



**COTSWOLD**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 14 JULY 2025</b>
Subject	<b>ANNUAL SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS STATISTICS FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN – YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2025</b>
Wards affected	All
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Accountable officer	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development Email: <a href="mailto:angela.claridge@Cotswold.gov.uk">angela.claridge@Cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Cheryl Sloan, Business Services Manager, Governance, Risk & Business Continuity Email: <a href="mailto:Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk">Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	This report presents the Annual Complaints statistics as provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025.
Annexes	Annex A – Annual Review Letter 2024 – 2025
Recommendation(s)	That the Audit and Governance Committee resolved to:  1. Note the content of the report and the Annual Review Letter 2024 – 2025.
Corporate priorities	All
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No



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Consultees/ Consultation	NA
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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** This report provides an overview from the annual summary of complaints statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – year ending 31 March 2025.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** At the end of each financial year, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) write to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, and Chair of Scrutiny to provide an annual summary of the complaint statistics which have been received by the LGO in relation to the Cotswold District Council (CDC).
- 2.2** The information is provided to give insight about the organisations approach to complaints, and for consideration as part of the Council corporate governance processes.
- 2.3** CDC had three stages to its' internal complaints process as detailed below. Once this was exhausted, if the complainant remained unsatisfied with the response provided, it was at this point that they could refer their complaint to the LGO.

Stage 1: Service Area Response

Stage 2: Independent Review

Stage 3: Appeal

- 2.4** The Annual Letter details the complaints which have been escalated to the LGO in relation to services provided by CDC.
- 2.5** Following a period of consultation, the LGO launched the Complaint Handling Code for councils in February 2024, setting out a clear process for responding to complaints effectively and fairly. Councils were urged to adopt this Code without delay, as they expect councils to carefully consider the Code when developing policies and procedures and will begin considering it as part of their processes from April 2026.

- 2.6** As a result, a new Complaint's Policy and Procedure was produced and approved by the Audit and Governance Committee in November 2024. This changed the complaints process from a three-stage internal process, to a two-stage which went live on 1 April 2025. Therefore, next year's report will be against a two-stage process as shown below:

Stage 1: Service Area Response

Stage 2: Appeal and Final Decision Notice

- 2.7** In addition, as part of the new Policy, next financial year, the Audit and Governance Committee will receive an annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

This will include the following:

- a) the annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure our complaint handling policy remains in line with the Code requirements.
- b) a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Council's complaint handling performance which will also include a summary of the types of complaints the Council has refused to accept;
- c) any findings of non-compliance with the Code;
- d) service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
- e) presentation of the annual report about the Council's performance from the LGO; and
- f) any other relevant reports or publications produced by the LGO in relation to the work of the Council.

### **3. OVERVIEW**

- 3.1** A total of 7 complaints were escalated to the LGO about services provided by CDC during financial year 2024 - 2025.
- 3.2** Of the 7 complaints received by the LGO, one complaint was investigated, but this was not upheld.

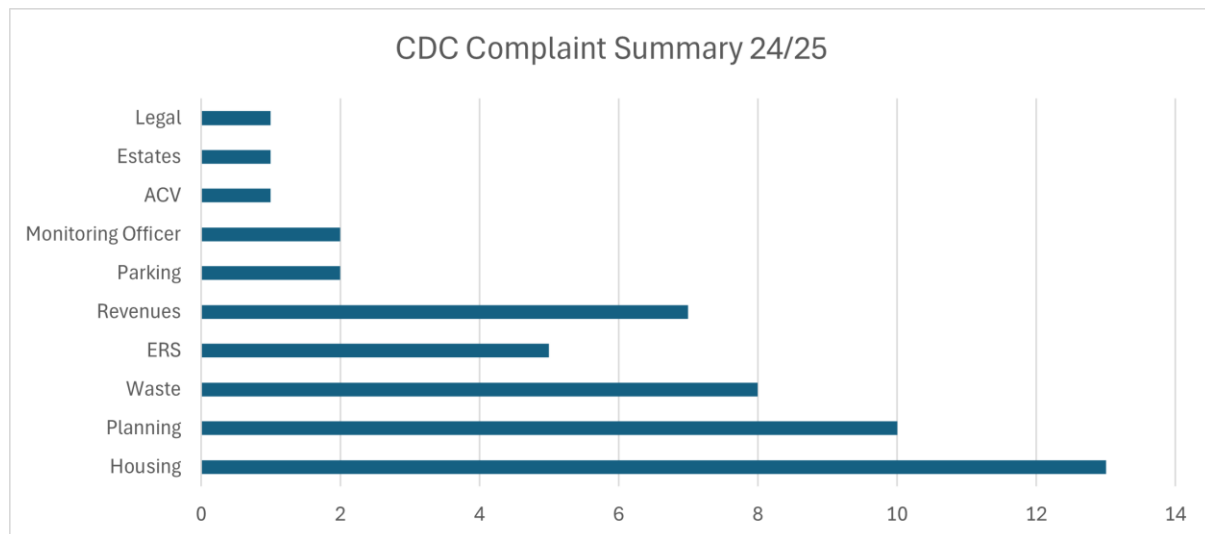
**3.3** The table below provides a summary of the 7 complaints received by the LGO, the complaint category (service area), the decision which has been made and the reason for the decision.

Subcategory	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason
Antisocial behaviour	12/04/2024	Not Upheld	no fault
Enforcement - other	15/04/2024	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given
Enforcement-householder	23/04/2024	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given
Standards committees	01/05/2024	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to Organisation
Refuse & recycling	10/08/2024	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given
Planning & Developmt-oth	18/02/2025	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault
NULL	11/12/2024	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised

**3.4** A total of 4 complaints were referred back to the Council, this is due to the complainant having not exhausted the 3 stages of the internal complaints process, 1 was closed after initial enquiries, and one complaint did not have enough information to proceed.

**3.5** During 2024-2025, CDC recorded a total of 50 complaints. 7 were referred to the Ombudsman, which equates to 14%. This is a 6% reduction from last year. It should also be noted that four of the complaints were referred straight back to the Council, which is, in the majority, where they have gone straight to the LGO, rather than through the Council's internal complaints process.

**3.6** Whilst the council receives a wide range of complaints, the majority relate to where decisions have been made, as opposed to the standard of services provided. This includes decisions around planning, housing, revenues and benefits and enforcement. A number of these complaints could be rejected by the Council as they are excluded under the Complaints policy, however, to try to mitigate residents' concerns, they are, in the main, still responded to under the complaints process. Complaints received by the Council and partner Councils are reviewed to check for trends, lessons learnt and mitigating action.



**3.7** Comparative data for other similar Authorities, as provided by the LGO, was that an average of 66% of the complaints investigated were upheld.

**3.8** Given the number of services provided by CDC, to have no complaints upheld by the LGO should be seen as a positive reflection of the way in which services are provided, and complaints are managed and subsequently rectified.

## **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

**4.1** None

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **7 RISK ASSESSMENT**

**7.1** If the Council's governance arrangements are weak then the Council is at risk of failing to safeguard the use of public funds. In turn this would lead to poor external assessments, damaging the reputation of the Council.

## **8 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**8.1** An equalities impact assessment is not required for this report.

## **9 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

**9.1** There are no climate or ecological emergency implications arising directly from this report.

## **10 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**10.1** The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

## **11 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS STATISTICS AND ANNUAL LETTER FROM THE LGO.**

**11.1** These documents will be available for inspection online at [www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk) or by contacting democratic services [democratic@cotswold.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@cotswold.gov.uk) for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.