect that full savings will be achieved.
- **£3.050m (52%)** is in respect of areas where delays and issues have been encountered, meaning savings were unlikely to be delivered as planned during 2026/27. These are included as forecast overspends in the position presented in this report. Further information on the main areas is noted below.

* Note – a further approved savings of £383,000 was delivered through an increase to the council tax base and as such not within departmental budgets. This savings is on track to be achieved.

- 4.51 The forecast saving of £3.000m relating to Children's Social Care is currently undeliverable given the scale of new demand and cost pressures within the service. The savings plans were largely targeted at reducing the number and cost of children within External Residential Placements given the significant escalation of spend within this placement type in recent years. As noted in 4.17 above, External Residential placements, has seen a number of children positively move on from these placements since the budget was set, equating to a £2.197m cost decrease in this area. This has been achieved through careful planning and support. Unfortunately, and driven by new demand or the breakdown of other placement types, this has been replaced by £2.220m of new placements (10) into External Residential placements during the same period. Given this equal pressure, cancelling out the saving, that savings target is categorised as not being achieved. The currently forecast non-achievement of the £3.000m saving, forms part of the headline forecast overspend for Children's Services.
- 4.52 A £0.050m saving was allocated to each Directorate for 2026/27 and was to be met from staffing structure reviews. Given the significant staffing pressures within Children's Services linked to service demand, it is not possible to meet the savings target in this area.

Dedicated School Grant

- 4.53 Until the 2022/23 financial year, the Council successfully managed High Needs Block (HNB) expenditure within the available annual grant allocation and HNB reserves. This has been achieved despite a significant increase in demands on this service. In subsequent years HNB pressures significantly increased and an overspend was recorded in each year. As at 31st March 2026, the DSG accumulated deficit totaled £8.793m.
- 4.54 Accounting regulations do not allow this balance to be included in the General Fund. In accordance with accounting regulations this balance is subject to a statutory override and transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account which is an unusable reserve.
- 4.55 The government announced that the statutory override will end on the 31st March 2028. Subject to the production of a compliant Local SEND Reform Plan, government are to provide 90% of the accrued DSG deficit balance to 31 March 2026 as a High Needs Block Stability Grant. This grant is expected to be received during 2026/27 and will significantly support the cash flow pressures on authorities from this deficit. Local authorities are required to fund the remaining 10% balance. A £2.000m reserve has been created which is the forecast requirement to cover Hartlepool's 10% contribution and anticipated deficits arising in 2026/27 and 2027/28. The Council submitted their Local SEND Reform Plan to government in June 2026 for approval and is currently awaiting the outcome.
- 4.56 The 2026/27 High Needs Budget exceeded the funding allocation by £7.360m. Several mitigations were implemented including limiting inflation on Top Up Funding and Special Schools funding, along with a strategy to reduce the Out of Area and Independent School places by meeting need in Hartlepool provision. The transfer of £0.454m (0.5% the maximum without Secretary of State approval) from the Schools Block and uncommitted funding of £0.047m from the Central School Services Block to the High Needs Block were proposed by School Forum and agreed by Children's Services Committee.
- 4.57 The 2026/27 forecast HNB outturn is an overspend of £7.217m, a reduction of £0.143m compared to the budgeted overspend. This favourable variance is predominantly owing to lower than anticipated Independent Schools Fees, as pupils are being placed in Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs), enabling children with additional needs to be educated in the Borough. This overspend is partially offset by a projected underspend of £0.500m from the Early Years Block and projected £0.005m underspend from the Central Schools Services Block, resulting in a £6.712m forecast DSG deficit for 2026/27.
- 4.58 It is difficult to accurately forecast the Early Year Block outturn at this early stage in the financial year. Early Years funding allocations are based on PTE's (part time equivalents) at given census points, whereas payments to providers are based on actual attendance levels throughout the year. As the attendance between census points can fluctuate, variances between funding received and payments to providers are unavoidable.

- 4.59 The projected outturn has been calculated using trend analysis of previous years' census returns, adjusted for actual attendance levels.
- 4.60 The Government has indicated that they will manage the High Needs Block element of the DSG from 2028/29. Details on how this will operate are still to be announced.

Reserves

- 4.61 The significant emerging overspend for 2026/27 will have a seriously concerning impact on the Council's available reserves and resultant financial stability and resilience. The forecast overspend will fully utilise the budget support fund in 2026/27 and also utilise reserves previously earmarked for transformation activity. This forecast depletion of the council's reserves and associated reduction in financial resilience will necessitate an update to the council medium term budget strategy.
- 4.62 The current reserves position and the forecast usage of reserves in future years is summarised in the table below, with a detailed analysis provided at **Appendix P**.

Reserve Area	Balance as at 31st March 2026	Movement Between Reserves	Actual Use 2026/27	Balance as at 31st March 2027	Forecast Use 2027/28 to 2029/30	Forecast Balance as at 31st March 2030
	£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
Unearmarked General Fund	5,500	0	0	5,500	0	5,500
Budget Support Fund	5,486	0	(5,486)	0	0	0
Budget Support – Transformation and Invest to Save	3,279	0	(1,741)	1,538	(1,538)	0
DSG 10% Contribution Reserve	2,000	0	0	2,000	(2,000)	0
Other Revenue Reserves	14,103	0	(4,672)	9,431	(6,008)	3,423
Revenue Reserves Total	30,368	0	(11,899)	18,469	(9,546)	8,923
Capital Reserves	19,524	0	(18,374)	1,150	(1,150)	0
TOTAL	49,892	0	(30,273)	19,619	(10,696)	8,923
DSG Deficit - Unusable Reserve	(8,793)	0	(6,712)	(15,505)	15,505	0

- 4.63 Please note the information provided excludes any ringfenced School and HRA reserves.

5. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

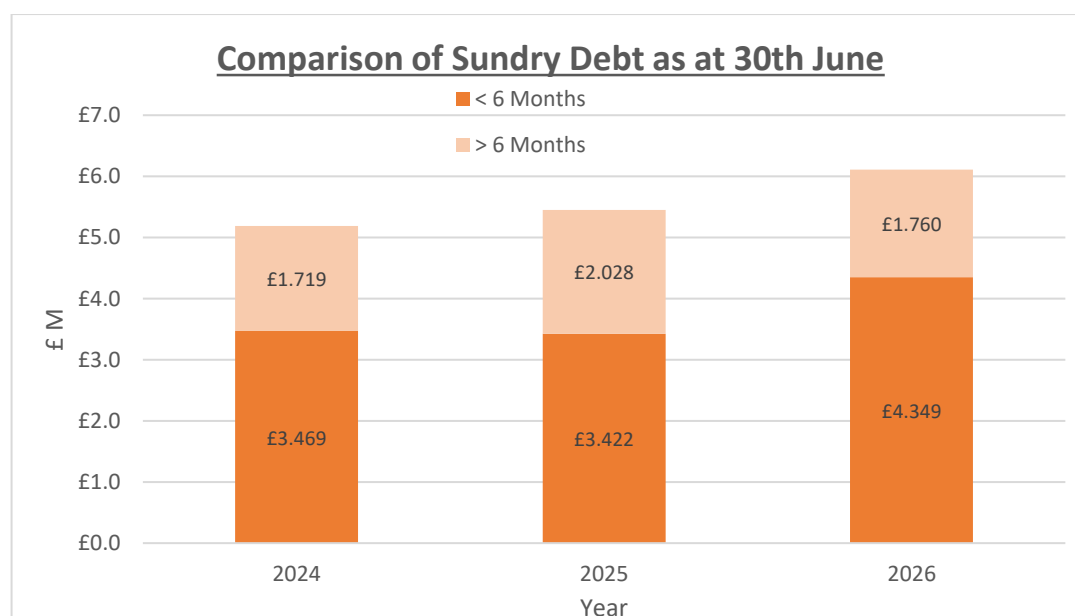
- 5.1 The HRA is forecasting a balanced budget for the financial year. Further details are provided at **Appendix H**.

- 5.2 Rental income is forecast to be marginally lower than budget, with some new properties available slightly later than planned.
- 5.3 There are variances across expenditure budgets including further repairs and maintenance spend, for damp and mould works and one-off legionella assessments, partially offset by some underspends in other areas.
- 5.4 These expenditure variances are fully offset by a reduction in voluntary contribution to the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR).
- 5.5 The HRA reserve is expected to remain at £0.500m
- 5.6 The HRA capital position is outlined in **Appendix I**.

6. Income Collection and Collection Fund

Sundry Debts

- 6.1 The Council collects significant Sundry Debts income for the payment of services provided by the Council. In total, £17.176m in sundry debts were raised in the first three months of 2026/27. As of 30th June 2026, £13.434m (78.22%) of this amount had been collected.
- 6.2 Robust procedures for collecting the remaining outstanding debt are in place. The following graph shows the comparable positions on 30th June for the last three years for long-term debt and current debt, which have been outstanding for less than six months.



- 6.3 Debtors totalled £6.109m as of 30th June 2026, of which £4.349m (71.19%) relates to current debts (less than 6 months old). Included within current debts (less than 6 months old) is debt where the customer has been invoiced for the whole of 2026/27, but payment is to be received in instalments throughout the year.

- 6.4 Debts greater than 6 months old total £1.760m. 99.26% (£1.747m) of this amount is under recovery action and 0.74% (£0.013m) is now considered unrecoverable.

Council Tax

- 6.5 The in-year performance to the end of June is slightly up on 2025/26. As at the 30th June 2026 the Council had collected 26.92% of the 2025/26 liability, compared to 26.65% for the previous year. Arrears collection continues to perform well.
- 6.6 Increased efforts to target potential single person discount (SPD) fraud continues. Despite these efforts in the first quarter of the year the number claiming the discount has increased by 52. The current claimant count is 16,475 a reduction of 936 (5%) from the 17,411 claiming SPD in March 2024 when the fraud awareness campaign began.
- 6.7 As at the end of June the Local Council Tax Support claimant count was 13,105 of which there were 8,660 working age claimants. There has been a slight decrease in working age claimants since the beginning of the year.
- 6.8 The Collection Fund in respect of Council Tax continues to be closely monitored.

Business Rates

- 6.9 At the 30th June 2026 the Council had collected 24.36% of the 2026/27 liability compared to 26.60% for the previous year. This is slightly down on 2025/26, but business rate collection tends to be volatile during the year, and is also impacted by changes to liability for businesses. At this stage we expect collection rates to be in line with 2025/26.

7. Capital Monitoring

- 7.1 Details of actual expenditure, budget variations and reprofiling of budget are provided in **Appendices J to O** and summarised below. Where applicable

expenditure has been reprofiled into future years. Resources will also be carried forward to fund these commitments.

Department	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/26	Actual 2026/27	Budget 2026/27	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2026/27	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2026/27	Revised Budget 2026/27
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Major Regeneration Schemes	118,466	52,313	1,937	43,717	0	(12,701)	31,016
Adult Services & Public Health	14,632	8,310	433	1,748	26	0	1,774
Children's Services	10,418	1,013	459	6,316	1,018	(1,822)	5,512
Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services	45,365	18,625	1,659	18,607	623	(6,090)	13,140
Housing, Growth & Communities	9,211	1,304	256	2,267	694	0	2,961
Corporate	3,211	415	17	1,845	(49)	0	1,796
Total Capital Expenditure	201,303	81,980	4,761	74,500	2,312	(20,613)	56,199

7.2 As shown in the above table, actual 2026/27 in-year capital expenditure to 30th June 2026 (end of Q1) totals £4.761m and reprofiling of expenditure into future years totals £20.613m. After taking account of the reprofiling and budget variations the forecast capital expenditure in 2026/27 now totals £56.199.

7.3 The main areas of cost variation, included within the net £2.312m capital programme increase shown in the 'additional schemes and cost variations' column relate to:

- Children's Services Scheme variations (£1.018) – mainly linked to confirmation of the Schools High Needs allocation for 2026/27 with £0.930m now added to the capital programme.
- Local Transport Plan - £0.348m variation for additional works funded by TVCA.
- Hartlepool Marina North Pier scheme – increase in the scheme of £0.295m fully funded by the Environment Agency.
- Housing, Growth and Communities - Pride in Place main programme funding added for capital programme period (£5.306m to 2029/30). Current year 1 allocation of £0.360m added to 2026/27.
- Housing, Growth and Communities – variation for Playgrounds Fund allocation received from MHCLG (£0.240m capital)

7.4 Full details of any budget variances and reprofiling of expenditure are shown in **Appendices J to O**.

Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk Capital Fund'

- 7.5 The council submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) to Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk Capital Fund' in June 2026, to request support for the restoration of 8/9 Church Street, a locally listed vacant asset owned by the Council in the Church Street Conservation Area. The EOI was accepted by Historic England in early July 2026 with an invitation to submit a full application to the fund by 31 July. A full bid application has now been submitted requesting £489,300 for capital works, £43,500 of project development costs and £72,700 of professional fees, totalling £605,000.
- 7.6 The funding would be used for a range of structural works including piling, foundations, replacement of gable wall, roofing works, internal structural scaffolding, and other repairs including to stonework. These works would allow the asset to be brought back into meaningful use, and should the full bid be successful, approval is requested to accept the grant funding from Historic England.
- 7.7 A further update on the success or otherwise of the bid will be reported as part of a future update. Given the need to progress quickly with delivery, should the application be successful, approval is sought for grant acceptance within section 9 of the report.

Capital Receipts

- 7.8 There were no significant capital receipts received in Quarter 1.

8. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	No relevant issues.
Financial Considerations	The financial implications are fully set out in the main body of the report.
Subsidy Control	No relevant issues.
Legal Considerations	No relevant issues.
Single Impact Assessment	No relevant issues.
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues.

Consultation	No relevant issues.
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9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Note the 2026/27 forecast outturn position of £5.680m overspend and the accompanying financial performance for the year;
- ii) Approve the virements noted at paragraphs 4.48 to 4.49;
- iii) Note the forecast use of reserves at paragraph 4.61;
- iv) Note the 2026/27 forecast outturn in relation to the Housing Revenue Account detailed within Section 5 of the report; and
- v) Note the capital programme position and approve budget variations
- vi) Approve the acceptance of grant funding for the Town Centre Crime & Safety Project funding application to TVCA detailed in 4.35 and the Historic England 'Heritage at Risk Capital Fund' funding application, detailed in 7.5, should these applications be successful.

10. Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 To inform Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee of the Council's 2026/27 financial forecast outturn position.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee – Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 – 2029/30 – 10th February 2026.

Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee – Budget Monitoring Outturn Report 2025/26 – 24th June 2026.

12. Contact Officers

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Paul Dixon
Assistant Director, Finance
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Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 12/08/2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 12/08/2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 12/08/2026

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27 as at 31st March 2027

2026/27 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Adult Social Care		
75	Carers	3	Minor Variances
5,270	Commissioning - Adults	(97)	The underspend mainly relates to the use of grant funding.
175	Departmental Running Costs	(68)	The underspend relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies over and above the departmental salary abatement target.
387	Direct Care & Support (including Telecare)	(25)	The underspend mainly relates to staff savings offsetting a small overspend relating to Telecare income being slightly below the latest budget.
1,075	LD & Transition Social Work	(127)	The underspend relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies over and above the departmental salary abatement target.
2,252	Locality & Safeguarding Team	(41)	The underspend mainly relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies - over and above the departmental salary abatement target - offsetting the overspend in legal and assessment costs associated with Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS).
1,453	Mental Health Services	(101)	The underspend relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies over and above the departmental salary abatement target.
1,496	Occupational Therapy (OT) & Disability Equipment	144	The overspend mainly relates to OT equipment and the minor adaptations budgets.
32,522	Packages of Care	1,333	The overspend relates to a combination of historic cost pressures, increased demand, increased costs and income targets across a number of mainly Older People packages of care budgets.
313	Transformation & Digital	0	
1,318	Working Age Adult Day Services	(56)	The underspend relates to staff savings from incremental drift and vacancies over and above the departmental salary abatement target.
46,336	Adult Social Care Sub Total	965	
	Public Health Grant		
4,137	Children's Services	(3)	Minor Variances
4,196	Substance Misuse Services	52	Some planned expenditure was to be funded from the ring-fenced Public Health reserve, however, given the overall Public Health forecast outturn position the use of reserves for this spend will not be required.
2,095	General Public Health Support Services	(110)	Forecast underspend mainly relates to staff vacancies and incremental drift alongside some areas of the budget where work is on-going to determine how to allocate the remaining ringfenced balance on public health activity.
663	Sexual Health Services	0	
178	Smoking Cessation	0	
469	Physical Activity	0	
15	Mental Health	4	Minor Variances
91	Health Checks	(45)	Forecast is based on spend to date which may increase as year progresses.
225	Obesity	0	
(12,069)	Public Health Grant	0	

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27 as at 31st March 2027

2026/27 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Children's Social Care		
4,126	Children & Families	596	Overspend mainly relates to the costs of keeping young people at home/out of care and increases in the number of children subject to Child Arrangement Orders and Special Guardianship Allowances.
30,862	Children in our Care	5,417	The forecast overspend includes the non-achievement of the £3m savings target included within the 2026/27 MTFP (see accompanying main report for more details). In addition, there are further overspends arising from increases in the numbers and costs of children coming into care and the associated impacts on social work staffing workloads and budgets, including supervising family contact. This reflects the increasing complexity of children's needs and the significant fees being charged by the external care market.
296	Early Intervention	0	Early Help Services, including the 0-19 Team are mainly funded from the Public Health Grant. At this stage in the year a nil outturn across all areas is forecast.
7,569	Safeguarding Children	437	Overspend mainly relates to increased social worker staffing costs and legal/barrister costs associated with care proceedings. These overspends have been partly offset by the use of 'one-off' grant income.
680	Standards, Engagement & Development	50	Overspend mainly relates to a shortfall in funding for the social worker apprenticeships.
1,145	Strategic Commissioning	50	Overspend mainly relates to historic income pressures.
297	Youth Justice Service	0	An underspend is forecast, mainly arising from staffing savings and 'one-off' income, however any underspend will be transferred to the ringfenced YJS Partnership Reserve.
44,975	Children's Services Sub Total	6,550	
	Education (excluding DSG)		
169	Access to Education	0	
97	Central Support Services	0	
507	Other School Related Expenditure	0	
666	Raising Educational Achievement	(10)	Forecast underspend relates to additional income generation.
695	Special Needs Services	(70)	Favourable variance relates to additional grant funding.
499	Strategic Management	(85)	Favourable variance owing to vacant posts.
1,009	Youth Service	(25)	Favourable variance owing to vacant posts and staff not at the top of their grade and additional grant income.
3,642	Education Sub Total	(190)	
48,617	Children's Services Sub Total	6,360	

	Dedicated Schools Grant	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable)	
16,213	Early Years Block	(500)	Favourable variance relates primarily to funding for the new entitlements for under 2 year-olds and 2 year-old working parents. Funding based on in-year census points exceeded actual attendance. Additionally, underspending against funding for 3-4 year-old provision and the centrally retained budget contribute to the overall underspend. Provision for 2 year-old Families Receiving Additional Support overspent against funding received.
18,900	High Needs Block	7,217	Government grant insufficient to fulfil responsibilities for education of pupils with SEND. In line with strategy, Independent School placement costs are reducing, although these have been offset by greater levels of funding to schools as they increase Inclusion and support children with more complex needs at mainstream.
18,991	Schools Block	(5)	Reduced cost of Central School Services, including the Admissions Service
54,104	TOTAL Dedicated Schools Grant	6,712	

NEIGHBOURHOODS & REGULATORY SERVICES

4.1 Appendix C

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27 as at 31st March 2027

2026/27 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Neighbourhood Services		
9	Building Design Team	(25)	Anticipated surplus on trading activity given positive position achieved in recent years. But this early in the financial year and subject to change.
130	Construction Team	(25)	Anticipated surplus on trading activity given positive position achieved in recent years. But this early in the financial year and subject to change.
357	Engineering Services (including Coastal Protection and Contaminated Land)	0	Budget contains statutory duties for flood and coast protection and is subject to fluctuation over winter.
3,378	Environmental Services	0	
2,359	Highways	0	Resurfacing budget reduction for 2026/27 may impact on reactive maintenance over winter.
2,368	Passenger Transport	140	Children SEND costs continue to be greater than budget as a result of increased running costs particularly in relation to 3rd party provider costs and fuel. The impact of the September 2026 cohort is not fully known at this stage, so the forecast will be more accurate for Q2.
522	Planning & Development	20	Relates mainly to building control income.
161	Road Safety	30	Relates mainly to school crossing patrol staff saving not achieved following members decision to fill vacant post.
(25)	Strategic Asset Management	40	Forecast adverse variance reflects shortfall in lease income and recharge income.
80	Strategic Development & Sustainability	0	Lower the budget recharge income from schemes.
1,474	Street Lighting	0	Although forecasting a zero variance it is still early in the financial year and may be subject change.
2,062	Sustainable Transport	160	Forecast adverse variance reflects unfavourable contract negotiations and demographic changes in relation to Concessionary Fares costs, which are significantly higher than in previous years. This is the result of a previous saving taken from the budget.
(97)	Vehicle Fleet	(50)	Income from chargeable repairs and hire vehicles.
8,489	Waste Services	0	Subject to the ongoing roll out of food waste and an increase in recycling. Nil variance assumes booking system remains.
21,267	Neighbourhood Services Sub Total	290	
	Regulatory Services		
(807)	Car Parking & Enforcement	0	This is an early forecast that may be subject to change . A nil variance takes account of the revised parking fees.
961	Community Safety & Engagement	(50)	Relates to underspend on non staffing budgets.
1,024	Facilities Management	200	A shortfall in school meal income.
244	Health & Safety	0	
684	Public Protection	130	Forecast adverse variance reflects shortfall in licensing income.
2,106	Regulatory Services Sub Total	280	
	Strategic Management & Admin		
432	Strategic Management & Admin	(150)	Forecast favourable variance reflects anticipated over achievement of the salary abatement target.
23,805	Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Total	420	

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27 as at 31st March 2027

2026/27 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Inclusive Growth		
31	Archaeology	0	
(231)	Coast, Cems & Crems, Country	100	Adverse variance mainly relates to historic income pressures within the Cemeteries and Crematoria service area.
82	Cultural - Events and Theatres	110	Relates to Borough Hall partial closure and Town Hall Theatre income pressures.
499	Cultural - Museums and Galleries	30	Overspend mainly relates to staffing and other one off cost pressures.
387	Economic Growth	0	
73	General Allotments	0	Minor variances in relation to non staffing budgets.
286	Sports, Leisure & Rec Facilities	210	Relates to income and cost pressures in relation to various budgets. Including: Brierton Community Sports temporary closure impact and Carlton Centre forecast income shortfall.
1,128	Inclusive Growth Sub Total	450	
	Housing and Community		
71	Adult Education	10	Shortfall in income from Waverley Community Allotments.
1,063	Community Hubs	50	Forecast overspend relates to income and running costs variances for the Library Service.
0	Employment & Skills	(240)	Relates to available grant funding from to support the service.
3,880	Housing, Hardship & Welfare	(460)	Favourable variance mainly relates to the receipt of increased grants and staffing vacancies.
5,013	Housing and Community Sub Total	(640)	
	Strategic Management & Admin		
347	Strategic Management & Admin	(20)	Relates to temporary vacancies in senior management posts.
347	Strategic Management & Admin Sub Total	(20)	
6,488	Housing, Growth & Communities Total	(210)	

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27 as at 31st March 2027

2026/27 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
	Corporate and Financial Services		
610	Benefits	(80)	Favourable variance owing to posts not being at the top of the grade, additional income generation and non pay savings.
(1,090)	Central Administration Recharges	0	
1,547	Corporate Finance	(60)	Favourable variance owing to posts not being at the top of the grade and vacant hours.
230	Internal Audit	(25)	Favourable variance owing to a vacant post and posts not being at the top of the grade.
181	Procurement	(45)	Favourable variance owing to posts not being at the top of the grade and non pay savings.
1,322	Revenues	10	Projected adverse variance is owing to additional costs in supplies and services.
(607)	Revenue & Benefits Central	175	Projected adverse variance is owing to additional costs in supplies and services and reduced court cost income.
746	Shared Services	10	Projected adverse variance is owing to additional costs in supplies and services.
50	Corporate Management Running Expenses	(25)	Favourable variance owing to savings on the corporate subscriptions budget.
2,989	Corporate and Financial Services Sub Total	(40)	
	Customer Services and IT		
436	Corporate ICT	(25)	Favourable variance owing to posts not being at the top of the grade.
1,272	Customer and Support Services	(70)	Favourable variance owing to vacant posts and posts not being at the top of the grade.
27	Registration Services	40	The adverse variance is owing to a reduction in income generation on both birth and death registration certificates, along with a reduction in ceremonial certificates.
1,735	Customer Services and IT Sub Total	(55)	
4,724	Finance, IT & Digital Total	(95)	

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27 as at 31st March 2027

2026/27 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
51	Civic Attendants	5	The projected adverse variance is owing to the requirement for additional staff time.
208	Corporate Support	(20)	Favourable variance owing to posts not being at the top of the grade.
55	Corporate Training	0	
129	Democratic	(5)	Favourable variance owing to posts not being at the top of the grade.
556	Human Resources	(45)	Favourable variance owing to vacant posts and staff not at the top of their grade, partially offset by reduced income generation.
861	Legal Services	50	Projected adverse variance is owing to additional supplies and services costs.
175	Municipal Elections and Registration of Electors	0	
48	Other Office Services	(10)	Favourable variance owing to additional grant income.
118	Scrutiny	0	
146	Support to Members	0	
34	Trade Union	0	
2,381	Legal, Governance and HR Total	(25)	

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

4.1 Appendix G

REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27 as at 31st March 2027

2026/27 Budget £'000	Description of Service Area	Actual Outturn Adverse/ (Favourable) £'000	Director's Explanation of Variance
202	Chief Executive	0	
236	Communications and Marketing	0	
184	Corporate Strategy and Performance	5	Minor variance owing to additional supplies and services costs.
(83)	Reprographics	60	Forecast adverse variance reflects income shortfalls in relation to Reprographics.
539	Office of the Chief Executive Total	65	

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT for 2025/26 as at 31st March 2027
4.1 APPENDIX H

2025/26 OUTTURN		2026/27 BUDGET	2026/27 Forecast	Variance	COMMENTS
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	
	Income				
(2,023)	Dwelling Rents	(2,085)	(2,074)	11	Adverse variance due to Persimmon properties (New build) expected to come on line later than budgeted for.
(59)	Income from Insurance Claim	-	-	-	
(22)	Non-dwelling Rents - Other Income	(25)	(25)	-	
(13)	Charges for services and facilities	(8)	(8)	-	
(35)	Government Grant	-	-	-	
(2,152)	Income sub total	(2,118)	(2,107)	11	
	Expenditure				
628	Repairs and maintenance	650	692	42	The overspend reflects the continued increase in the number and higher value repairs for damp and mould issues and procurement for one-off Legionella risk assessment and testing. On-going charges will be included as part of cyclical maintenance.
480	Supervision and management	548	541	(7)	
34	Rents, rates, taxes and other charges	24	28	4	Favourable variance due to savings from staff turnover
5	Right to Buy Reserve	5	-	(5)	Not affordable in current year
-	Provision for bad or doubtful debts	-	10	10	
656	Depreciation (Major Repairs Allowance)	431	384	(47)	The lower charge for the voluntary provision element is to offset the one-off legionella expenditure included above.
1	Discretionary Housing Payments	4	2	(2)	
13	Debt Management costs	13	13	-	
335	Net Interest payable	443	437	(6)	
2,152	Expenditure sub total	2,118	2,107	(11)	
0	HRA (Surplus) / Deficit for the year	0	(0)	(0)	
	Movement on the HRA Reserve				
(500)	HRA Reserve Opening Balance	(500)	(500)		
-	(Surplus)/Deficit for the year	0	0		
(500)	HRA Reserve Closing Balance	(500)	(500)	0	

COUNCIL HOUSING CAPITAL SCHEMESCAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 31st March 2027

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/26	2026/27 Actual Spend	Budget 2026/27 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2026/27	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2026/2027	Revised Budget 2026/27	Comments
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
S106	Affordable Housing	816	0	0	225			225	Potential schemes are being explored using the 'Council Housebuilding Support Fund'. Profiling to review later in year once data is collected and a report is compiled .
7182	Empty Homes - Phase 3	618	103	0				0	
8106	New Build	370	1					0	
8799	Major Repairs	510	128	0	182			182	Expenditure to review later in year
9617	Acquisition of 9 Houses on South West Extension	965	0	170	965			965	This scheme includes £518,000 S106 funding contribution; in addition to that shown above.
9294	HRA Adaptations	441	85	0	156			156	No planned works as at Q1
9520	Social Housing Decarbonisation Phase 3	450	156	110	294			294	
COUNCIL HOUSING - CAPITAL SCHEMES		4,170	473	280	1,822	0	0	1,822	

MAJOR REGENERATION SCHEMES

4.1 APPENDIX J

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 31st March 2027

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/26	2026/27 Actual Spend	Budget 2026/27 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2026/27	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2026/2027	Revised Budget 2026/2027	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
8958	A19/ Elwick Road/ North Lane Junction and Elwick Road/Hartlepool Western Link Project	24,497	2,227	25	5,458		(2,729)	2,729	Rephased to 27/28 to match indicative delivery periods.
7550	CIP - Highlight	35,868	33,559	1,208	2,309			2,309	
9101	CIP - Borough Hall Improvement	2,300	158	1	2,142			2,142	
9440	CIP - Town Hall Theatre Improvement	700	378	46	322			322	
9159	CIP - Wingfield Castle	2,800	842	85	1,958			1,958	
9160	CIP - Dam Board	1,227	399	0	828			828	
9161	CIP - National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN)	7,500	4,082	0	3,418			3,418	
9245	CIP - Museum of Hartlepool	1,219	680	0	539		(377)	162	Rephased to 27/28 to match indicative delivery periods.
9130	CIP - Business Park Investment	760	488	1	272			272	
TBC	CIP - Bowling Club Refurbishment	600	0	0	0			0	
9433	CIP - Brierton Sports Complex	562	151	46	411			411	
9165	Local Regeneration Fund - Middleton Grange	13,860	145	23	8,911			8,911	Updated profile being develeoped will be updated in future quarters.
9231	Local Regeneration Fund - Waterfront Connectivity	5,020	1,239	84	3,781		(1,300)	2,481	Rephased to 27/28 to match indicative delivery periods.
7715	Local Regeneration Fund - Wesley Chapel	1,641	1,602	39	39			39	
9234	Local Regeneration Fund - Health and Social Care Academy	1,250	1,216	0	34			34	
9247	Local Regeneration Fund - Screen Production Village	18,662	5,147	379	13,295		(8,295)	5,000	Rephased to 27/28 to match indicative delivery periods.
Total Major Regeneration Schemes		118,466	52,313	1,937	43,717	0	(12,701)	31,016	

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 31st March 2027

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/26	2026/27 Actual Spend	Budget 2026/27 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2026/27	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2026/2027	Revised Budget 2026/2027	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
7218	Disabled Facilities Grant	11,061	4,759	413	1,699	55	0	1,754	Additional grant funding received.
7768	Supporting Treatment and Recovery Together (START) - Substance Misuse Service	3,571	3,551	20	49	(29)	0	20	Final capital expenditure following opening now complete. Saving against gross budget of £29k reducing reserve usage requirement.
Total Adult Services & Public Health		14,632	8,310	433	1,748	26	0	1,774	

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 31st March 2027

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/26	2026/27 Actual Spend	Budget 2026/27 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations	Reprofiling of Expenditure	Revised Budget	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
8072	ICS Case Management Improvement	37	0	0	37	0	0	37	
9246	Children's Centre - Family Hubs	425	201	0	35	62	0	97	New grant funding received.
9421	Purchase Childrens Home	1,000	439	0	561	0	0	561	
7474	High Tunstall 3G Pitch	35	22	0	13	0	0	13	
7478	High Tunstall Grass Pitch	16	0	0	16	0	0	16	
7521	Two Year Old FNE Capacity Funding	23	0	0	23	0	0	23	
NEW	Throston Bungalow Conversion (S106)	205	0	0	205	0	0	205	
7384	Devolved Schools Capital	536	249	0	158	(75)	0	83	Funding allocated to individual Conditions schemes.
9238	Energy Efficiency Capital Funding	111	99	0	12	0	0	12	
9534	Kingsley Primary School Fire Stopping Works (Ph1a)	15	0	6	15	0	0	15	
9533	Rift House Primary School Fire Stopping Works (Ph1)	65	0	4	89	(24)	0	65	Funding returned to Schools General - Fire Safety Modifications.
9523	Kingsley Primary School New Provision of ARP	1,236	0	443	1,236	0	0	1,236	
9590	Kingsley Primary School Heating Pipework Ph1	4	3	1	0	1	0	1	
9585	Fens Primary School Drainage Works (car park)	12	0	1	0	12	0	12	
9586	Fens Primary School W/C Renewal Room 52	28	0	0	0	28	0	28	
9587	Fens Primary School W/C Renewal Room 54	28	0	0	0	28	0	28	
9588	Fens Primary School W/C Renewal Room 56	28	0	0	0	28	0	28	
9589	Fens Primary School W/C Renewal Room 57c	28	0	0	0	28	0	28	
9591	Kingsley Primary School Heating Pipework Ph1a	62	0	2	0	62	0	62	
9592	Kingsley Primary School Roof Renewal (Y6 area)	12	0	0	0	12	0	12	
9593	Kingsley Primary School KS1 - W/C Renewal	28	0	0	0	28	0	28	
9594	Rift House Primary School Electrical Rewire (ph3of3)	90	0	1	0	90	0	90	
9595	Rift House Primary School Drainage Works/Resurfacing	38	0	0	0	38	0	38	
9596	Rift House Primary School Renewal Outside Surface Area	25	0	0	0	25	0	25	
9597	Rift House Primary School Drain/Gulley Works (Car Park)	12	0	0	0	12	0	12	
9598	Rift House Primary School Heating System Replacement	94	0	0	0	94	0	94	
9599	Throston Primary School Access Road	50	0	0	0	50	0	50	
9600	Throston Primary School KS1 - W/C Renewal	53	0	0	0	53	0	53	
9601	Throston Primary School KS2 - W/C Renewal	28	0	0	0	28	0	28	
9602	High Tunstall College of Science Fan Conv/Wtr Htr Rplc (Sh Cen)	27	0	0	0	27	0	27	
9603	High Tunstall College of Science Heat Srce/Plant Rm (Shine Cen)	81	0	1	0	81	0	81	
9604	High Tunstall College of Science Water Heater Rep (Life Centre)	19	0	0	0	19	0	19	
9605	Horizon Heating pipework (ph2of3)	60	0	0	0	60	0	60	
9606	Horizon Hot & cold water distribution	30	0	0	0	30	0	30	
9607	Horizon Roof Light renewal/replacement	6	0	0	0	6	0	6	
7142	Schools General - Fire Safety Modifications	31	0	0	0	31	0	31	
9004	Schools General - Schools Condition - 24/25 onwards	1,981	0	0	1,010	(769)	0	241	Funding allocated to individual Conditions schemes.
9004	Schools General - Contingency	120	0	0	97	23	0	120	Funding allocated from Schools Conditions.
9004	Schools General - SEMH Funding Pot	730	0	0	730	0	0	730	
9004	Schools General - Basic Need	1,680	0	0	1,680	0	(1,680)	0	Rephased to 2027/28.
9004	Schools General - High Needs Provision	1,187	0	0	257	930	0	1,187	New grant funding received.
9004	Schools General - Conditions unallocated	142	0	0	142	0	(142)	0	Rephased to 2027/28.
Total Children's Services		10,418	1,013	459	6,316	1,018	(1,822)	5,512	

NEIGHBOURHOODS & REGULATORY SERVICES

4.1 APPENDIX M

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 31st March 2027

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/26	2026/27 Actual Spend	Budget 2026/27 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2026/27	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2026/2027	Revised Budget 2026/2027	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
S106	Developers Contribution Fund	8,794	323		8,493	(22)	(5,000)	3,471	Updated figures from 25/26 Outturn
7466	DSO Vehicle Purchase (updated for revised programme)	10,443	4,830	126	3,683		(1,000)	2,683	Forecasted spend of around 2.6m remainder rephased into 27/28
9512	Tofts Farm Solar PV	243	236	7	5	2		7	Funded through reveune contribution
9514	Warm Homes Local Grant scheme	2,037	223	6	916			916	
8306	Schools - Kitchen Refurbishment	249	76		173			173	
7272	Wheelie Bin Purchase (current year allocation only)	507	237		90			90	
7437	NIP - Sinking Fund	62	4	17	58			58	
7440	NIP - Central Park	120	119	1	1			1	
9147	NIP - CCTV in parks	34	31		3			3	
9396	Waste Transfer Station	200	0		200			200	
7744	Food Waste Capital Transitional Grant	807	761		46			46	
7066	Avondene Accommodation, Church St	130	0	1	130			130	
7220	Private Sector Housing Grants	97	40	3	57			57	
NEW	BIS Capital Works	874	0		874			874	
7577	EDM Hartlepool North NDIP Study	50	0		50			50	
7900	EDM Hartlepool Marina - North Pier	857	405	49	157	295		452	Funded through Environment Agency
7902	EDM Hartlepool Drainage Schemes	36	6		30		(30)	0	Expected to not start in 26/27 - Rephased into 27/28
9331	EDM Hartlepool Easington Road Storage & Screen Study	60	0		60		(30)	30	Scheme expected to start design but not begin until 27/28
9332	EDM Hartlepool Bamburgh Rd Surface water drainage study	60	0		60		(30)	30	Scheme expected to start design but not begin until 27/28
9429	EDM West Park Flood Scheme	931	888		43			43	
LTP	LTP Integrated Transport Block (ITB) - Indicative	8,823	4,016	842	1,755			1,755	
LTP	LTP Scheduled reconstruction - Indicative	7,984	4,961	607	1,573			1,573	
LTP/8722	LTP Additional Scheduled Highways Maintenance (SHM) Allocation	461	461		0			0	
LTP/8722	LTP Road Resurfacing Fund - Indicative	1,356	1,008		0	348		348	Funded through TVCA
NEW	Claxton Landfill Site - Plant Replacement	150			150			150	
Total Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services		45,365	18,625	1,659	18,607	623	(6,090)	13,140	

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 31st March 2027

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/26	2026/27 Actual Spend	Budget 2026/27 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2026/27	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2026/2027	Revised Budget 2026/2027	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
7711	Carlton Adventure Centre	502	264	43	238	0	0	238	
7811	Summerhill Cycle Hub	533	501	0	32	0	0	32	
9232	Playground Equipment - Levelling Up Parks Fund	98	79	7	19	0	0	19	
Allot	Other Allotment Schemes	201	176	0	25	0	0	25	
8534	Church Street Townscape Heritage Project	155	102	0	53	0	0	53	
9518	Art Gallery Tower Refurbishment	302	0	0	302	0	0	302	
9535	Cremator Filter System	280	0	0	280	0	0	280	
9525	Pride in Place Impact Fund	1,500	182	200	1,318	0	0	1,318	
9627	Playgrounds Fund	240	0	0	0	240	0	240	New Playgrounds Fund grant allocation received from MHCLG
9628	Pride in Place Programme	5,306	0	0	0	360	0	360	Pride in Place funding added for capital programme period (£5.306 to 2029/30). Current year 1 allocation of £0.360m added to 2026/27.
9613	Community Hubs Digital Upgrades	94	0	6	0	94	0	94	New grant funding received.
Total Adult & Community Based Services		9,211	1,304	256	2,267	694	0	2,961	

CORPORATE

4.1 APPENDIX O

CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD ENDING 31st March 2027

Code	Scheme Description	Gross Budget	Actual to 31/3/26	2026/27 Actual Spend	Budget 2026/27 (adjusted for prior year reprofiling)	Additional Schemes and Cost Variations 2026/27	Reprofiling of Expenditure 2026/2027	Revised Budget 2026/2027	Comments
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
7036	Uncommitted Corporate Capital Fund	190	0	0	190	0	0	190	
7041	Corporate Capital Pot	1,300	0	0	806	(506)	0	300	Budget allocated to new schemes below and £49k transferred to Revenue Maintenance Scheme.
NEW	Community Hub Central - Main Entrance Doors	33	0	0	0	33	0	33	
NEW	Art Gallery Roof and Door Replacement	48	0	0	0	48	0	48	
NEW	Sir William Gray House Roof Renewal - Phase 1	58	0	0	0	58	0	58	
NEW	Town Hall Rewire Stage Electrics	44	0	0	0	44	0	44	
NEW	Community Hub Central Male Toilet Replacement	44	0	0	0	44	0	44	
NEW	Sir William Gray House Roof Renewal - Phase 2	53	0	0	0	53	0	53	
NEW	Summerhill Visitor Centre Septic Tank Replacement	143	0	0	0	143	0	143	
NEW	Throston Youth Project Roof Replacement	34	0	0	0	34	0	34	
7065	Fire Risk Assessments (Fire Stopping / Compartmentalism)	86	15	0	71	0	0	71	
7200	Civic Centre Capital Project	75	13	0	62	0	0	62	
8970	Historic Quay Dilapidation Work	97	0	0	97	0	0	97	
7771	Borough Hall - Capital Maintenance	161	41	0	120	0	0	120	
NEW	Health and Safety Maintenance Fund	845	346	17	499	0	0	499	
	Corporate Total	3,211	415	17	1,845	(49)	0	1,796	

RESERVES FORECASTS (EXCLUDING SCHOOL BALANCES, HRA AND UNUSABLE RESERVES)

4.1 APPENDIX P

	Balance as at 31st March 2026	Forecast Use of Reserves				
		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Forecast Balance as at 31st March 2030
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Reserve	5,500	0	0	0	0	5,500
Budget Support Fund (BSF)	5,486	(5,486)	0	0	0	0
BSF - Transformation Costs	2,000	(1,241)	(759)	0	0	0
BSF - Invest to Save	1,279	(500)	(500)	(279)	0	0
Revenue Grants Unapplied	4,524	(1,580)	(1,317)	(1,006)	(201)	420
Business Rates Risk Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance Fund	3,003	0	0	0	0	3,003
Children in our Care Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0
BSF - Treasury Management Income	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Management Reserve	500	(500)	0	0	0	0
DSG 10% Contribution Reserve	2,000	0	(2,000)	0	0	0
Earmarked Revenue Reserves under £1m	6,076	(2,592)	(1,526)	(1,545)	(413)	0
Revenue Reserves Total	30,368	(11,899)	(6,102)	(2,830)	(614)	8,923
Earmarked Capital Reserves	5,543	(4,393)	(862)	(288)	0	0
Capital Grants Unapplied	13,981	(13,981)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	49,892	(30,273)	(6,964)	(3,118)	(614)	8,923
Cumulative TOTAL		19,619	12,655	9,537	8,923	
DSG Deficit - Unusable Reserve	(8,793)	(6,712)	(8,881)	24,386	0	0
DSG Reserve Cumulative Balance		(15,505)	(24,386)	0	0	



Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

8th September 2026

Report of: Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Subject: HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE COMPLAINTS
POLICY: ANNUAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING
REPORT

Decision Type: Key Decision (F&CA 116/26)

1. Council Plan Priority

Hartlepool will be a place:
where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects its community. (Organisation)

2. Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To present the updated Housing Management Service Complaints Policy following the policy review undertaken by the Housing Ombudsman, as part of the Ombudsman's duty to monitor compliance with the Complaint Handling Code. 11 recommendations were made by the Ombudsman, which have now been incorporated into the policy.
- 2.2 To present the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment for 2025/26 and, to seek a governing body response to this; ensuring that Committee has scrutinised the organisation's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code sets out best practice for landlord's complaint handling procedures, to enable a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector, regardless of the size or type of landlord. The Code encourages landlord-tenant relationships so that residents can raise a complaint if things go wrong.
- 3.2 From 1st April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code became statutory, meaning that social landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements.
- 3.3 This Code aims to support the earliest resolution of complaints while the matters are still within the landlord's own procedure. This can avoid issues escalating with further detriment to the resident, requiring more time and resource by the landlord to remedy.
- 3.4 The Code should empower those handling complaints within an organisation and encourage involvement in complaint resolution, develop staff ownership, decision-making and engagement and, ensure the appropriate resources and tools are provided to handle complaints.
- 3.5 The Code also acts as a guide to residents of what to expect if they make a complaint and improve access and awareness of the procedure when they need it.
- 3.6 Part of the new statutory nature of the Code means that landlords are required to submit an annual submission of their performance against the Code to ensure they are compliant. Submissions for landlords with under 1,000 homes are to be provided within 6 months of the financial year-end, and no later than 30th September.
- 3.7 The Code also requires landlords to have a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) on their governing body to provide assurance to the governing body on the effectiveness of its complaints system, including challenging the data and information provided to Committee. The Housing Ombudsman is looking for the MRC within each organisation to promote a culture of openness and transparency in relation to complaints made by residents. It also expects the MRC to provide assurance that systems are in place to capture learning from complaints, that the governing body is engaged with this and to ensure senior level ownership of learning and accountability stemming from complaints. The Chair of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee assumes the role of the MRC for the Council to drive a positive complaint handling culture throughout the organisation.
- 3.8 The Housing Ombudsman also has a legal duty to ensure landlords complaint procedures and responses are compliant with the Code.

- 3.9 Where a landlord does not meet the requirements in any of the areas and does not move into compliance within a reasonable timescale, the Ombudsman may issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO).

4. Housing Management Service Complaints Policy

- 4.1 The Council has a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code therefore complaints relating to the housing management service are not dealt with and reported on under the umbrella of the Council's Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.
- 4.2 A standalone Housing Management Service Complaints Policy was developed in line with the statutory requirements of the Code; this policy was approved by delegated decision and came into effect on 1st April 2024. All complaints relating to the Council's housing management services have therefore been dealt with under this policy since.
- 4.3 The Housing Ombudsman has since undertaken a review of the policy, which has focused on ensuring landlords have met the requirements of the Code based on what residents can reasonably expect to be included in a policy document. By taking this approach, the Ombudsman aims to work with landlords to achieve consistency across the sector and ensure that residents receive a fair service, regardless of where they live and who provides housing services.
- 4.4 As part of the review, the Housing Ombudsman fed back that the Council is to be commended for proactively deciding for the benefit of residents and, despite its small number of units, to separate its housing complaints policy from its corporate complaints policy.
- 4.5 The review also identified 11 recommendations, which the Housing Ombudsman encourages the Council to carefully consider and make the recommended changes to the policy; ensuring that the changes are embedded across the organisation. The Ombudsman will review the Council's response to the recommendations through the next annual submissions process.
- 4.6 The policy has been updated to reflect the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman and a copy of the updated policy is attached as **Appendix 1**. The self-assessment includes the details of these 11 recommendations. The final version of the updated policy will be published on the Council's website.

5. Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and Self-Assessment

5.1 In order to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code, landlords must produce an annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:

- the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements;
- a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance - this must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept;
- any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;
- the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
- any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and
- any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.

5.2 The annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the section of the organisation's website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this. The organisation's annual self-assessment should be included within this report. The purpose of the self-assessment is to set out how landlords demonstrate their complaint handling service complies with the provisions of the Code. In addition, the self-assessment supports landlords to inform residents about service provision.

5.3 In line with the requirements of the Code, the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report has been produced and, included within this, is the annual self-assessment. This report and self-assessment are set out in **Appendix 2**.

5.4 The report sets out the Council's ethos in terms of complaints handling, a summary of complaints in 2025/26, trends, risks and service improvement and learning. The self-assessment demonstrates whether the Council's policies and practices comply with the Code. When the self-assessment was undertaken, the Council met all of the Code requirements.

6. Summary of Complaints 2025/26

6.1 During 2025/26 a total of 6 complaints have been received and dealt with by the Council with 1 complaint progressing to stage 2 of the complaints process.

Number of service requests	Number of complaints	Number of stage 1 complaints	Number of stage 2 complaints	Number upheld or partially upheld at stage 2	Percentage upheld or partially upheld	Refusals	Complaint referrals to the Housing Ombudsman
8	6	6	1	0	0%	0	1

6.2 All of the complaints related to the repairs service carried out by the Council in residents' homes. Further details on the complaints are included in **Appendix 2**, but in summary, the reasons cited in these complaints included:

- Dissatisfaction with the response time to carry out repairs;
- Attitude of contractors whilst undertaking works;
- Initial repairs not resolving the problem with further follow-up repairs required; and
- Dissatisfaction with the decisions not to replace a kitchen and repair an appliance.

6.3 Whilst the volume of complaints received for 2025/26 are consistent with the level of complaints received for 2024/25, the service has seen a significant drop in the number of service requests. From 21 recorded in 2024/25 to 8 in 2025/26.

7. Governing Body's Response

7.1 In order to meet the requirements of the Code, Members are asked to consider the 2025/26 Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report, inclusive of the self-assessment. A formal response from Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee for publication is required, which will be published as the Council's governing body's response.

8. Future Monitoring of Performance

8.1 Complaints relating to the Council's housing management services will continue to be reported to Committee on an annual basis. In order to meet the annual timescales set by the Housing Ombudsman, reports will be brought to Committee in advance of the Housing Ombudsman's deadline – meeting schedule permitting.

8.2 Future reports will continue to include, as a minimum, the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment for consideration and will request a governing body's response to these.

9. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	Poor complaint handling provides risks to the organisation around reduced customer satisfaction and reputational damage. It could also lead to increased financial costs to the HRA for example, void loss, if residents are dissatisfied with the housing management services they receive. Where a landlord does not meet the compliance requirements in any of the areas and does not move into compliance within a reasonable timescale, the Housing Ombudsman may issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO) on the organisation.
Financial Considerations	No relevant issues
Subsidy Control	No relevant issues
Legal Considerations	The Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1st April 2024, meaning that social landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements. Part of the statutory nature of the Code means that landlords are required to submit an annual submission of their performance against the Code to ensure they are compliant. The Code also requires landlords to have a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) on their governing body to provide assurance to the governing body on the effectiveness of its complaints system, including challenging the data and information provided to Committee. The Housing Ombudsman expects the MRC within each organisation to promote a culture of openness and transparency in relation to complaints made by residents. To provide assurance that systems are in place to capture learning from complaints, that the governing body is engaged with this and to ensure senior level ownership of learning and accountability stemming from complaints. The Chair of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee assumes the role of the MRC for the Council to drive a positive complaint handling culture in the organisation.

	The Housing Ombudsman also has a legal duty to ensure landlords complaint procedures and responses are compliant with the Code.
Single Impact Assessment	The Housing Management Service Complaints Policy is available for all residents, across all wards who are or have been, in a landlord/tenant relationship with the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service or, have applied for a property owned by the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion requirements have been considered in the delivery of the policy and in the preparation of the supporting procedures, officer guidance notes, officer training and letter templates etc. The policy has recently been updated to reflect the 11 recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman, which Committee is being asked to endorse in this report. A Single Impact Assessment is not required following these updates to the policy. We recognise that our residents are more frequently making the service aware of specific needs and vulnerabilities relating to physical and mental health conditions. We have started work identifying our vulnerable residents so that services can be effectively delivered to best meet the individual needs of our residents and support vulnerable customers. Formally recording this data is an area for future development. A Single Impact Assessment will be considered in the development of processes for the collection of this data.
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues
Environment, Sustainability	No relevant issues

and Climate Change Considerations	
Consultation	The Chair of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee has been consulted on the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and a Forward from the Chair / Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) included.

10. Recommendations

10.1 Members are asked to:

- i) endorse the changes to the Housing Management Complaints Policy following the implementation of the 11 recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman (**Appendix 1**); and
- ii) review the annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment for 2025/26 (**Appendix 2**) and provide a formal response in writing from Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee for publication as the governing body's response.

11. Reasons for Recommendations

- i) to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the organisation's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code; and
- ii) to ensure a governing body's response is provided, to meet the requirements of the Code.

12. Background Papers

12.1 Housing Ombudsman new Complaint Handling Code

[The Complaint Handling Code | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

13. Contact Officers

Scott Parkes

Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Hartlepool Borough Council

Email: scott.parkes@hartlepool.gov.uk

Tel: 01429 523207

Tim Wynn

Strategic Asset Manager

Hartlepool Borough Council

Email: tim.wynn@hartlepool.gov.uk

Tel: 01429 523386

Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 16 August 2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 16 August 2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 16 August 2026



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Housing Management Service Complaints Policy

Version: v3

Date: September 2026

Name of lead team / division / department	Housing Management Service, Neighbourhood Services, Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services
Date of approval and by who	The Housing Management Complaints Policy was approved by delegated decision in March 2024 for use from 1st April 2024
Policy context	The policy has been developed in line with the statutory requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Since April 2024, the Complaint Handling Code has been statutory. This means landlords must comply with its requirements by law
Related documents	Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy Hartlepool Borough Council
Review arrangements	The policy is reviewed annually by the Housing Management Service as part of the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Next review date	September 2027
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Version history:

Version	Date	Description of revision / changes made	Approved by
v2	08/09/2025	Policy updated to include reference to the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee rather than the Finance and Policy Committee	Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

1. Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service Complaints Policy

1.1 Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service, known as the Landlord throughout this policy, aims to provide high-quality housing management services that meet the needs of local people. We want to make our service as efficient and effective as possible. To do this we need to know whether we are getting it right and how we can improve our service.

1.2 In response we promise to listen carefully to what people have to say and respond promptly to their comments and complaints. Any information that is provided will be treated confidentially. We aim to deal with any complaints impartially, objectively and professionally. Making a complaint will not affect the treatment or services that individuals or their family receive.

1.3 This policy has been developed in line with the statutory requirements of the [Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code](#).

1.4 Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service defines **a complaint** as...

...an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.

An individual does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such.

1.5 The Landlord and the resident must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. A service request is a request from a resident that requires an action to be taken to put something right. A service request is not a complaint but



will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. If a complainant still remains dissatisfied after highlighting a service request the resident will be given the choice whether to make a complaint or not. A complaint can be raised even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. The Landlord will not stop its efforts to address a service request if a resident complains.

1.6 Complaints can be made through this policy by:

- a person or persons who are or have been in a landlord/tenant relationship with the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service; or
- someone who has applied for a property owned by the Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service (other than statutory allocations and applications for assistance from people who are homeless or threatened).

2. Exclusions

2.1 We, as the Landlord, will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If we decide not to accept a complaint we will set out the reasons why and provide evidence to support our decision. Each complaint will be considered on its own merits.

2.2 This policy sets out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered a complaint and these circumstances will be fair and reasonable to all residents. Acceptable exclusions include:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.
- Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim such as a claim form and Particulars of Claim, have been filed at court.
- Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.
- If the complaint refers to a service not provided by Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service.

2.3 We will accept a complaint that has been referred within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident being aware, unless it is excluded on other grounds. As a Landlord we will consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there is a good reason to do so.

2.4 If we decide not to accept a complaint we will provide an explanation to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process along with the resident's right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman. If then the Housing Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Housing Ombudsman may tell us, the Landlord, to take on the complaint.

2.5 We will not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints, we will consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.



3. Confidentiality and privacy

3.1 Information will only be shared as outlined in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. We will keep a full record of the complaint, any review and the outcome at each stage, including all documents, relevant correspondence with the complainant or their representative and other parties, surveys and report.

4. Accessibility and awareness

4.1 At the outset and at every stage of the complaints process we will provide clear guidance as to who will be responding to a resident's complaint, including how to escalate if the resident is dissatisfied with the response.

4.2 As the Landlord we will provide different channels through which a resident can make a complaint. We have considered our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments required by residents who may need to access the complaints process. The complaints policy is publicised online and details of the policy are shared with residents during home inspection visits and via surveys, newsletters and email communications.

4.3 Residents can raise their complaint in a number of ways:

- by completing a complaints form;
- in writing a letter or by email; or
- over the telephone or in person to any member of staff to be redirected to the Housing Management Service.

4.4 Residents have the opportunity to have a representative to deal with their complaint on their behalf. This could be an advocate, a Councillor or Member of Parliament or a family member or friend. We will need to confirm, in writing, that this person has the authority and consent to represent you. This is because providing a response to the complaint may involve disclosing personal information relating to the resident and Hartlepool Borough Council need to ensure that the rights of the individual are protected.

4.5 At any point of the complaints process the resident is entitled to engage with the Housing Ombudsman about their complaint and the contact details are:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET

Online form: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/bring-your-complaint-to-the-housing-ombudsman/>



Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Phone: 0300 111 3000



Complaints Handling Process – Summary

Service Request

If you have a request for a service or a problem please get in touch and we will seek to resolve as soon as possible. If any specialist services are required we will ensure that you, the resident, is kept up to date with progress. Service requests can be made via Customer Services on 01429 266522 or by email to customerservice@hartlepool.gov.uk



Stage 1

If you are dissatisfied with how we have dealt with your service request you can then raise a complaint. This can be done via letter, email, over the phone or in person. Your complaint will be acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days** of receipt. A full response will be issued **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.



Stage 2

If all or part of your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction then you can request for it to be progressed to Stage 2 – a final response. A request for Stage 2 will be acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days** of receipt. We will issue a final response **within 20 working days** of the escalation being acknowledged.



Housing Ombudsman

If you are still unhappy with the outcome you have the right to ask the Housing Ombudsman to review your complaint. The Housing Ombudsman is an independent body set by law to review housing complaints. (www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)



Complaints Handling Process - Detailed

5. Stage 1

5.1 A complaint must be raised when a resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. The Landlord will not stop its efforts to address a service request if a resident complains. Complaints can be received in a variety of forms – by letter, email, over the phone, online form and in person. Where complaints are taken over the phone or in person then the person taking the complaint will record the name and contact details of the complainant, their preferred method of contact and the detail of their complaint. We will look at resolving the complaint promptly with an explanation, apology or resolution provided where appropriate.

5.2 Stage 1 complaints will be acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days** of the complaint being received. We will confirm the subject of the complaint to ensure we are investigating the right issue(s) including the Landlord's understanding of the complaint, the outcomes the resident is seeking, which aspects of the complaint the Landlord is and is not responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear. A full response will be issued **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.

5.3 If an extension on this timescale is required due to the complexity of the complaint then you, the resident, will be informed of the expected timescale for response. Any extension will be no more than 10 extra working days without good reason and that reason will be clearly explained. Where a response to a complaint will fall outside of the timescales provided by the Code, the landlord will agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint where required. When you, the resident, are informed of an extension you will also be provided with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

5.4 If additional complaints are raised during the investigation, these will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if they are related and the response has not yet been issued. Where the Stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code.

5.5 The response to Stage 1 will address all the points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. The response will confirm the following in writing to you, the resident, at the completion of Stage 1 in clear, plain language:

- a) The complaint stage;
- b) The complaint definition;
- c) The decision of the complaint;
- d) The reasons for any decision made;
- e) The details of any remedy offered to put things right;
- f) Details of any outstanding actions; and



- g) Details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if you are not satisfied with the response.

5.6 Where there are multiple actions a response will be provided to the resident when the answer is known not when all outstanding actions are completed and updates will be provided to the resident on outstanding actions.

6. Stage 2

6.1 If all or part of your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction at Stage 1 you can request that it your complaint be progressed to Stage 2. The Stage 2 response will be our final response. Your request for Stage 2 will be acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days** of receipt of your request. We will confirm the Landlord's understanding of the complaint, the outcomes the resident is seeking, which aspects of the complaint the Landlord is and is not responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.

6.2 You are not required to explain your reasons for requesting Stage 2 consideration but we, the Landlord, will make reasonable efforts to understand why you remain unhappy. The investigating officer for Stage 2 will not be the same person who considered your Stage 1 complaint.

6.3 We will issue a final response to Stage 2 **within 20 working days** of the escalation request being acknowledged. If an extension is required due to the complexity of the complaint you will be informed of the expected timescale for a response. Any extension will be no more than 20 working days without good reason and the reason(s) for the extension will be clearly explained. Where a response to a complaint will fall outside of the timescales provided by the Code, the landlord will agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint where required. If we inform you of an extension we will also provide you with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

6.4 The response will be provided when the answer to the complaint is known and not when the outstanding actions are completed. Outstanding actions will still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to you, the resident. We will address all points raised in the defined complaint providing clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

6.5 We will confirm in writing the following at the completion of Stage 2:

- a) The complaint stage;
- b) The complaint definition;
- c) The decision of the complaint;
- d) The reasons for any decision made;
- e) The details of any remedy offered to put things right;
- f) Details of any outstanding actions; and
- g) Details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the response.



7. Putting things right

7.1 If something has gone wrong we will acknowledge it and set out any actions we have already taken, or intend to take, to put things right.

These can include:

- Apologising;
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
- Taking action if there has been a delay;
- Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
- Providing a financial remedy; and
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

7.2 We will take into account the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman when deciding on any appropriate remedy. The remedy will reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified. The remedy will clearly set out what will happen and by when with agreement with the resident.

8. Housing Ombudsman Service

8.1 The Housing Ombudsman can independently review a complaint from a resident if it has been through the full Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service Complaints Procedure (Stages 1 and 2). The Housing Ombudsman is an independent body set up by law to review housing complaints. Throughout the process all complainants will be told of their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service if they are still not satisfied and will be provided with contact details. (www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

9. Other Information

Collective complaints

9.1 Where appropriate complaints made by a number of individuals on the same subject will be dealt with as one investigation. It may be appropriate for each complainant to receive a response directly unless a representative has been nominated on behalf of the individuals.

Withdrawing a complaint

9.2 You may withdraw your complaint at any time by contacting the Housing Management Service and letting them know. Consideration will be given as to whether the concerns raised still need to be fully investigated, for instance if there were safeguarding concerns relating to you or other individuals.



Anonymous Complaints

9.3 All anonymous complaints i.e. where an individual does not provide their name or contact details will be reviewed and investigated where appropriate, however it will not be possible to provide a response. If an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable the Council to investigate or take further action, then the Council will not be able to investigate.

Social Media

9.4 In line with Council procedure, the Housing Management Service will not respond formally to complaints which have been uploaded to any social media platform. Please use the contact details outlined above.

Managing Unreasonable Behaviour

9.5 In general, dealing with a complaint is a straightforward process but in a minority of cases people pursue their complaints in a way that can impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource implications for the Landlord. A separate Corporate [Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour](#) policy is in place for the Council to deal with the very small number of complainants whose frequency of contact with the Council, unreasonable, unreasonably persistent or unacceptable behaviour makes it necessary for special measures to be taken. Although the Council may take steps to restrict a resident's contact with the Landlord in line with the Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour policy, housing-related complaints made by the resident will be handled in line with this complaints policy.

9.6 Before implementing any of the provisions set out in the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour policy, officers must consider whether Hartlepool Borough Council Housing Management Service's procedures including this Housing Management Complaints Policy have been followed correctly, whether full and reasonable responses have already been given and whether the complainant is now inappropriately persistent or behaving unreasonably.

Privacy information and Data Protection

9.7 All personal information collected is for the purpose of responding to customer feedback and complaints and will only be shared with relevant service areas of the Council or third parties where the law enables the Council to do so (e.g. MPs or councillors). For more information about how the Council processes your personal data please visit:

<https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/council/transparency/access-to-information>



Confidentiality

9.8 The Housing Management Service will consider the importance of confidentiality when handling customer feedback and complaints. However to enable a complaint investigation to be undertaken, personal information will be shared with the investigating officer and on occasions other officers where necessary. Personal information will not be shared with anyone unnecessarily and will be handled in line with data protection legislation.

Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

9.9 We will produce an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code, which will contain an analysis of the complaints received and the outcomes. It will also highlight any service improvements made as a result of learning from the complaints as well as any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Housing Ombudsman. The annual self-assessment, annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and our governing body's response will be published on our website alongside this policy.

Scrutiny and oversight: continuous learning and improvement

9.10 As a Landlord we will look beyond the circumstances of an individual complaint and consider where service improvements can be made for all residents as a result of finding fault. Any wider learning and improvements will be reported to stakeholders where required.

9.11 The Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services is accountable for complaint handling with regards to the Housing Management Service and the Chair of Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee has lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaints handling culture in the Housing Management Service. This elected member will be known as Member Responsible for Complaints – MRC. The MRC and the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee will review as a minimum:

- updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint performance;
- issues and trends arising from complaint handling;
- updates on Housing Ombudsman investigation and compliance; and
- the annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

Review of Policy

9.12 This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code as required by the Housing Ombudsman.





Hartlepool
Borough Council



Hartlepool Borough Council's Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report

Forward

Welcome to this year's edition of the Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report.

Being new to the role of Chair of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee and the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), I have taken some time to review published guidance by the Housing Ombudsman to learn about the Code, how it can be applied and how we can use the self-assessment to scrutinise the service effectively. As Chair of the Committee it is my responsibility to drive a positive complaint handling culture across the organisation for the Council's Housing Management service and overseeing improvements where they are needed.

During the reporting period, most complaints related to the repairs service. It is important that we deliver a responsive and reliable customer-focused repairs service with improved response times and improvements to the quality of the repairs carried out whilst assuring value for money. I welcome the suggested changes to both policy and procedures to enhance the service being delivered to residents.

Complaints provide an invaluable opportunity to hear directly from our residents and I fully support the additional work being carried out to seek feedback, improve resident communication and adapt services to be responsive to the individual needs of residents. It is vital that we do not lose focus on both handling complaints effectively in practice and use learning from these as a valuable tool to drive change.

By listening and learning we are improving the service we provide to our residents and on behalf of the Committee I would like to thank all residents who have taken the time to raise their concerns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Harrison', with a stylized, flowing script.

Graham Harrison

Chair of Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee and
Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

Introduction

Since the introduction of the Housing Management Service Complaints Policy on the 1st April 2024, the Council has closely monitored complaints and has had a welcoming, open and transparent approach to complaint handling.

This report along with our self-assessment, sets out how we are performing as a service in terms of complaint handing including the volumes, categories and outcomes of complaints and explores our learning and future service improvements.

Summary of complaints

Year	Number of service requests	Number of complaints	Number of stage 1 complaints	Number of stage 2 complaints	Number upheld or partially upheld at stage 2	Percentage upheld or partially upheld	Refusals	Complaint referrals to the Housing Ombudsman
2023/24	N/A	1	1	0	0	0%	0	0
2024/25	21	7	7	1	1	100%	0	0
2025/26	8	6	6	1	0	0%	0	1

Year	Stage 1 response within 10 working days	Percentage stage 1 response within 10 working days	Stage 2 response within 20 working days	Percentage stage 2 response within 20 working days
2023/24	1	100%	N/A	N/A
2024/25	6	83%	1	100%
2025/26	6	100%	0	0%

Reason for complaints

All 6 stage 1 complaints received were related to the repairs service carried out by Hartlepool Borough Council in residents’ homes. In summary, the reasons cited in these complaints included:

- Dissatisfaction with the response time to carry out repairs;
- Attitude of contractors whilst undertaking works;
- Initial repairs not resolving the problem with further follow-up repairs required; and
- Dissatisfaction with the decisions not to replace a kitchen and repair an appliance.

The stage 2 complaint (also dealt with at stage 1) was due to the Housing Management Team’s decision not to replace the kitchen at the request of the resident. The kitchen was deemed in suitable condition and this decision was upheld at stage 2 complaints process by a qualified surveyor.

Whilst this stage 2 complaint was responded to outside the 20 working days deadline, the resident was notified of this extension to the initial deadline. It is this complaint which has now been referred to the Housing Ombudsman and the outcome of the Ombudsman’s investigation is pending.

Trends and risks

All of the service requests and complaints received in 2025/26 related to the repairs service provided to residents in their homes. For context, the Council carried out 1370 responsive repairs in residents' homes within the financial year and therefore expressions of dissatisfaction received equate to 1.1% of overall jobs completed.

On the completion of a repair, residents continue to be contacted to complete a short satisfaction survey. Whilst overall satisfaction is high, the survey has given residents a greater opportunity to feedback on the repairs service and continues to actively encourage complaints.

Each of the complaints received were investigated and feedback provided to the resident. In all but one of the complaints at stage 1, it was determined that the Council was not at fault. On one occasion fault was found with the attitude of two staff members in the Housing Maintenance Team and an apology issued to the resident by the Construction Manager.

Complaints received for 25/26 are consistent with the level of complaints received for 24/25. The consistency of complaints suggests that residents are aware of how to make a complaint and are confident to express dissatisfaction to us and that the complaint handling process is working efficiently.

Service improvement and learning

All negative feedback relating to repairs from repair satisfaction surveys is fed back to the Construction Manager and as a result the issue is reviewed and rectified as required and any lessons learned shared with the Housing Maintenance Team through the ongoing 'tool box talks' to ensure the quality standards are met. These are helpful to instill a positive complaints handling culture and to improve the repairs service provided to our residents. We will continue to seek feedback from residents on completion of all repairs and welcome complaints regarding the Housing Management service. A member of the Housing Management Team also follows up each completed repair when no feedback has been received to help improve satisfaction survey response rates. Online repair reporting has also been introduced and available for all residents. This option will be promoted further over the next year.

In terms of service development and improvement, the complaints have indicated that the Council requires a clearer policy in relation to timescales for the replacement of key property features such as kitchens and bathrooms. Whilst the Council follows the industry standard and Decent Homes Standard for 'reasonably modern services' when deciding to replace, this is not set out within our repairs policy. To improve clarity on this, it is suggested that average replacement timescales are included within a revised repairs policy with any planned maintenance programmed. Residents will then know what to expect from the Council.

Reporting performance

Following the submission of the 2024/25 annual Complaint Handling Code Submission Form to the Housing Ombudsman, the Ombudsman has reviewed the Council's Housing Management Service Complaints Policy, as part of its duty to monitor compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.

The review was focused on ensuring landlords have met the requirements of the Code based on what residents can reasonably expect to be included in a policy document. By taking this approach, the Housing Ombudsman aims to achieve consistency across the sector and ensure that residents receive a fair service regardless of where they live and who provides housing services.

The Housing Ombudsman has commended the Council as a landlord for pro-actively deciding for the

benefit of residents, and despite its small number of units, to separate its housing complaints policy from its corporate complaints policy.

The Housing Ombudsman review identified 11 recommendations to the Housing Management Complaints Policy, which have been carefully considered and, the recommended changes have been made to the policy. Our response to the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations will be reviewed through next year's annual submission process.

Under the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code we have completed the self-assessment for 2025/26, which is to assess our compliance with the Code. The self-assessment accompanies this report as Appendix A. This annual report and the self-assessment will be published to our residents following the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee in September 2026. To date there have been no findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Housing Ombudsman.

Future improvements

We recognise that our residents are more frequently making the Housing Management service aware of specific needs and vulnerabilities relating to physical and mental health conditions. This can be in the context of requesting quicker response times for repairs to be undertaken or when staff are dealing with a tenancy enforcement case. The ongoing programme of home inspection visits helps to identify any vulnerabilities and to support residents where necessary. We have started work identifying our vulnerable residents so that services can be effectively delivered to best meet individual needs.

We are currently working with the Construction Manager to develop a dedicated resource to support the Council's Housing Management Service with the intent of improving the delivery of services to our tenants. It is intended for this solution to be implemented within the next reporting period.

We will continue to embed the complaints handling culture across the organisation and keep staff training up to date, with focus on recognising customer dissatisfaction and the effective handling of complaints. Similarly, we will maintain our use of a range of reports the Housing Ombudsman publishes to share incites from complaints it has investigated to help landlords drive positive change in service provision.



Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.’</i>	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.4
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5 An expression of dissatisfaction by a resident will be considered a complaint in line with the Council’s adopted definition of a complaint set out in paragraph 1.4 The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman’s recommendations below: Recommendation 1: the landlord should review its policy to state that a resident does not have to use the word

				'complaint' for it to be treated as such Recommendation 2: the landlord should review its policy to state that a resident who expresses dissatisfaction will be given the choice to make a complaint
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.5 The Council has robust processes in place to respond to service requests and complaints. Service requests and complaints are defined in the policy and both are recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraphs 1.5 and 5.1 The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations below: Recommendation 3: The landlord should review its policy to remove the first sentence of section 5.1 Recommendation 4: The landlord should review its policy to state that it will not

				stop its efforts to address a service request if a resident complains
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes		Details of how to complain are included in the housing repairs satisfaction survey sent out to each resident after a repair has been completed. Details of how to complain will be included in other future satisfaction surveys – including the next tenant perception survey

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.1
2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraphs 2.2, 9.5 and 9.6 The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing

	residents. Acceptable exclusions include: • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.			Ombudsman's recommendation below: Recommendation 5: The landlord should review its policy to: - Remove the exclusion in section 2.2 of complaints relating to a policy approved by the Committee- Remove from sections 9.5 and 9.6 of its policy references to 'persistent and unreasonable complaints' in the title and body of these sections and make clear that, although the Council may take steps to restrict a resident's contact with the landlord in line with its Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour policy, housing-related complaints made by the resident will be handled in line with this complaints policy
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.3

2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.4
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 2.5

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.2
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.3

	member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.			Refresher training to be provided to officers on the changes to the Housing Management Service Complaints Policy – Sep 2026
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.1. The Council uses complaints to improve service delivery Until April 2024 complaints from residents were processed through Hartlepool Borough Council's Corporate Complaints Policy. The standalone Housing Management Complaints Policy in place since April 2024 makes the complaints process more accessible and transparent for residents. This approach has been commended by the Housing Ombudsman
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See Complaint Handling Process Summary

3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraphs 4.2, 8.1 and 9.9 The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman's recommendation below: Recommendation 6: The landlord should review its policy to explain within the policy how the landlord publicises details of the complaints policy
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.4
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.5 This is also included in response and extension letters

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes		Given the size of the LAs housing stock, complaints handling is dealt with by Principal Officers within Housing Management supported by the Service Support and Development Team Overall responsibility for complaints handling currently sits with the Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes		The Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services has access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints and has the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes		Hartlepool Borough Council has a complaints guide and toolkit for officers to provide training and guidance to those dealing with complaints in the authority. Investigating Officer training is also held periodically, which the differences between the Corporate Complaints Policy

				and Housing Management Complaints Policy are highlighted
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Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 1.2 The Housing Management Complaints Policy was approved by delegated decision in March 2024 for use from 1st April 2024. This policy is reviewed annually
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See Complaint Handling Process Summary section
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See Complaint Handling Process Summary section
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator)	N/A	N/A	Within the reporting year a third party has not been appointed to handle

	at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.			complaints for Hartlepool Borough Council
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	N/A	N/A	Within the reporting year a third party has not been appointed to handle complaints for Hartlepool Borough Council
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.2 and 6.1 The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman’s recommendation below: Recommendation 7: The landlord should review its policy to state that in the landlord’s acknowledgement at stage 1 and stage 2, it will set out:- The landlord’s understanding of the complaint- The outcomes the resident is seeking- Which aspects of the complaint the landlord is and is not responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear

5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.2 and 6.1 The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman's recommendation below: Recommendation 7: The landlord should review its policy to state that in the landlord's acknowledgement at stage 1 and stage 2, it will set out:- The landlord's understanding of the complaint- The outcomes the resident is seeking- Which aspects of the complaint the landlord is and is not responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: - deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; - give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; - take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and - consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.	Yes		Covered in the Council's complaints guide and toolkit for officers dealing with complaints in the authority to ensure all complaint handlers are appropriately trained to handle complaints in the correct manner

5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraphs 5.3 and 6.3 The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman's recommendation below: Recommendation 8: The landlord should review its policy to state that where a response to a complaint will fall outside of the timescales provided by the Code, the landlord will agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. 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.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 4.2
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.5 and 6.5

5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 3.1 All data and information relating to service requests and complaints is held within the Housing Management Service system. Some information is also held on the relevant tenancy record
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.1 to 7.2
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.5, which includes a link to the Council's Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.5

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.1
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received</u> .	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.2
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.2
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.3

	10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.			
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.3 This is included in response and extension letters
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6 Actions are tracked and actioned through the Housing Management Service system to manage actions resulting from the investigation of complaints The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations below: Recommendation 9: The landlord should review its policy to state that for the stage 1 response, the response will be provided to the resident when the answer is known not when all outstanding actions are completed

				Recommendation 10: the landlord should review its policy to state that updates will be provided to the resident on outstanding actions
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.5 The Council has template response letters that align with the complaints policy to assist complaints officers to ensure they address all points raised in the complaint definition and these are amended on review
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.4
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made;	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 5.5 The Council has template response letters that align with the complaints policy to assist complaints officers to ensure they address all points detailed in paragraph 5.5 and 5.6 of the policy. These are kept under

	e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.			review and updated following any feedback from complainant
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Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.1
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.1
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.2
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.2

	that considered the complaint at stage 1.			
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.3 The policy has been updated to reflect the Housing Ombudsman's recommendation below: Recommendation 11: The landlord should review its policy to remove the words 'aim to' from section 6.3 of the Policy so that the section 6.3 then states 'We will issue...'
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.3
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.3
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.4 Actions are tracked and actioned through the Complaints process and records of actions maintained

	actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.			
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.4
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.5 The Council has template response letters that align with the complaints policy to assist complaints officers to ensure they address all points detailed in paragraph 6.5 of the policy
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 6.1 A final response under Stage 2 would be signed off by the Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services; this is an internal procedure

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include: • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.1
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.2
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.2 Actions are tracked and actioned through the Complaints process and records of actions maintained

7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 7.2
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Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and	Yes	Annual complaints, performance and service improvement reports Hartlepool Borough Council	

	f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.			
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Yes	8 September 2026: Finance and corporate affairs committee Hartlepool Borough Council Annual complaints, performance and service improvement reports Hartlepool Borough Council	Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and annual self assessment to be considered by the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee on 8th September 2026 for consideration The report and self-assessment will be published on Council's website alongside the Governing Body's response following the meeting of the Committee
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	N/A	N/A	Within the reporting year there has been no significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	N/A	N/A	Within the reporting year there has been no Ombudsman investigation
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords	N/A	N/A	Within the reporting year there has been no circumstances that would result in non-compliance with the Code

	must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.			
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Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.10 to 9.11
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.10 to 9.11
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	8 September 2026: Finance and corporate affairs committee Hartlepool Borough Council	Learning and service improvements are included in the report considered by Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee on 8th September 2026
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues,	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.11

	serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.			
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	See paragraph 9.11
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	8 September 2026: Finance and corporate affairs committee Hartlepool Borough Council	Annual reporting to Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee on complaints handling performance. Performance is reported annually as this is considered to be proportionate to the size of the Council's portfolio Complaints handling performance relating to 2025/26 will be considered by Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee on 8th September 2026
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;	Yes		Performance is reported to the MRC and governing body annually, as this is considered to be proportionate to the size of the Council's portfolio and the number of complaints received. Reporting procedures are kept under

	b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.			review in line with the number of complaints received
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.	Yes	Housing Management Service complaints policy Hartlepool Borough Council	The policy reflects the standard objective taking into account the points outlined in 9.8 of the self-assessment



Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

8th September 2026

Report of: Monitoring Officer

Subject: CORPORATE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT
2025-26

Decision Type: For information

1. Council Plan Priority

Hartlepool will be a place:
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects its community. (Organisation)

2. Purpose of Report

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to inform Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee of the 2025/26 outturn position in relation to corporate complaints and those complaints considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

3. Background

- 3.1. This report covers the final year of the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy. A new Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy was introduced on 1st April 2026. Within both policies there is a requirement to provide an annual report to elected members detailing the number of corporate complaints received by the Council along with the outcome of those complaints. The annual report is also used to share the information

contained within the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) Annual Letter.

4. Summary of Progress

- 4.1. The attached annual report (**Appendix 1**) details the Corporate Complaints received from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. It details the types of complaints received, which department they related to and the outcome of the complaints upheld. It also includes information from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Letter 2025-26.
- 4.2. Members should note that annual reports on the statutory complaints procedures for Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Housing Management and Public Health have also been prepared and presented to the relevant Policy Committee for information.
- 4.3. Alongside the publication of this Annual Report a Members Briefing Note has been prepared and will be circulated to all members.

5. Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy Update

- 5.1 The Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy was reviewed and updated in July 2026. Minor amendments were made including changes to job titles, clarification of roles in the process and the addition of reference to the Staff Safety Policy which has been adopted since this Policy was agreed. The updated Policy is available on the Council's website: [Introduction | Managing unreasonable customer behaviour policy | Hartlepool Borough Council](#).

6. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	Poor complaint handling provides risks to the organisation around reduced customer satisfaction, reputational damage and the potential of an adverse report from the LGSCO. If the LGSCO Complaints Handling Code is not adhered to the Council could be at risk of an adverse report from the LGSCO.
Financial Considerations	In some cases the outcome of an upheld complaint requires a financial remedy to be provided to the complainant.

Subsidy Control	No relevant issues.
Legal Considerations	We have a statutory duty to co-operate with the LGSCO during complaint investigations.
Single Impact Assessment	No relevant issues.
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues.
Consultation	No relevant issues.

7. Recommendations

7.1. Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee are recommended to note the update on complaints received during 2025/26 and the update to the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

8.1. Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee have responsibility for the monitoring of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy.

9. Background Papers

10.1 Finance and Policy Committee 8th September 2025 - Corporate Complaints Monitoring Report for 2024/25 and New Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy.

10. Contact Officers

Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and HR / Monitoring Officer
Hayley.martin@hartlepool.gov.uk 01429 284322

Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 11 August 2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 11 August 2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 11 August 2026



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2025-26

Date: August 2026

1. Background

- 1.1 This report covers 2025/26, the final year of the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy. A new Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy was introduced on 1st April 2026. Within both policies there is a requirement to provide an annual report to elected members detailing the number of corporate complaints received by the Council along with the outcome of those complaints.
- 1.2 The annual report is also used to share the information contained within the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) Annual Letter to the Council which details the complaints received and investigated by them. By doing this we fulfil the LGSCO expectation that their Annual Letter be reported to elected members in a timely manner.

2. Summary of progress

- 2.1 During 2025/26 the overall number of corporate complaints rose significantly on the previous year from 15 to 42 complaints. However, data shows that the proportion that were upheld decreased in 2025/26 to 33% from 47% in 2024/25.

Year	Number of complaints	Number upheld	Percentage upheld
2025/26	42	14	33%
2024/25	15	7	47%
2023/24	15	5	33%
2022/23	9	3	33%
2021/22	12	4	33%

- 2.2 Although it is difficult to definitively identify why the number of complaints has increased significantly this year anecdotal evidence suggests that residents are using AI platforms to help them submit a complaint. We understand that AI makes it easier and quicker for residents to make a complaint and that this may have resulted in the increased number of complaints received. AI supported complaints are often long and can include reference to incorrect or inappropriate information. These complaints require additional officer time to identify what the specific points of complaint are, how the complainant has been personally affected and what the complainant's desired outcomes are.

2.3 It is important to note that even though the number of complaints received has increased the proportion of upheld complaints has decreased from last year back to the level of previous years.

2.4 The following table shows the number of corporate complaints received by each department during 2025/26:

Department	Number of Corporate Complaints Received	Number of Corporate Complaints Upheld	Percentage Upheld
Adult Services and Public Health (ASPH) Department	0	0	N/A
Children's Services (CS) Department	14	4	29%
Finance, IT and Digital Services (FITDS) Department	5	2	40%
Housing, Growth and Communities (HGC) Department	11	2	18%
Legal, Governance and Human Resources (LGHR) Department	0	0	N/A
Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services (NRS) Department	12	6	50%
Total	42	14	33%

2.5 **Appendix A** provides detail about the 14 complaints that were upheld after a Stage 2 investigation by an officer independent from the service being complained about.

3. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) – Annual Review Letter 2026

3.1 The LGSCO Annual Review 2026 Letter received on 20th May 2026 sets out the annual statistics on complaints made to the LGSCO about Hartlepool Borough

Council (HBC) for the year ending 31st March 2026 (**Appendix B**). The data shows both the complaints and the enquiries that the LGSCO has recorded along with any decisions they have made. It is worth noting that the Council has had no reports issued in the past 10 years. A report is issued by the LGSCO where there is significant injustice, systemic issues, or important learning for councils.

3.2 In summary:

- In 2025/26 the LGSCO received 21 complaints or enquiries about HBC, which is a decrease of 6 on the previous year.
- The LGSCO made decisions on these 21 complaints or enquiries during 2025/26 and the outcomes were:

Decision	Number
Referred back for local resolution	11
Closed after initial enquiries	7
Detailed investigation - Not upheld	0
Detailed investigation - Upheld	1
Incomplete or invalid	1
Advice given	1
Total	21

Please note the number of complaint enquiries the LGSCO received during the year does not always match the number of decisions made as not all complaints investigations were completed within the same year.

- The data shows that just one of the complaints received by the LGSCO was investigated and that it was upheld. This means our upheld rate is 100%. However, as the number of complaints investigated was very small this has significantly skewed the percentage figure.
- To allow easier comparison between the different sized local authorities the LGSCO calculate the rate of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. Our rate of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents is 1. The average rate

for similar authorities is 5.6 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. This shows that our upheld rate is better than other similar authorities.

- The complaint investigated by the LGSCO (LGSCO Ref: 24 017 610) was that the Council had delayed the review of an education, health and care plan and failed to secure special educational needs provision. The LGSCO upheld the point of complaint about the delayed review and the uncertainty that this caused to the family. However, the LGSCO believed that on balance of probabilities this delay did not cause the loss of special educational needs provision and therefore did not uphold this part of the complaint. As a remedy the Council apologised for the delay as requested by the LGSCO. This complaint had already been partly upheld at Stage 2 of our Corporate Complaints process for the same point of complaint. This demonstrates that the Council's investigation of complaints is robust.
- Over the past five years there have been 6 complaints upheld out of a total of 110 complaints received by the LGSCO. This represents an upheld rate of 5% of the total number received by the LGSCO over the 5-year period. Of the 14 complaints that went on to be investigated by the LGSCO over the past 5 years the upheld rate is 43%. Further details are provided in **Appendix C**.
- Once a complaint has been through the Corporate Complaints process the complainant is advised of their right to approach the LGSCO to ask for a review. The fact that only a few complainants choose to do so and only a small number of complaints are investigated and then upheld provides assurance that our approach to corporate complaints is robust and we are responding to complaints at the earliest opportunity.
- The table below shows how Hartlepool compares favourably with the other 11 North East Local Authorities with the lowest number of complaints being investigated by the LGSCO resulting in the lowest upheld rate per 100,000 residents.

North East Local Authorities – 2025/26 LGSCO comparison

	Number of detailed investigations	Complaints Upheld		Upheld cases where the authority provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman	Number of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents
		Number	%		
Hartlepool	1	1	100%	0%	1.0
Durham	21	17	81%	24%	3.2
Northumberland	14	11	79%	27%	3.3
Newcastle	11	9	82%	11%	2.8
Sunderland	6	4	67%	50%	1.4
Gateshead	7	4	57%	0%	2
South Tyneside	10	7	70%	14%	4.6
North Tyneside	19	16	84%	38%	7.4
Darlington	6	5	83%	40%	4.4
Stockton	7	7	100%	43%	3.4
Middlesbrough	9	4	44%	25%	2.6
Redcar & Cleveland	4	3	75%	33%	2.2

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The Complaints Code from the LGSCO has been introduced nationally from the 1st April 2026. To reflect this the Council introduced a new Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy from 1st April 2026. The Council is committed to submitting the voluntary self-assessment at the end of 2026/27 year with the outturn being reported to member in the next Annual Complaints Report.
- 4.2 In order to comply effectively and efficiently with the Code the Council has procured a Complaints Management System. This will help ensure all Key Performance Indicator targets are met and allow for the Complaints Service across all departments to be delivered in the most effect manner.

- 4.3 To reflect the changes within the LGSCO Complaints Code all staff across the Council are encouraged to complete the Complaints Awareness online course. For managers and heads of service this training is mandatory. We also intend to develop further Complaints Investigation training to increase the pool of officers that have the skills to complete Stage 2 Reviews of complaints.

Appendix A - Details of Corporate Complaints Upheld in 2025/26

The following table details the 14 corporate complaints that were upheld after a Stage 2 investigation by an officer who was independent to the service being complained about.

Department	Complaint Description	Outcome of complaint
Children's Services	Complaint in relation to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) about statutory timescales not being met, failure to undertake annual review or transition planning and failure to respond to the raised complaint.	The complaint was partly upheld. It was identified that the statutory timescales in respect of the EHCP were not met and the service failed to undertake an annual review or transition. There was some evidence that the complaint had been considered but actions that the service said it would take did not happen on two occasions, so this part of the complaint was partly upheld. An apology was issued and a financial remedy offered. The complainant has escalated this to the Ombudsman and it is currently being investigated.
Children's Services	Complaint in relation to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) about failure to provide interim education arrangements and failure to meet part of the EHCP.	This complaint was upheld. It was identified that the service had not followed the correct process at the start of the EHCP. As a result, relationships between the SEND Leads, parent and school have become strained, and communication has broken down between all parties. An apology was offered and steps put in place to improve relationships and move forward.
Children's Services	Complaint in relation to a parental request for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA), the provision of information booklets that contained incorrect information and that the complaints procedure timescales were not followed.	This complaint was partly upheld. It was identified that the service had not sent the parent notification of the outcome of their request within 6 weeks of them making the request. The investigation found a lack of timely communication/repeated non-response from the council, a late statutory decision and that no formal letter of outcome was provided. The service also failed to issue 6-week statutory decision. The information booklets were confirmed to be incorrect and the complaints procedure timescales were not met. An apology was issued, the information booklets have been recommended to be

Department	Complaint Description	Outcome of complaint
		updated and the need for an internal review of the SEND panel procedures was identified. The complainant has escalated this to the Ombudsman and it is currently being investigated.
Children's Services	Complaint in relation to actions during court proceedings, refusal for a change of social worker and mishandling of this request.	This complaint was partly upheld. It was identified that the first part of the complaint could be separated from the legal proceedings heard in Family Court and therefore could not be investigated through the Corporate Complaints Policy. The investigation found that the decision not to change the social worker was sound and logical and clearly explained to the complainant. However, it was identified that a response should have been sent much sooner than it was. An apology was issued.
Finance, IT and Digital Services	Complaint about the handling of a Council Tax account.	This complaint was partly upheld. The investigation found that there were no errors in terms of the council tax levied, the recovery process or the costs applied. However, the service did not take into account personal circumstances when dealing with the recovery of the debt. An apology was issued and as a gesture of goodwill the liability costs on the account were cancelled. The complainant escalated this to the Ombudsman but they have chosen not to investigate as it was late and they felt that the Council had taken suitable action.
Finance, IT and Digital Services	Complaint about handling of payments for Business Parking Permits.	This complaint was upheld. The investigation concluded that the processing of incorrect data on the initial parking permit application led to the error which resulted in monies being taken from the wrong account. An apology was issued and work practices reviewed to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Department	Complaint Description	Outcome of complaint
Housing, Growth and Communities	Complaint about a gravestone being installed on the wrong plot.	This complaint was upheld. The investigation found that there had been a typing error made in the paper work. Working practices have been reviewed and an apology and a financial remedy provided to the family for the distress caused.
Housing, Growth and Communities	Complaint about misleading information on webpage with regards to Household Support Fund, that the funds eligibility was discriminatory against age and the delay in response after initial request.	This complaint was partly upheld. The investigation found that the information on the webpage made it unclear that the eligibility criteria of the voucher scheme may differ but there was no discrimination against age found in the scheme. It also identified that there had been a delay in updating the complainant. An apology was issued along with an update on the application and a voucher issued as a remedy. The webpage and other public documents have been amended to clearly define the scheme and work practices have been reviewed to help ensure all contacts are responded to in a timely manner.
Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services	Complaint about handling of a planning application.	This complaint was upheld. It was identified that the planning application took a protracted amount of time beyond what might be reasonably expected. There was a lack of communication with the complainant over long period of time due to an IT issue. An apology was issued and the IT issue was to be reviewed.

Department	Complaint Description	Outcome of complaint
Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services	Complaint regarding licensing conditions of the Soundwave Festival.	This complaint was partly upheld. The investigation found there was a delay in communication when the complainant initially contacted the Council with regards to this issue. However, the complaint about not enforcing licensing conditions was not upheld. The council was also unable to comment on whether the event organisers had met their duties under the equality act as it was outside of our jurisdiction. An apology was issued for the delay in communication.
Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services	Complaint about the Council's management of a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) application and sought compensation for financial losses.	This complaint was upheld. The investigation identified that the initial survey by the service at the property had been carried out incorrectly. An apology was provided and measures put in place within the service to ensure this doesn't happen again. The complainant escalated this to the Ombudsman but they have chosen not to investigate as they cannot achieve the outcome the complainant is looking for because the court is better placed to consider the legal claim for financial losses and there was no further public interest to justify their investigation.
Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services	Complaint about the planning application process, consideration of the Fulford Judgment and whether the National Planning Policy Framework had been followed.	This complaint was partly upheld. The investigation found that it would have been beneficial for the Fulford Judgment Principles to have been considered and this consideration be recorded on the case file. However, this did not affect the outcome of the decision. An apology was issued and officers have been asked to ensure that all considerations of relevant case law be recorded on case files to allow for full transparency. The complainant escalated this to the Ombudsman but they have chosen not to investigate as they were unlikely to find fault and the individual had not suffered significant injustice.

Department	Complaint Description	Outcome of complaint
Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services	Complaint about disability access on North Gare footpath.	This complaint was partly upheld. It was found that the current access arrangements restrict access to disabled persons on wider mobility scooters. The footpath will now be considered as part of any future review and improvement programme, subject to available resources and feasibility.
Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services	Complaint about Blue badge refusal with misapplication of law, disability discrimination and subject access record discrepancy.	This complaint was partly upheld. The element of complaint about the refusal to issue a blue badge was not upheld as it followed the required process. However, the complainant had asked for email communication alongside postal arrangements. This part of the complaint was upheld because it was found that the Council had not always used email communication as requested by the complainant. The subject access complaint was not investigated as it did not fall under the Corporate Complaints Policy but the complainant was advised of how they could take that forward. An apology was issued and the service reviewed to prevent this situation happening again. The complainant escalated this to the Ombudsman but they have chosen not to investigate as there was not enough evidence of fault

Appendix B – LGSCO Annual Review Letter 2025/26



20 May 2026

By email

Mr Wilton

Chief Executive

Hartlepool Borough Council

Dear Mr Wilton

Annual Review letter 2025-26

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2026.

We recognise that local authorities continue to face significant pressures in delivering services to their communities. We hope the data and insight we share with you each year remains a useful tool for reflection and continuous improvement. Please consider it as part of your corporate governance processes.

[Your annual statistics are available here.](#)

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

We will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 15 July 2026.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

We remain committed to supporting the sector to embed effective systems of redress. Where authorities are navigating reorganisation and devolution, we are ready to help ensure that robust complaint handling is built into new arrangements from the outset. Please do get in touch if your organisation would benefit from our advice and guidance.

Our [Complaint Handling Code](#), in force since April 2025, is now applied in our casework and offers structure and support to your local complaint system. Our training programme provides a flexible, expert-led route to building complaints capability across your teams, with courses open for individual delegates to book. Contact training@lgo.org.uk for more information.

Our Annual Review of Local Government Complaints will be published in July 2026, setting out the national picture of complaints, trends across service areas, and emerging systemic issues. We encourage you to read it alongside your own organisation's data.

Yours sincerely,

A. K. Clarke

Amerdeep Clarke

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaint overview

Reporting year

2025 / 2026

Update results

Between 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, we dealt with 21 complaints. Of these, 13 were not for us or not ready for us to investigate. We assessed and closed 7 complaints. We investigated 1 complaints.

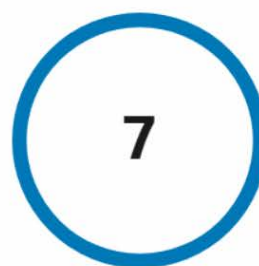
You can [search the decisions](#) behind these statistics and read our [annual letters to this council](#).



Complaints dealt with



Not for us



Assessed and closed



Investigated

Complaints upheld



We investigated 1 complaints and upheld 1.

100% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of 85% in similar authorities.

Adjusted for Hartlepool Borough Council's population, this is 1 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.



The average for authorities of this type is 5.6 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

[View upheld decisions](#)

Satisfactory remedies provided by the Council



0
out of
1

In **0** out of **1** upheld cases we found the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

 **0%** satisfactory remedy rate.

[View satisfactory remedy decisions](#)

 This compares to an average of **13%** in similar authorities.

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



1
out of
1

We recorded compliance outcomes in **1** cases.
In **1** cases we were satisfied with the actions taken.

 **100%** compliance rate with recommendations.

 This compares to an average of **100%** in similar authorities.

In **1** out of **1** cases compliance with recommendations was **on time**.

 **100%** timely compliance rate.

 This compares to an average of **77%** in similar organisations.

Service improvements

View as [Chart](#) | [Table](#)

Category	Number of service improvements
No categories	0

No service improvements were recorded during the year.

Service improvements are actions councils agree to take to address faults identified in our investigations which help prevent similar problems affecting other people.

[View service improvements](#)

Annual total

Current year

Reports

Reports are issued where there is significant injustice, systemic issues, or important learning for councils.

► [Why we publish investigation reports](#)

0

Reports published about Hartlepool Borough Council in the last 10 years

[View all](#)

Appendix C - Historical Data from the LGSCO

Historical Comparison of Decisions Made by LGSCO for the last 5 years – Hartlepool

	Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Detailed Investigations/Outcome			Total	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
					Not Upheld	Upheld	Uphold Rate		
2025/26	1	1	11	7	0	1	100%	21	85%
2024/25	0	0	5	17	2	2	50%	26	80%
2023/24	0	0	6	11	0	2	100%	19	79%
2022/23	1	1	5	10	2	0	0%	19	72%
2021/22	0	0	5	15	4	1	20%	25	64%
5 Year Total	2	2	32	60	8	6	N/A	110	N/A

Historical Comparison of Complaints and Enquiries Received by LGSCO for the last 5 years – Hartlepool

	Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and other services	Education and Children's Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
2025/26	2	4	2	11	2	1	2	3	1	28
2024/25	5	4	2	8	3	2	1	2	0	27
2023/24	2	0	1	9	1	4	1	3	0	21
2022/23	3	0	3	10	1	0	0	0	1	18
2021/22	5	1	3	6	1	1	1	2	0	20



Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee

8th September 2026

Report of: Director of Finance, IT and Digital

Subject: CORPORATE PROCUREMENT REPORT ON CONTRACTS

Decision Type: For Information

1. Council Plan Priority

Hartlepool will be a place:
where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
that is connected, sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects its community. (Organisation)

2. Purpose of Report

2.1 To satisfy the requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules with regard to the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee:

- Receiving and examining reports on the outcome of contract letting procedures including those where the lowest/highest price is not payable/receivable.
- Receiving and examining reports on any exemptions granted in respect of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council's Contract Procedure Rules require that the following information be presented to the Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee.

Section of Contract Procedure Rules		Information to be reported
Introduction	Para 8 iii & Para 8 vi	Outcome of contract letting procedures
Part G	Para 12 v	
Introduction Part B	Para 8 iii Para 3 v	Basis of award decision if not lowest/highest price payable/receivable
Introduction	Para 8 vi	Contract Name & Reference Number
Part G	Para 12 v	
Introduction	Para 8 vi	Description of Goods/Services being procured
Part G	Para 12 v	
Introduction	Para 8 vi	Department/Service area procuring the goods/services
Part G	Para 12 v	
Introduction	Para 8 vi	Prices (separate to Bidders details to preserve commercial confidentiality)
Part G	Para 12 v	
Part G	Para 12 v	Details of Bidders

- 3.2 In addition to tender related information, details of exemptions granted to the Contract Procedure Rules are also reportable.

4. Information for Consideration

4.1 Tender Information

Appendix A provides details of goods/services/works tenders valued over £60K awarded since the last report to committee, along with the social value percentage weighting that was incorporated at the application stage.

4.2 Exemption Information

Appendix B provides details of Contract Procedure Rules exemptions, granted since the last report to committee. Exemption request forms have been amended to detail reasons why Hartlepool based firms have not been selected and this information is now being collated.

4.3 Commercial / Confidential Information

Appendix C includes the commercial information in respect of the tenders received and any confidential information relating to Contract Procedure Rule exemptions or contract extensions (**This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, Appendix C).**

5. Other Considerations/Implications

Risk Implications	No relevant issues
Financial Considerations	No relevant issues
Subsidy Control	No relevant issues
Legal Considerations	No relevant issues
Single Impact Assessment	No relevant issues

Staff Considerations	No relevant issues
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues
Consultation	N/A

6. Recommendations

6.1 That the Committee notes the contents of the report.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 The Committee is required to review the information supplied to ensure that monitoring in the award of contracts is carried out and evidenced.

8. Background Papers

9. Contact Officers

James Magog
 Director of Finance, IT and Digital
 Email: james.magog@hartlepool.gov.uk

Paul Dixon
 Assistant Director - Finance
 Email: paul.dixon@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 11/08/26
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 6/8/26
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 11/08/26

7.2 APPENDIX A

TENDER INFORMATION (details the required information for each procurement tender awarded since the last report along with the social value percentage weighting that was incorporated at the application stage)

Date of Contract Award	Contract Name and Reference Number	Description of Goods / Services being procured	Duration of Contract (optional extensions in brackets)	Department / Service area procuring the goods / services	Details of Companies invited including location	Details of Bids received	Basis of award decision if not lowest/highest price payable / receivable (Social Value Element)	Outcome of contract letting procedures (Named sub-Contractors and location)	Previous Provider / Location
12/02/2026	Rotary Mowers (wide areas) - OPEN2026302	The Authority is seeking to procure two rotary mowers (wide area)	N/A	Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services	Ben Burgess & Company Limited, Norfolk Henry Armer & Son, Cumbria Thomas Sheriff & Company Limited, Northumberland	Ben Burgess & Company Limited, Norfolk Henry Armer & Son, Cumbria Thomas Sheriff & Company Limited, Northumberland	90% Price 10% Social Value	Thomas Sheriff & Company Limited, Northumberland	N/A

Procurements Exempted from Council Contract Procedure Rules

(Provides details of the required information in relation to Contract Procedure Rules exemptions granted since the last Corporate Procurement Report on Contracts. Exemption request forms have been amended to detail reasons why Hartlepool based firms have not been selected and this information is now being collated)

Dept.	Service Unit	Company Name	Company based at	Duration	Description	Approval
Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services	Strategic Development	Carter Towler	Leeds	01/05/2026-01/11/2026	The <i>Reimagining Middleton Grange</i> project has been delayed due to property ownership issues affecting key development assets. With funding due to expire in March 2028, HBC now needs urgent specialist support to complete complex freehold and leasehold title transfers and variations, enabling the project to progress and preventing the loss of regeneration funding. A full procurement process would cause unacceptable delay and risk failure to meet funding deadlines.	Request Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Kieran Bostock 18/05/26
Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services	Consultancy Services	Legionella Dossier	London	01/10/2026-30/09/2027	HBC was informed in May 2026 that its current legionella system will cease on 30 June 2026, creating an urgent risk to statutory water safety compliance. Due to the limited timeframe, a competitive procurement cannot be completed without service interruption, exposing the Council to legal, financial, and reputational risks. HBC is therefore making a direct award due to extreme urgency arising from unforeseeable events.	Request Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Kieran Bostock 04/06/26
Adults & Community Based Services	Housing, Growth & Communities	Living Woods North-East CIC	Hexham	01/10/2026-31/03/2027	Living Woods provides a comprehensive tree planting service, including sourcing trees and equipment, site preparation, community engagement and education, planting events, aftercare, risk assessments, and monitoring of tree numbers, species, and locations. Market testing confirmed that no other local provider can deliver the full end-to-end service. Using a single provider supports continuity, strengthens community relationships, and encourages long-term ownership and stewardship of planting projects	Request Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Gemma Ptak 02/06/26

Procurements Exempted from Council Contract Procedure Rules - Exemptions

Dept.	Service Unit	Company Name	Company based at	Duration	Description	Approval
Childrens & Commissioning Services	Childrens Commissioning	Golnspire	Leicester	01/07/2026-30/06/2027	Hartlepool Borough Council is facing sustained pressure in meeting the needs of children in care, driven in part by a shortage of foster carers locally and nationally. This has increased reliance on higher-cost Independent Fostering Agencies and residential placements, impacting both financial sustainability and placement stability for children. To address this, the Council is commissioning Golnspire to deliver a data-driven fostering recruitment campaign. Golnspire utilises advanced analytics and large-scale consumer data to identify and target individuals most likely to become foster carers. Following a review of the market, no other supplier has been identified that offers an equivalent data-led recruitment methodology at scale. Golnspire's proven track record and specialised capability mean they are uniquely positioned to deliver this service and will support improved outcomes for children in care while contributing to the financial sustainability of the service.	Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Alison Sutherland 26/06/26
Childrens & Commissioning Services	Childrens Commissioning	The Difference Education Ltd t/a The Difference	London	01/09/2026-31/12/2026	As part of the Government's SEND reforms, Hartlepool Borough Council has committed, through its Local Area Inclusion Reform Plan, to strengthen inclusive mainstream provision. The development of inclusion bases is identified as a key priority within this work. To support delivery, the Council is commissioning a bespoke two-day training programme focused on inclusion bases. This programme is offered by The Difference and is informed by research into effective internal alternative provision. The Difference were a leading partner in developing the Department for Education's (DfE) national inclusion guidance, which sets out recognised best practice for inclusion bases. Due to their unique involvement in producing this guidance and their	Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Alison Sutherland 26/06/26

7.2 APPENDIX B

Dept.	Service Unit	Company Name	Company based at	Duration	Description	Approval
					specialist expertise, they are considered the most appropriate provider to deliver this training. The training will support schools to implement high-quality inclusion bases aligned with national expectations, contributing to improved inclusion and outcomes for pupils.	
Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services	Communications & Marketing	Origami	Vancouver	01/07/2026-30/06/2029	Origami provides a pre-configured SharePoint intranet enhancement solution that integrates directly with the Council's existing Microsoft 365 and SharePoint environment. The solution includes ready-made templates, web parts and functionality that can be deployed rapidly without the need for bespoke development or extensive implementation services. Market research was undertaken to identify alternative suppliers. Whilst other providers offer intranet solutions and related consultancy services, these are typically bespoke or configuration-led offerings requiring significant design, development and implementation activity. No supplier was identified that offered a comparable off-the-shelf SharePoint enhancement product with equivalent functionality, deployment model and integration capability. Due to the unique nature of the Origami solution and the absence of a directly comparable alternative, a like-for-like comparison was not possible and a direct award is considered appropriate.	Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Matt Wilton 01/07/26
Legal Governance & HR	Legal	Vivid Government (Part of Vivid Resourcing)	London	6 months	Following unsuccessful recruitment to a vacant planning solicitor post, a hybrid approach is proposed to maintain service delivery. Section 106 agreement work will be provided through the NEPO Framework, allowing full cost recovery, while a part-time locum solicitor (15 hours per week) will provide planning advice and committee support at a lower cost. The option offers both cost savings and service resilience.	Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Matt Wilton 03/07/26

Procurements Exempted from Council Contract Procedure Rules - Extensions

Dept.	Service Unit	Company Name	Company based at	Duration	Description	Approval
Childrens & Commissioning Services	Childrens Commissioning	Changing Futures North-East (CFNE)	Hartlepool	01/10/26-30/09/27	Funding for the Family Group Conferencing service under the Family Network Pilot has recently been secured for a further 12 months. This contract is necessary to maintain continuity for vulnerable families and avoid disruption to a specialist, relationship-based service. The existing provider ensures consistency, with staff already trained in HBC's practice model, and previous attempts to recruit in-house have been unsuccessful. A change in provider at this stage would introduce avoidable risks to service quality and established relationships. A 12-month extension allows time to review the service, engage stakeholders, consider TUPE implications, and carry out a compliant procurement process aligned with future social care reforms.	Request Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Alison Sutherland 15/06/26
Adult Services & Public Health	Adult Commissioning Service	Cleveland Fire Authority	Hartlepool	1/10/2026 – 31/12/2026	A three-month contract extension to 31 st December 2026 is proposed to allow time to procure a redesigned service that supports socially isolated adults of all ages, ensures a smooth transition for existing users, and incorporates lived experience into the procurement process. The current provider has agreed to deliver the extension.	Request Approved by James Magog, Hayley Martin and Jill Harrison 3/8/2026