

Subject:	Annual Council Feedback Review and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Enquiries	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	CMT Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	10th November 2025
Report of:	Head of People and Policy	Portfolio Holder:	Environment and Corporate Services
Key Decision:	☐ Forward Plan ☐	General Exception ☐	Special Urgency ☐
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes/No	Attached: Yes/No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes/No	Attached: Yes/No
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1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1.1 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the different types of feedback received by the Council, including Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) enquiries and complaints for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.
- 1.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the report and provide feedback to Council's Corporate Management Team.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The report updates committee members on the following types of feedback for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025:
 - Formal complaints
 - LGO enquiries and complaints
- There were 164 formal complaints with the highest number being about bins or bin collections.
- There were 11 LGO enquiries and 10 LGO decisions (1 LGO enquiry received during the year closed after 31st March 2025 on 11th June 2025)

3. BACKGROUND

The terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny committee require the committee to monitor complaint handling, monitor LGO complaints as well the Council's performance.

4. Customer Contact

The Council deals with a significant amount of contact on a daily basis and each department has their own system for dealing with customer contact. The majority of this contact is in relation to service requests, rather than formal complaints.

It is important to consider the information included in this report should be considered within the context of the overall level of customer contact and service delivery undertaken by the Council.

During the reporting year, the Council administered 32,902 Council Tax accounts, 2,829 Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) accounts, and 4,865 benefit claims. Customer contact remained

high, with 67,552 telephone calls and 19,000 completed web forms received, in addition to other contact channels.

Operationally, the Council completed 848,713 domestic paper and cardboard collections, and an equivalent number of glass, tins, cans, and plastic collections, 897,339 general waste collections and 136,529 garden waste collections, Commercial waste services were provided to 419 businesses and 3,716 bulky waste requests were completed.

These figures demonstrate the Council's continued commitment to efficient service delivery and responsiveness to customer needs.

4.2 **Complaints and LGO Complaints**

Formal complaints are classed as a serious expression of dissatisfaction and usually occur when a customer is not happy with a response, the outcome or action.

Formal complaints received by the Council are recorded and responded to by the relevant department.

The Council's customer service standards require officers to respond to complaints, Member enquiries and MP enquiries within 10 working days.

Where it is not possible to send a full response within 10 working days' a holding response is sent.

Complaints are processed in two stages. Stage 1 complaints can be resolved by an initial response, the complaint can be progressed to a Stage 2 complaint if the complainant is unsatisfied with the initial response.

Once an initial response has been provided, the complainant has a month to progress the complaint to Stage 2. Stage 2 complaints should be responded to within 10 working days.

The Stage 2 review will be undertaken by a Director or Head of Service.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the Stage 2 response, the complaint can be escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for investigation.

LGO complaints are processed in 5 stages:

Premature stage: LGO rejects the complaint due to complainant's failure to follow Council's internal process.

The LGO usually returns the complaint asking the complainant to use the Council's internal complaints procedure first.

This ensures the Council has the opportunity to resolve the issue

Preliminary enquiries stage: LGO checks whether it has jurisdiction and whether the complaint is suitable for investigation.

Information is gathered from the complainant and the Council is asked for a basic response.

The complaint is either rejected (out of jurisdiction, already resolved or no maladministration) or accepted for investigation

Investigation stage: LGO conducts a detailed investigation into the complaint.

LGO requests evidence and documents from the Council, Council officers or complainants are interviewed (if needed), policies, procedures and decisions are reviewed.

LGO will determine if there has been maladministration, service failure or injustice.

Decisions issued: LGO confirms outcome of the investigation and issues a formal decision or report.

Types of decision includes:

- **Maladministration found with injustice** – complaint upheld recommendations made for remedy
- **No maladministration** – complaint not upheld
- **Other resolution** – early resolution or settlement

Closed stage: The complaint is formally closed.

The Council is expected to implement any recommendations.

The complaint is informed of their options if they disagree (for example, judicial review in rare cases)

LGO closes their file

4.3 Complaints received 2024/25

In the period 2024/25, 164 formal complaints were received by the Council. An analysis of reason of the complaints over the last 3 years is detailed within Appendix 1.

The areas of most complaints during 2024/25 were in relation bins/bin collection with 23 complaints, detailed within Appendix 2.

4.4 During 2024/25 the average number of working days taken to deal with complaints was 12 days, which is above the expected customer service standard of 10 working days.

4.5 157 complaints of the 164 complaints received in 2024/25 were resolved at stage 1. 23 complaints progressed to stage 2 reviews, 19 were resolved (4 rolled over).

4.6 LGO Enquiries and Complaints

The LGO provides an Annual Summary of complaints they have received against the Council each year.

LGO does not normally notify the Council of all public contact (such as when advice is given, or if it is something at the pre-enquiry stage).

4.7 The LGO Liaison Officer provides regular updates to the Council regarding open investigations.

- 4.8 A quarterly Feedback/Enquiries Report is provided to Corporate Management Team meetings for the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service to monitor complaints.
- 4.9 Complaints are recorded in the Council's quarterly Performance Management Reports monitoring, which are scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.10 During 2024/25 the Ombudsman received 11 enquiries/complaints about this Council, between 1 April 2024 to 31st March 2025 the LGO dealt with 10 complaints (1 complaint rolled over to 2025/26 and was closed on 11th June 2025).
- 4.11 Of these, 5 were not for LGO or not ready to be investigated. The LGO assessed and closed 4 complaints and 1 complaint was investigated:



Complaints dealt with



Not for us



Assessed and closed

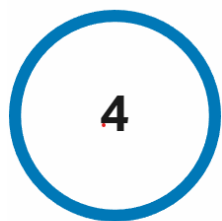


Investigated



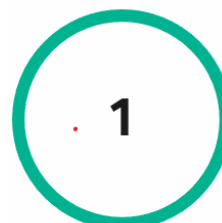
Not for us

- 3 referred to the Council to go through the internal complaints process
- 2 incomplete – invalid



Assessed and closed

- 4 closed after initial enquiries due to no injustice/service failure



Investigated

- 1 investigated and closed – fault found in an organisational action

- 4.12 There was an investigation and decision made for improvement in 2024/25, relating to Planning and Development.

The LGO upholds complaints where fault is found in an organisation's actions. They also uphold complaints where the organisation accepts fault before their involvement. The service improvements agreed were:

- To review why there was a delay responding to the complainant and act to ensure it cannot be repeated in the future.
- To ensure the planning team are reminded about the timescales set out in the complaints procedure.
- To ensure the planning team is aware of the need to make it clear to those complaining that it is being treated as a complaint under its complaints procedure and what that involves.

4.13 Comparisons with 2024/25 LGO complaints and enquiries are as follows:

Ombudsman Complaints and Enquiries:	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Received	5	6	11
Decisions made	6 (roll over)	6	10

Complaint received category:	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Benefits and Tax	2	2	4
Corporate and other services	0	0	0
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	1	1	3
Highways and Transport	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Planning & Development	2	2	2
Housing	0	1	2
Total	5	6	11

Decisions made:	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Referred back for local resolution	1	2	3
Closed after initial enquiries	4	1	4
Incomplete/invalid	0	1	2
Advice given	0	0	0
Investigated: Upheld	0	2	1
Investigated: Non Upheld	1	0	0
Total	6	6	10 (roll over)

A breakdown of complaints and decisions made, are within Appendix 3, additional information are within Annual Review Letter 2024-25 in Appendix 4 ([Rossendale LGO statistics](#))

This information also details the Council's compliance with remedies suggested the LGO. The number of enquires received and decisions issued by the Ombudsman remains low.

No public interest reports were issued during this period, and was 1 upheld. Bear in mind the amount of contact the Council has with its customers on an annual basis.

4.14 Learning and improvements

The Council welcomes customer feedback to make continuous improvements to its services. Services are also improved through reviewing formal complaints and identifying learning outcomes.

Managers receive weekly complaints reports with a break-down of all complaints received to support the continued improvement of systems and procedures, customer services and service delivery, key changes during 2024/25 have included:

- **Communications** – following feedback in relation work on the gyratory in Rawenstall and the proposed Waste Transfer Station an effective method of communication and consultation is to develop a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to inform residents and explain proposed changes.
- **Online forms on the Council website** – following the successful implementation of on-line forms for service requests and payments on the new Council website to improve customer service experience, it is proposed to continue to add forms to the internet where possible.
- **Additional information to the Council website** – it is proposed to add additional information to the Council website to provide 24/7 hour information to residents and improve the customer service experience.
- **Implementation of Refuse and Recycling System (Bartec)** – to support live tracking and updates to support customers in relation to refuse and recycling bin collections, supporting improvement to customer service experience.

4.15 The number of LGO Investigations remain low during 2024/25

5. RISK

All the issues raised and the recommendations in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- There is a risk of damage to the Council's reputation if complaints are not responded to in a timely manner. Complainants and the LGO are kept up to date if there are extenuating circumstances, or if a complaint is so complex that it requires more time than usual to respond.
- Not monitoring complaints would create a risk of not learning from experiences. Complaints are regularly reviewed via Corporate Management Team and by service area managers.
- There is risk of financial penalty should the LGO find maladministration against the Council.

6. FINANCE

The Council faces the risk of financial penalty should the LGO find maladministration against the Council in any existing or future complaints. During the period 2024/25 the Ombudsman did not award any penalties against the Council.

7. LEGAL

The legal implications have been included within the report. In addition to LGO investigations, the Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility to consider and, where necessary, investigate illegality, maladministration or statutory breaches which may, in turn, also be reported to the Council.

8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy or equalities implications.

9. REASON FOR DECISION

To monitor formal complaints and LGO enquiries to enable the Council to make continuous improvements to its services.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
2022/23 Report item D3:	25th September 2023: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Rossendale Borough Council
2023/224Report item D5:	9th September 2024: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Rossendale Borough Council
	Appendix 1 – Number of complaints received 2022/3,1023/4,2024/5 Appendix 2 – Details of highest area of complaints received 2024/5 Appendix 3 – Breakdown of complaints and decisions 2024/5 Appendix 4 – LGO Annual Review Letter 2024/5

Complaint about:	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
	No. of complaints	% of total	No. of complaints	% of total	No. of complaints	% of total
Action/response/communication	20	14.1	14	12.3	7	4.3
Advice/information given	0	0	0	0	4	2.45
Anti-social behaviour	2	1.41	2	1.75	1	0.61
Application processing	1	0.70	1	0.90	0	0
Bailiff charges/action	3	2.11	2	1.75	2	1.22
Benefits processing	6	4.23	3	2.65	3	1.83
Bins/bin collection	39	27.5	20	17.55	23	14.02
Council decision	3	2.11	5	4.39	16	9.76
Council policy/procedure	5	3.52	3	2.63	11	6.71
Council Tax charges/ decision	32	22.53	14	12.29	22	13.41
Customer service	1	0.70	1	0.88	7	4.27
Flooding/Drainage	1	0.70	0	0	1	0.61
Footpaths	0	0	5	4.39	2	1.22
Grant Funding	2	1.41	0	0	0	0
Grass cutting	1	0.70	3	2.63	1	0.61
Housing/landlord	1	0.70	2	1.75	4	2.45
Litter/ debris/ fly tipping	1	0.70	2	1.75	2	1.22
Noise nuisance	1	0.70	0	0	4	2.45
Other	0	0	4	3.51	22	13.41
Property/ land	5	3.52	9	7.90	7	4.27
Quality of service	5	3.52	4	3.51	3	1.83
Recovery/payment Council Tax	0	0	2	1.75	0	0
Staff member/ team	11	7.74	8	7.02	13	7.93
Time taken	1	0.70	4	3.51	4	2.45
Trees	0	0	3	2.63	3	1.83
Weeds	1	0.70	2	1.75	2	1.22
Total	142		114		164	

Bin/bins collection complaints received during 2024-2025

- 1 Neighbour's leaving bins on complainant's land
- 1 issue with communication
- 1 continued failure to make refuse collections
- 1 Waste collection service
- 1 Assistance – bin collection – change of collection point
- 1 blue bin keeps being missed Industrial Street
- 1 issue with missed bin and officer
- 1 contaminated bins from previous tenant still not emptied
- 1 bins ordered, not delivered, still waiting for a response
- 1 issue with collection of bulk collection
- 1 Not emptying bins properly
- 1 Missed blue bin collections and illegal dumping
- 1 bins regularly being missed
- 2 Missed bin collection – 3 and 4 weeks
- 1 Damage to pole outside property
- 1 missed bins – Wells Street/Warwick Street, Haslingden
- 1 issue with bin collections
- 1 Bins not being emptied
- 1 Garden waste collection
- 1 Non collections of bins
- 1 Failure to refund garden waste payment
- 1 Failure to collect a Christmas tree

Reference	Authority	Category	Subcategory	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason	Remedy
23021184	Rossendale Borough Council	Planning & Development	Other planning application	30/09/2024	Upheld	fault & inj	Procedure or policy change/review,Provide training and/or guidance
24002352	Rossendale Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	Council tax	19/06/2024	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(a) tribunal Other	
24002744	Rossendale Borough Council	Planning & Development	Householder planning application	18/06/2024	Closed after initial enquiries	26B(2) not made in 12 months	
24003169	Rossendale Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	Council tax	08/06/2024	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
24004100	Rossendale Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Antisocial behaviour	08/08/2024	Closed after initial enquiries	Other reason not to investigate	
24006889	Rossendale Borough Council	Housing	Private housing disrepair	04/08/2024	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised	
24007841	Rossendale Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Antisocial behaviour	16/08/2024	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised	
24011984	Rossendale Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	Housing benefit	12/11/2024	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to Organisation	
24017292	Rossendale Borough Council	Housing	Homelessness	27/03/2025	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
24020671	Rossendale Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	Council tax	11/03/2025	Closed after initial enquiries	Other Agency better placed	

21 May 2025

By email

Mr Huntington
Chief Executive
Rossendale Borough Council

Dear Mr Huntington

Annual Review letter 2024-25

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 2025. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. We have listened to your feedback, and I am pleased to be able to share your annual statistics earlier in the year to better fit with local reporting cycles. I hope this proves helpful to you.

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

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public 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.

In a change to our approach, we will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation's 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 16 July 2025, alongside our annual Review of Local Government Complaints.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published [good practice guides](#) to support councils to adopt our [Complaint Handling Code](#). The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. The guides were issued alongside free [training resources](#) organisations can use to make sure front-line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular [complaint handling training](#) programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England