



**THRIVING COUNCIL
COMMITTEE**

Thursday 30th July 2026

Annual Local Government and Social Care Report 2025/26

Report by:

Director of Corporate Services

Contact Officer:

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Executive Summary:

This is a report on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review Letter 2025/26 covering complaints referred to and decided by them between April 2025 and March 2026. Examining the types and outcomes of complaints referred and comparison with other similar district councils.

RECOMMENDATION:

That committee members receive this report, and after considering its contents are assured that the current complaint handling procedures are functioning adequately.



**Local Government and
Social Care
Ombudsman (LGSCO)
Report 2025/26**

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Executive Summary

This report examines the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review Letter 2025/26 which covers complaints that were either referred to or decided by them during the period from April 2025 to March 2026.

Historical data on complaints handled by the LGSCO is included within this report along with comparison to previous year's figures and findings.

Finally, the report compares how West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) has performed overall in comparison with 20 other similar district councils in terms of the number of complaints referred, investigated and upheld by the LGSCO.

During the 2025/26 period, a total of 18 new complaints were referred to the LGSCO.

WLDC Service		LGSCO Categorisation
Planning and Development	5	Planning and Development
Planning Enforcement	4	Planning and Development
Refuse and Recycling	3	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation
Licensing -Other	1	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation
Housing Benefit	1	Benefits & Tax
Council Tax	1	Benefits & Tax
Homelessness	1	Housing
Private landlord/tenant issues	1	Housing
NULL	1	NULL

There were also 2 outstanding complaints that were carried over into the 2025/26 period that had not yet been decided at the end of the 2024/25 period.

In total the LGSCO made 12 decisions during 2025/26. 7 complaints were closed after initial enquiries, 1 complaint was incomplete, and 1 complaint led to the complainant receiving advice from the LGSCO and 2 were referred back for local resolution. 1 complaint was investigated and upheld.

The LGSCO investigated 1 and upheld 1 complaint in 2025/26. More details on this upheld complaint and the recommendations made by the LGSCO can be found in the [Upheld Complaints, Learning and Improvement Actions](#) section of this report.

It is important to note that at the end of the 2025/26 period there were 8 outstanding complaints received by the LGSCO that have yet to be determined for action or not by the LGSCO, these will be reported against in 2026/27 annual letter.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 If a customer has followed and completed the Council's formal complaints process and remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the way it has been handled by WLDC they are able to refer their complaint to the LGSCO for review.
- 1.2 The LGSCO will only consider a complaint once it has been dealt with in full via the WLDC Customer Feedback Policy and only if it meets their criteria for investigation - <https://www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint/what-we-can-and-cannot-look-at>
- 1.3 Issues that have another formal route of appeal or tribunal will not be considered by the LGSCO, for example, planning appeals, council tax valuation issues and appeals regarding the suitability of housing etc.
- 1.4 There is no cost to the authority for the work carried out by the LGSCO. A cost is only involved if an upheld complaint recommendation suggests a financial remedy.
- 1.5 The LGSCO do not necessarily investigate all complaints that are referred to them. As the LGSCO is a public service they have to decide how to best use their publicly funded resources and therefore they cannot investigate all complaints they receive.

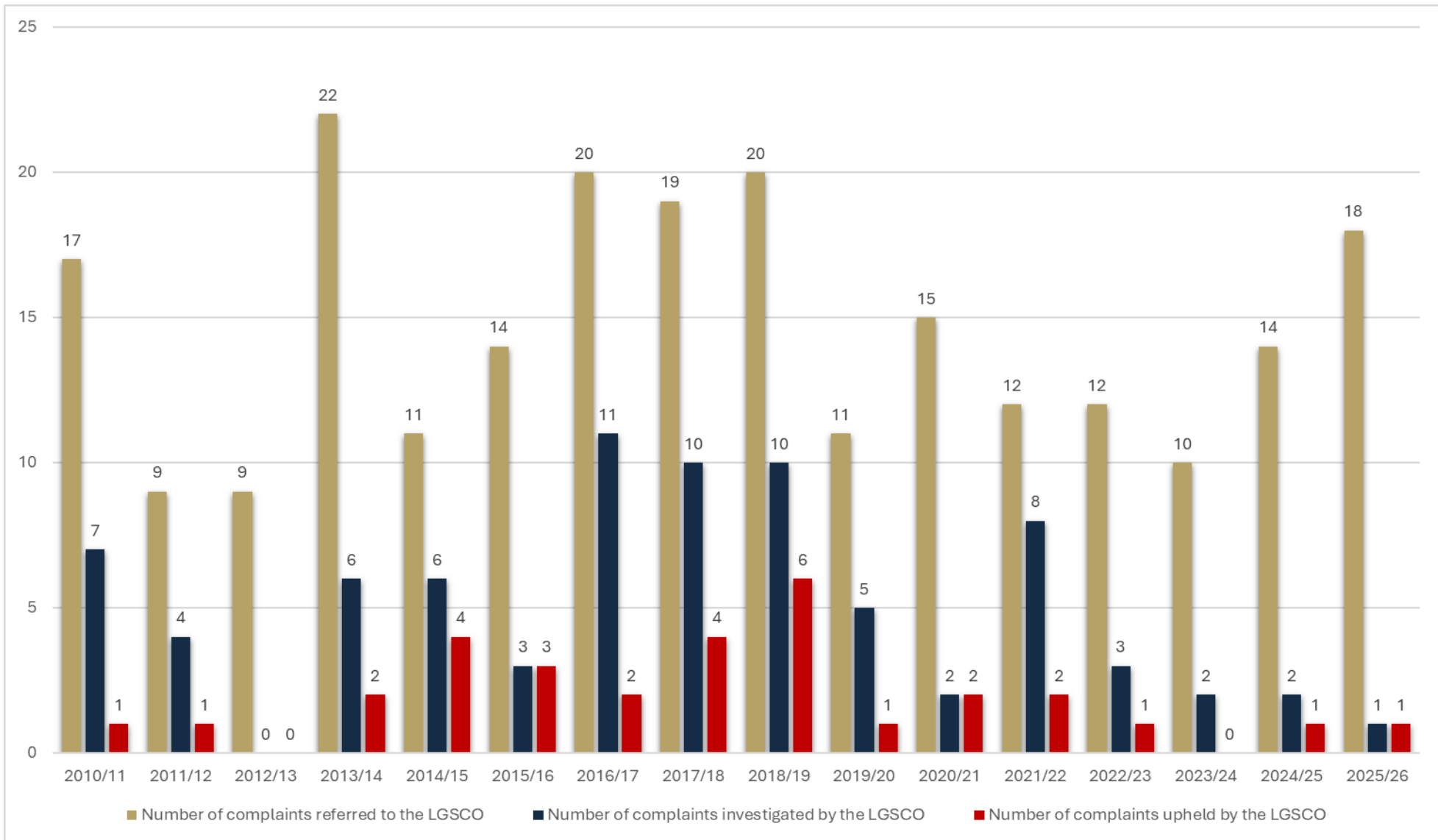
They are more likely to investigate complaints where the issues:

- have had a serious or long-term impact on people's lives
- affect many other people

They are less likely to investigate complaints where:

- the issues have caused minor irritation or upset
- they cannot ask the Council to do what the complainant wants them to

- 1.6 An Annual Review Letter is published by the LGSCO for each authority every year which details the number of complaints referred to them, investigated by them and includes information on complaints upheld by them. Information regarding compliance with LGSCO recommendations is also included. The full WLDC Annual Review Letter for 2025/26 can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of this report.
- 1.7 The information published by the LGSCO allows us to examine our performance for the year and look at how we compare to other similar authorities.
- 1.8 The investigations carried out and decisions made by the LGSCO allow us to learn and make improvements to the way we deliver our services and deal with our customers daily. Complaints investigated that are not upheld by the LGSCO provide assurance that we are operating correctly. We can also learn from LGSCO complaints and decisions made for other authorities, when weekly decision lists are published, they are shared with relevant team managers.
- 1.9 The graph on the next page shows how many WLDC complaints have been referred to, investigated and upheld by the LGSCO each year since 2010, the last 4 years has seen a decrease in the average number of WLDC complaints investigated and upheld by the LGSCO:



- The number of complaints investigated and upheld in 2012/2013 is unknown due to change in LGSCO procedure

2. Annual Review Letter 2025/26 Figures

- 2.1 In total 18 new complaints were referred to the LGSCO in 2025/26, this is a small increase when compared to the previous 3 years. The table below shows which services the 18 complaints related to compared with previous years.
- 2.2 As you can see, over the years the majority of the complaints referred to the LGSCO are in relation to Planning and Development services. In 2025/26 there was an increase in the number complaints regarding this group of services being referred to the LGSCO for WLDC when compared to the previous 3 years.

	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Environmental Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
2025/26	2	0	4	0	2	9	1	18
2024/25	2	2	3	1	1	5	0	14
2023/24	0	0	4	0	0	6	0	10
2022/23	1	1	3	0	3	4	0	12
2021/22	1	0	1	0	1	9	0	12
2020/21	0	0	3	0	1	10	1	15
2019/20	4	1	1	0	1	4	0	11

- 2.3 The service categories for complaints that the LGSCO use include various WLDC service areas, for instance their Planning and Development category includes Planning Enforcement and their Environmental Services and Public Protection and Regulation includes Environmental Health services, Community Safety including ASB and Housing Enforcement, and Corporate and Other Services includes FOI requests.
- 2.4 The table below, that is also included in the introduction section of this report shows the breakdown of WLDC services compared to the LGSCO categorisation and the number of complaints referred to them relating to each WLDC service in 2025/26:

WLDC Service		LGSCO Categorisation
Planning and Development	5	Planning and Development
Planning Enforcement	4	Planning and Development
Refuse and Recycling	3	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation
Licensing -Other	1	Environmental Services & Public Protection

		& Regulation
Housing Benefit	1	Benefits & Tax
Council Tax	1	Benefits & Tax
Homelessness	1	Housing
Private landlord/tenant issues	1	Housing
NULL	1	NULL

2.5 As well as the 18 new complaints referred to the LGSCO in 2025/26 included in the table above, there were 2 complaints outstanding from the previous year, these were in relation to Council Tax and Planning Enforcement and the LGSCO decided not to investigate them further.

2.6 In total 12 decisions were made by the LGSCO during the 2025/26 period. The table below provides information on the complaints that were received and decided including the dates they were received and decided by the LGSCO, the service they related to, the decision made, and any recommendations made regarding the decision reached.

The links included in the LGSCO Category and Reference Number column of the table below will take you to the full complaint details as published on the LGSCO website. If there is no link included the LGSCO did not publish any information because the complaint did not pass the initial assessment stage.

LGSCO Category and Reference Number	WLDC Service	Received by the LGSCO	Decided by the LGSCO	Days Taken	Decision	Decision Reason	Remedy
24018333 Planning and development	Enforcement - other	22/01/2025	08/04/2025	77	Advice given	Previously considered and decided	N/A
24020059 Corporate & Other Services	Council Tax (access to information)	19/02/2025	06/04/2025	47	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.1 court proceedings	N/A
25000676 Housing	Home Choices (Homelessness)	18/06/2025	07/01/2026	203	Upheld	Fault causing Injustice	Apology and Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble
25004473 Benefits and Tax	Council Tax	06/06/2025	04/08/2025	60	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	N/A

[illegible]

25020485 Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse and Recycling	10/12/2025	15/04/2026	127	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	N/A
25024105 Planning & Development	Enforcement - householder	21/01/2026	15/06/2026	146	Closed after initial enquiries	Late complaint - out of jurisdiction	N/A
25024864 Planning and Development	Policy/Local Development framework	26/01/2026			The LGSCO have not contacted WLDC yet		
25026771 Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Licensing - other	25/02/206			The LGSCO have not contacted WLDC yet		
25028423 Planning and Development	Enforcement - other	03/03/2026			The LGSCO have not contacted WLDC yet		
25028513 Housing	Private landlord/tenant issues	04/03/2026			The LGSCO have not contacted WLDC yet		
25028686 Planning and Development	Enforcement - other	05/03/2026			The LGSCO have not contacted WLDC yet		
25029622 Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse and Recycling	17/03/2026			The LGSCO have not contacted WLDC yet		

- 2.7 At the end of the 2025/26 period there were 8 outstanding complaints that had been received by the LGSCO that had not yet been made known to WLDC.
- 2.8 During 2025/26 2 complaints were referred back to WLDC for a local resolution. This occurs when a customer has not initially made their complaint known to us or have not given us the chance to investigate and resolve their complaint internally. The LGSCO will only consider a complaint once it has been investigated via the authority under the Council's formal complaint process.
- 2.9 1 of the complaints referred to the LGSCO was incomplete or invalid and 1 complainant received advice, these complaints did not progress any further.
- 2.10 In total 7 complaints were closed after initial enquiries were made. This occurs when the LGSCO receive a complaint and consider the initial information including details of the complaint and the response we have given them. If the LGSCO decide that it is unlikely that any fault or maladministration will be found or that any harm or injustice has been caused they will not investigate the matter further. The LGSCO will also take this approach to complaints where an appeal or tribunal route is available to the complainant or where the complaint has been made out of time. The reasons why the LGSCO closed these 7 complaints are listed below:

Planning and Development x 3

25005492 - Householder planning application

We cannot investigate Mr C's complaint about the Council's refusal of his planning applications because Mr C appealed to the Planning Inspector. We do not have the power to investigate the actions of the Planning Inspector.

25008579 – Housholder planning application

We will not investigate this complaint about how the Council dealt with a planning application and the pre-application planning advice it provided. This is because the complainant has appealed to the Planning Inspector. It is unlikely we would find fault in relation to the remaining issues complained about.

25011503 – Other planning application

We will not investigate this complaint about the way the Council considered a planning application. There is not enough evidence of fault in the Council's actions to warrant an investigation.

Benefits & Tax x3

24020059 – Council Tax

We will not investigate Miss X's complaint about the Council's handling of council tax arrears. This is because the matter is subject to court proceedings. The Information Commissioner is better placed to consider how the Council has dealt with Miss X's requests for information.

25004473 – Council Tax

We will not investigate this complaint about historic council tax arrears because there is insufficient evidence of fault by the Council.

25016157 – Housing Benefit

We will not investigate Ms X's complaint about the Council's actions to recover an overpayment of housing benefit and its response to her information request. There is insufficient evidence of fault to warrant an investigation. The Information Commissioner's Office is better placed to consider a complaint about information rights or data protection.

Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation x1

25010807 – Refuse and Recycling

We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's bin collection crew removing two rubbish bags from his bin and leaving them on his drive. This is because the matter did not cause Mr X significant injustice and we cannot achieve the outcome Mr X wants.

- 2.11 The LGSCO carried out detailed investigations into 1 complaint during 2025/26, this complaint was in relation to homelessness and was a case that was dealt with by the Council's Home Choices department.
- 2.12 Following the LGSCO's investigations into this complaint, fault causing injustice was identified and the complaint was upheld with recommendations being made.
- 2.13 As the LGSCO upheld the 1 complaint investigated in 2025/26 the upheld rate when taking into account all complaints referred to the LGSCO (18) is 6%.
- 2.14 The LGSCO calculate complaints upheld by using the number they investigated, for 2025/26 they investigated 1 complaint and upheld 1 so in terms of complaints investigated 100% were upheld. This compares to an average of 74% in similar authorities.
- 2.15 An overview of West Lindsey District Councils performance can be found on the LGSCO website here: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/west-lindsey-district-council/statistics/#complaints-upheld>
- 2.16 The table below shows how many complaints have been referred to, investigated and upheld by the LGSCO compared to previous years.

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
Complaints and enquiries received by the LGSCO	18	14	10	12	12	15
Number of detailed investigations carried out by the LGSCO	1	2	2	3	8	2
Number of complaints upheld by the LGSCO	1	1	0	1	2	2
Upheld complaint percentage % (the number of complaints received/the number of complaints upheld)	6%	7%	0%	8%	17%	13%

- 2.17 As you can see the upheld rate has fluctuated over the years depending on how many complaints were investigated by the LGSCO. The actual number of upheld complaints is minimal, when compared to the number of complaints referred to them.
- 2.18 The decrease in the number of complaints investigated by the LGSCO and the reduction in the number of complaints that the LGSCO felt were justified is attributed to the work of the Customer Experience Manager and the centralised approach taken to handling complaints, that was implemented in 2018.
- 2.19 It is acknowledged that cases referred to the LGSCO have been more complex in nature, and we welcome a fresh pair of eyes on these matters to assist us in identifying how we can do things differently in the future.

3. Upheld Complaints and Learning and Improvement Actions

- 3.1 The LGSCO investigated and upheld 1 complaint in 2025/26, the complaint in relation to the Home Choices service and how long a family were placed in hotel accommodation for.
- 3.2 Below are the details of the complaint that was upheld, to view the full report from the LGSCO please follow the title link below:

[25000676 Housing](#)

The complaint:

Mrs X complained on behalf of her husband about the Council's actions when they became at risk of homelessness.

LGSCO decision:

I find no fault in the Council's actions leading up to the family's eviction, nor in its actions in trying to secure suitable temporary accommodation. However, I do find fault in the family being placed in hotel accommodation for a total of 23 weeks. We recommend the Council apologises and makes a payment to Mr Y.

- 3.3 The LGSCO did not find fault in the Council's actions leading up to the family's eviction or in trying to secure suitable temporary accommodation, but they did find fault in how long the family were placed in a hotel for.
- 3.4 The LGSCO acknowledged that the family refused a suitable offer of interim accommodation and, as a result, the Council was not required to make further offers. The LGSCO also recognised the significant and sustained support the Council provided throughout this period and accept that, had the family accepted the offer of suitable interim accommodation, this would have avoided the placement in hotel accommodation.

However, they pointed out that the law is clear that hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation is not suitable for families with children, regardless of the reasons why such accommodation is used. For this reason, they identified the use of hotel accommodation as a service failure, rather than maladministration, to reflect that this arose from circumstances outside the Council's control.

- 3.5 To remedy the injustice caused by the fault identified the LGSCO recommended that the Council apologised to Mrs X and Mr Y and pay Mr Y £850 to recognise the unsuitable hotel accommodation the family were placed in.
- 3.6 These recommendations were completed within the LGSCO required timeframe and the complaint findings were shared with members of the Home Choices team.
- 3.7 The Council recognises that there is a lack of suitable temporary accommodation to suit all needs and work is ongoing to increase availability going forward.

4. Compliance with Ombudsman Recommendations

- 4.1 The LGSCO produce and report statistics on compliance with the recommendations they make in relation to upheld complaints. The LGSCO's recommendations are specific and will include a timeframe for completion, allowing them to follow up with authorities and seek evidence that the recommendations have been implemented.
- 4.2 During 2025/26, 2 recommendations were made by the LGSCO as explained in the upheld complaint section above, an apology and a financial payment.
- 4.3 This recommendation was completed within the timescales set by the LGSCO and the compliance rate for WLDC is 100%

5. Comparison with other similar District Councils

- 5.1 A list of 20 district councils that are similar to WLDC in terms of size, population and services provided has been compiled so that some meaningful comparison and benchmarking can take place.
- 5.2 The tables in [Appendix 2](#) of this report show how WLDC compares with the other 20 similar authorities.
- 5.3 In terms of the number of complaints dealt with by the LGSCO in 2025/26, WLDC is number 12/21 compared to similar district councils.
- 5.4 WLDC is number 13/21 in terms of the number of upheld complaints when compared to similar district councils.

Appendix 1 – LGSCO Annual Review Letter 2025-26

20 May 2026

By email

Mr Burkinshaw
Chief Executive
West Lindsey District Council



Dear Mr Burkinshaw
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

Appendix 2 – Comparison with 20 similar District Councils – Complaints dealt with and Upheld

Complaints and Enquiries Decided 2025-26

Authority Name	Complaints dealt with in 2025/26	Not for the LGSCO	Assessed and closed	Complaints Investigated	Not Upheld	Upheld	Total	Uphold rate (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
East Suffolk District Council	35	11	23	1	0	1	35	100%	74%
Arun District Council	25	6	15	4	0	4	25	100%	74%
South Kesteven District Council	22	7	14	1	0	1	22	100%	74%
North Devon District Council	21	6	12	3	1	2	21	67%	74%
Adur District Council	17	8	8	1	0	1	17	100%	74%
Warwick District Council	17	10	6	1	0	1	17	100%	74%
East Lindsey District Council	16	4	8	4	1	3	16	75%	74%
Torridge District Council	14	4	8	2	1	1	14	50%	74%
Bassetlaw District Council	14	5	8	1	0	1	14	100%	74%
Babergh District Council	13	5	6	2	0	1	13	50%	74%
South Hams District Council	13	5	7	1	0	1	13	100%	74%
West Lindsey District Council	12	4	7	1	0	1	12	100%	74%
Mid Suffolk District Council	11	1	7	3	2	1	11	33%	74%
Cotswold District Council	11	6	4	1	0	1	11	100%	74%
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	11	3	8	0	0	0	11	0%	74%
South Holland District Council	10	6	4	0	0	0	10	0%	74%
Mid Devon District Council	9	1	6	2	0	2	9	100%	74%
Mansfield District Council	9	3	6	0	0	0	9	0%	74%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk Council	9	3	6	0	0	0	9	0%	74%
Breckland District Council	6	2	4	0	0	0	6	0%	74%
North Kesteven District Council	4	2	2	0	0	0	4	0%	74%

ASSOCIATED IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Financial: FIN/58/27/CL/SL

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Staffing:

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

LGR implications:

LGR has no impact on this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

The LGSCO have not identified any issues with how complaints are handled in terms of Equality and Diversity or Human Rights.

Data Protection Implications:

There are no data protection implications arising from this report, appropriate redactions have been made where required.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

Not applicable.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

Not applicable.

Health Implications:

There are no health implications arising from this report.

Risk Assessment:

Not applicable.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Annual Review Letters for West Lindsey District Council

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/west-lindsey-district-council/annualletters/>

LGSCO complaint decisions for West Lindsey District Council

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/Decisions/SearchResults?t=0&fd=0001-01-01&td=2026-06-25&dc=c%2Bnu%2Bu%2B&aname=West%20Lindsey%20District%20Council&sortOrder=descending>

West Lindsey District Council Performance 2023/24

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/west-lindsey-district-council/statistics>

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

X