

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
09 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: Full Year Update on Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3C's) 25/26

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CUSTOMER & DIGITAL SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR SEAN NOLAN

PRIORITY: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This information note is to provide an update on the full year (25/26) performance regarding the Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3C's) for the Council and the contractors that provide services on the Council's behalf. This briefing note accompanies the 3C's dashboard at Appendix A, and the breakdown of 3C's by service and type at Appendix B.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The Council has a well embedded policy and procedures for handling customer feedback; the 3C's Policy. We welcome feedback from our customers about our services so that we can continue to learn about how we can make improvements and what we do well.
- 2.2 The 3C's policy sets out clearly the definition of a comment, compliment, and complaint as well as how to escalate a complaint either to stage 2 of the process or the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Customers can give feedback in a number of ways and can do this directly to the Council or to the contractors who provide key services on our behalf.
- 2.3 The 3C's Policy was updated in September 2025 to ensure alignment with the LGO's Complaint Handling Code, which sets standards for resolving complaints promptly and using feedback to improve services. Most changes formalised practices the Council was already following, making procedures clearer and easier to understand. It strengthened clarity around complaint handling timescales, escalation routes and the consistent management of customer feedback.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 During 25/26, the number of complaints and compliments received directly by North Herts Council increased in volume compared to the previous year, whilst the number of comments decreased slightly.
- 3.2 The areas that generally receive the highest amount of feedback are those where there is the highest level of contact or interactions from residents such as the waste and recycling service and the leisure facilities.

- 3.3 The number of complaints received by both the Council and our contractors increased from 591 in 24/25 to 633 in 25/26 (a 7% increase). Of the total 633 complaints, 219 (35%) relate to services delivered by our leisure centres. Another 35% of this total relates to the Waste service, which is explained further at 3.7.
- 3.4 The percentage of stage 1 complaints resolved within the SLA of 10 days has decreased from 91% in 24/25 to 82% in 25/26, which is still 2% above the target of 80%. April saw the lowest number of complaints logged with (8), with May having the second lowest with only (13) logged.
- 3.5 Waste recorded the highest number of complaints not resolved within the 10/20-day timeframe (52). This was mainly due to the introduction of a new waste service, which led to a significant increase in customer contact volumes. At the same time, the shared Waste team experienced the departure of key staff members responsible for complaint handling, resulting in reduced capacity meaning that some complaints took longer to deal with.
- 3.6 The summary dashboard at Appendix A shows annual comparisons of both 3C's received directly at North Herts Council and 3C's received by our contractors. The dashboard also details the percentage of interactions resulting in a formal complaint. It is worth noting that the percentage of interactions/collections/visitors resulting in a complaint is currently below 0.1%.
- 3.7 Appendix B provides a breakdown of all 3C's received by service and type. The areas of highest complaints reported directly were Waste (220) and Revenues. The highest frequency of Waste complaints were regarding missed and on-going missed bins, with the most reports in October. The higher level of missed bin complaints reported reflect the initial implementation phase of the new service. During this period, a system issue incorrectly updated some communal properties to a three-weekly collection frequency, which required manual correction by the waste team. In addition, early technical issues associated with the new waste system resulted in some collections being manually recorded and amended, contributing to an uplift in reported missed bins. Most complaints related to assisted collections and flats, which were disproportionately impacted. The number of complaints received per month has since improved as these issues have been resolved and processes stabilised.

Revenues Billing & Recovery received 29 complaints; however, these have informed on-going work to strengthen customer communication and case management within the Revenues service.

- 3.8 In 25/26, the volume of 3C's received by the leisure centres totalled 412 – marking a 50% decrease from the previous year. This indicates that 3C's have decreased to a more consistent level, as shown in 22/23 (507) and 23/24 (334).

In 24/25, the leisure centres received a total of 823 3C's. This large total related to the start of the new contract with Everyone Active, which commenced on the 1 April 2024, and new processes and systems implemented as a result. From 1 April 2024, KPI data started to be collected by the Leisure and Active Communities team and will be used as baseline data to be able to monitor trends moving forward.

- 3.9 There were 173 compliments received directly to the Council. The Careline service received the highest number, with 42. These are generally submitted by a client's family following an incident where the Careline staff had provided an emergency response service, these included:

- Customer said “a big thank you for all Careline does for her. She says that this system has really saved her life twice now.”
- Customer called to say, “thank James, Careline Engineer, for his wonderful service on his recent visit and to express how grateful he and mother-in-law are in general for the excellent service Careline provides.”

3.10 There were 33 stage 2 complaints over the course of the year; 16 of which were for Waste. Of the 33 stage 2 complaints, 15 were deemed to be justified, and 13 of those were for Waste. The other two justified complaints were for Homelessness and Housing Advice.

3.11 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the complaint outcome after completing our process, they may escalate their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Complaints escalated to the LGO will usually have exhausted our internal complaints process.

3.12 North Herts Council received 6 LGO complaint decisions during this period. It’s prudent to note that the LGO Annual Review Letter and the Council figures may not always match, this is because some complainants may contact the LGO without going through the council’s process first, these are called premature complaints. The LGO will refer premature complaints to the council to go the 3Cs process, recording them on the Annual review statement as premature. Further information can be found on the LGO’s website, by searching for the reference numbers found in the table below. ([Decisions - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#))

There are also 2 cases currently in the ‘initial enquiries’ stage, that started within the 25/26-year period, for which we are awaiting outcomes.

The table below summarises the LGO decisions on those 6 complaints:

Service (as classified by the LGO)	LGO Decision	Further information
Housing	Not upheld: No fault	24 009 344 – “Mr X complained the Council initially did not allow him to join its Housing register, then after letting him join the Housing register did not consider him for properties which had a planning restriction for local parish residents only.” The LGO found the Council were not at fault.
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	25 000 531 – “We will not investigate this complaint about a vehicle the Council removed and destroyed because it believed it to be abandoned. This is because there is not enough evidence of fault by the Council.”
Planning & Development	Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	25 002 634 – “We will not investigate this complaint about the planning advice the Council provided to the complainant. This is because we are unlikely to find fault.”
Housing	Closed after initial enquiries – out of jurisdiction	25 005 123 – “We will not exercise discretion to investigate this

		complaint about the Council's offers of unsuitable temporary accommodation and its discharge of the homelessness duty following an unsuitable offer of rented accommodation. This complaint was received outside the normal 12-month period for investigating complaints. There is no evidence to suggest that Mr X could not have complained to us sooner."
Benefits & Tax	Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	25 021 104 – "We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's Council Tax reduction scheme. This is because we cannot achieve the outcome Miss B seeks."
Housing	Premature complaint – no complaint decision recorded	25 021 608 – "We will not pursue the complaint because it has not yet exhausted your own complaints procedure."

3.13 Following an audit conducted by the Shared Internal Audit Service, we received a reasonable overall assurance that there are effective controls in operation for the LGO processes. One of the low priority recommendations was to highlight details of the LGO complaints to the Overview and Scrutiny committee, including what the remedy was and what service improvements have been made. As none of the above complaints were upheld, there are no service improvements to advise on from this period.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 3C's performance will continue to be monitored and reported to this Committee on a yearly basis.
- 4.2 The Customer Service Manager (CSM) will continue to keep up to date with guidance and case studies from the LGO, sharing any key learning.

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix A – Dashboard
- 5.2 Appendix B - Breakdown by service area

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.