

Complaints & Enquiries Annual Report 2021-2022

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report provides an overview of complaints, Member/MP and Mayor & Cabinet Member enquiries made to the Council between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to: -

1. There are no formal recommendations arising from this report. This report is for information purposes and Scrutiny Panel can note the complaints and enquiries managed during 2021/22

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 This report is in accordance with the Scrutiny Panel's remit in monitoring the Complaints and Enquiries process.

4. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & CORPORATE RESOURCES

4.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report. The cost of staff dealing with complaints across the Council is met from within the relevant revenue budgets, as are any compensation payments made. The cost of complaints monitoring is met within the approved revenue budget of the Business Analysis and Complaints Team (BACT).

4.2 Such costs, however, can be minimised by ensuring that complaints are dealt with successfully at the first stage, thus reducing the numbers that proceed to later stages.

5. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES

5.1 In line with Article 7.1.(iii) of the Council's constitution one of the functions of the Scrutiny Panel is to contribute to continuous improvement in service delivery through the consideration of service delivery performance. This report recommends the Scrutiny Panel note how complaints and enquiries were managed during 2021/22. The report is informative in nature and assists the panel in giving consideration to how the Council engages and supports its wider community.

5.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

APPENDICES

- 1 - Complaints and Enquiries Annual Report 2021/22
- 2 - Stage 1 and 2 Complaints Data 2021/22

BACKGROUND PAPERS

In accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act, 1972 - Access to Information a list of Background Papers used in the preparation of reports is required.

Description of document	Location	Date

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Appendix 1

Complaints and Enquiries Annual Report 2021/22

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the Complaints & Enquiries received in 2021/22 covering volume and performance in managing and learning from them.

2. Volumes and Performance

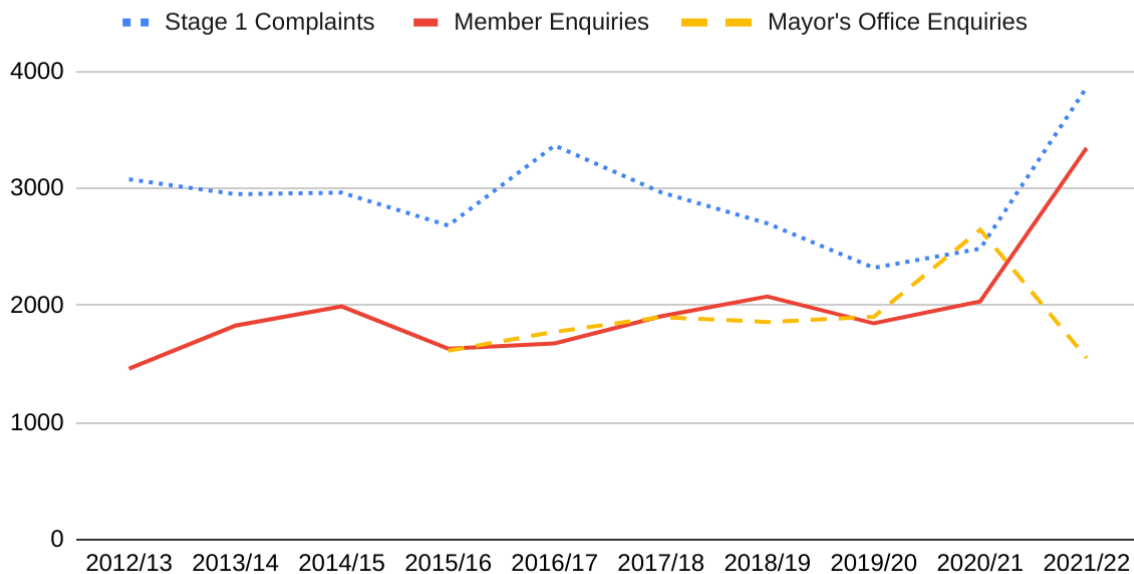
- 2.1 Further detail on volumes of complaints and enquiries received in 2021/22, the way they are managed and the intelligence they provide are set out in this report. In summary, 2021/22 saw the number of stage 1 complaints rise by 55% (2,485 to 3,863) compared to the previous year when volumes were depressed in number due to issues related to Covid 19.
- 2.2 Although the overall number of stage 1 complaints has risen, there are some variances within services that have seen some increases and some reductions - para 3.10 below sets out more detail. The volume of stage 2 complaints has seen a lower increase of 36% (253 compared to 186 2020/21). There has been a 92% increase (3,917 from 2,035) in the number of Members Enquiries compared to 2020/21 levels. In the two areas with statutory complaints procedures, volumes of stage 1 complaints fell in Adult Social Care to 68, from 73 in 2020/21 and rose to 17 from 15 in 2020/21 in Children's Social Care. There has however been a 41% decrease (1,552 from 2,647) in the number of Mayor & Cabinet Member Enquiries.
- 2.3 253 of 3,863 stage 1 complaints were escalated to stage 2 giving an escalation rate of 6.5%, down from 7.5% in 2020/21, the first percentage fall in the escalation rate in five years. This may be explained by the high rise in the number of stage 1 complaints this year. The number of stage 2 investigations escalating to become formal investigations by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), at 53, is higher than the 41 in the previous year and equates to around 21% (22% in 2020/21) of cases exhausting the Council's complaints process. The support of services where stage 2 investigations agree with the conclusions of theirs at stage 1 and the challenge given where it does not, indicates, as well as the conclusion of those cases progressing to the Ombudsman, that the stage 2 process is working well.
- 2.4 Of the 53 formal investigations undertaken by both the LGSCO and HOS, 38 (72%) were upheld, up from 68% last year. It should be noted that at the conclusion of the Council's investigation of a complaint, there is either fault found or not. Regardless of whether fault is found or not, complainants can, and often do, still take their concerns on to the appropriate Ombudsman. As such, cases upheld by the Ombudsman are often cases where the Council also found fault but where they feel that the redress (actions/compensation) was insufficient and is

increased - this was the case in 14 of the 38 cases referenced above (see para 3.13 for more information).

3. Complaints and Enquiries Data Analysis (2021/2022)

3.1 As shown in the chart below, the number of stage 1 complaints received by the Council in 2021/22 rose by 55% compared to 2020/21 when numbers were suppressed by Covid 19 and is now at the highest level in the 10 years since recording began. The number of Members Enquiries, including MP Enquiries, increased by 92% in 2021/22 and is now at the highest level in 10 years. Mayor & Cabinet Enquiry volumes fell by 41%.

Number of Stage 1 Complaints, Member Enquiries and Mayor's Office Enquiries 2012/13 to 2021/22



3.2 This report covers the period from April 2021 until March 2022 whilst services were still trying to recover from the impact of and response to the Covid 19 Pandemic as well as the impact of the cyber attack which affected many services and the associated ability to investigate complaints and respond to enquiries. The pent up demand caused by these events along with other factors specific to the service concerned have seen volumes of complaints and Member enquiries rise to unprecedented levels in 2021/22. Across services receiving the highest numbers of complaints and Member Enquiries, total volumes have increased by over 2,400 cases compared to 2020/21 with for example the Benefits service receiving an additional 810 cases this year and Housing Repairs an additional 430.

3.3 Whilst any complaint received means the Council have, in the opinion of our residents or service users, failed to provide an acceptable service, the numbers of complaints and those which are escalated should be viewed in the context of the size of the borough, the number of transactions and the complexity/nature of those transactions. Hackney has a population of 259,000 living in c.115,000

households. Relevant to the areas with the highest volume of complaints we are the landlord for 22,733 homes and have an additional 10,317 leaseholders/freeholders and have a population with a significant reliance on the Benefits and Housing Needs system.

Type	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Stage 1 complaints	2,967	2,701	2,322	2,485	3,863
Stage 2 complaints	153	161	160	186	253
Escalation rate	5%	6%	7%	7.5%	6.5%
Members/MP Enquiries	1,908	2,077	1,847	2,035	3,917
Mayor & Cabinet Enquiries					

Average Response Times	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Stage 1 complaints	17.7 working days	20.9 working days	19.7 working days	23.7 working days	32.1 working days
Stage 2 complaints	18.9 working days	20.2 working days	20.2 working days	20.8 working days	23.5 working days

3.4 The number of stage 1 complaints (see para 3.9 for more detail) has increased for the second consecutive year but this year, by 55%. This has impacted on the speed of response with an increase of 8 days in the average time taken to respond compared to 2020/21. These delays can, in many areas, be attributed to the impact of the significant increase in volumes and the increasing difficulty accessing records or data needed in the aftermath of the cyber attack. We do not set a rigid response standard, but do aim to respond on average within 15 working days, recognising some cases are more complex and will take longer to resolve. The only exception to this is the change in the standard made in September 2020 for Housing complaints which is now 10 working days in line with Housing Ombudsman scheme requirements. Delays in responding to complaints caused by the impact of pandemic and cyber attack meant that Housing complaints took on average 27.4 days to conclude.

3.5 Learning from complaints provides an insight into what is not working as well as we want. They create an opportunity to put things right for the complainant and give the Council the opportunity to provide support and training, advice on how to improve practices and procedures and identify any recurring trends. Case study examples of learning from complaints or actions taken as a result of them from a selection of services are set out below;

Adult Social Care

- Due to lack of communication between a social worker and client, further training in time management skills and customer care with a particular focus on the importance of communication feedback is to be implemented
- A complaint re failure to communicate with an individual who had concerns for their mother whose needs had taken a rapid deterioration in mental health and mobility. To reduce the risk of this happening again officers are working with ICT to develop ways to streamline referrals and requests which will mean quicker responses to such requests
- Following a complaint which highlighted a failing in staff cover, multiple services have put in place new ways of working to ensure that all work for an individual officer is identifiable and appropriately reallocated should they be absent either as part of planned leave or in an emergency situation

- The brokerage team has reviewed the content of their standard letters and correspondence following a complaint made about a number of errors made in a letter addressed to an individual
- A complaint was upheld that an assessment for a Blue Badge was based on a person's mobility and did not take into account their hidden disability. In response, the manager arranged staff training/guidance surrounding assessments. A training session for all service coordinators in the team that focused on screening for hidden disability, combined hidden disability/walking disability and walking disability. The manager also wrote to and met with the staff concerned and discussed the complaint, the learning and how to prevent complaints in the future. By doing this it will prevent OTs making assumptions and pre-judging the outcome of the assessment before they are completed.

Children's Social Care

- A parent complained about the length of time her children were temporarily in foster care. During this time, the service were legally empowered to secure passports for both children and did so, as part of our standard practice. The parent did not want her children to have passports. The complaint was not upheld, as the Department had acted within its remit, but on reflection, the manager responding concluded that there was scope to revise system wide practice. Managers are now asked to secure parental consent before proceeding with passport applications (even when not legally required). Parent's objections should be noted. These will either be accommodated or managers will explain why the passport application will proceed on a given case.
- Following a complaint regarding the delay in offering therapeutic services for adoptive parents, information is now shared with key regional adoption agencies to ensure timely services are offered to adopters.
- Following a Stage 2 investigation regarding contact arrangements for a Looked After Child, the service organised an urgent meeting between the social worker and grandmother to obtain her wishes and feelings. This was followed by a professionals meeting to formulate a robust plan for renewing contact between the family members.
- Following a complaints investigation a written plan for contact arrangements for Looked After siblings was developed to improve their contact.

Streetscene

- Following complaints regarding road safety, the service are now more routinely listening to and working with the resident groups campaigning to improve the safety and engaging with schools on the principles of safe routes to school
- Following roll out of further Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) where road closures were required, the service have taken on feedback through complaints which led to a reassessment of measures, especially regarding the surrounding roads

- Following complaints regarding the Queensbridge Road scheme, the service amended plans and narrowed the road down, adding a cycle lane and trees in response. Similarly, the service worked with Transport for London (TfL) to change the timing of traffic lights and provide an additional crossing in Graham Road following complaints received
- Additional on-street 'parklets', for example in Wilton Way, have been installed following complaints from residents and enquiries from Councillors

Environmental Services

- Cleaning of communal food waste bins on housing estates will be undertaken from September 2022 following complaints about the condition of facilities along with exploration of offering a chargeable bin washing service to residents and businesses for their food waste bins, wheelie bins and some Euro bins
- Residents had complained of poor quality bags (recycling and black sacks) - the issue was taken up with suppliers who confirmed a substandard batch was supplied which was resolved by the supplier reissuing a new supply of suitable bags
- Following complaints, a programme of deep cleaning (hot wash/steam cleaning) on estates, prioritising blocks with ingrained staining and/or subject to ASB and on street pavements with deep staining
- Following analysis of complaints about deliveries of recycling bins/bags ordered by residents not being received, data was used to assess the situation with additional resources now put in place to bring deliveries in line with the 10 day delivery timeframe
- As a result of analysis of complaints and other data/trends for fly tipping and dog fouling, there is now a closer working relationship with the Enforcement service with better signage to be installed and identification of perpetrators to prevent hot spots/ build up of dumps with the introduction of dedicated crews on both streets and estates.

Housing

- The Central Housing Complaints team set up a Lessons Learnt log in late 2020 to monitor the types of complaints received, identifying common or arising themes and to address any operational or performance issues that may be generating such complaints. More recently, they have also set up a lessons learnt report on their Casework database that is automatically sent to the inboxes of all Tier 1-3 managers on a monthly basis so that they can see what issues are generating complaints and take the steps necessary to ensure that they don't reoccur.
- The majority of new complaints received in 2021/22 related to leaks, damp and mould in properties. Housing Services have established a number of proactive initiatives via the Building Maintenance division's Repairs Improvement Action Plan to try and reduce the number of these cases coming into the system. These include:

- Clearing the backlog of responsive repairs built up as a result of limiting the service to emergency / urgent repairs only for 12 months
- Increased operational capacity of the repairs team through recruitment of additional trade operatives and appointment of external contractors
- Moving to a new way of working whereby all reports of leaks will be given an Urgent 24 hour response priority
- Developing a damp and mould strategy
- Establishing a Property MOT programme whereby they target problem blocks for proactive inspections based on an agreed set of criteria
- Residents chasing the results of surveyor inspections has been a big driver of complaints in 2021/22. Following the loss of legacy systems following the cyber attack, establishing the status of these work orders (the majority of which are sent out to an external contractor) is a very difficult and long winded process. The re-establishment of an effective mobile working solution for surveyors, which would help reduce the amount of failure demand complaints received and provide a far more customer friendly repairs service, is in development as part of the Modern Tools For Housing programme. In the meantime, the Building Maintenance Customer Relationship team and the Housing Services Central Housing Complaints Team have been undertaking a series of initiatives with both the Surveying team and external contractors, Purdy, to establish better information flows regarding the status of survey inspections that have taken place. These have included:
 - The establishment with Purdy of a new Hackney Enquiries mailbox, with an agreement from Purdy that it will be monitored by two supervisors and that all queries would be responded to within 24 working hours (maximum 48 working hours)
 - An Urgent enquiries tracker for both Purdy and the Council's Surveying team to share information on job progress
 - Weekly face to face meetings with representatives from both Purdy and the Council's Surveying team
 - In addition, the Housing Transformation team are building an interim Business Intelligence (BI) tool for the Surveying team that will allow them to monitor work progress more effectively while the new mobile working solution is built. This should help to reduce failure demand.
- During the first half of 2021/22, Housing Service's failure to effectively respond to correspondence (e.g. leasehold service charge arrears letters) and also to supply documentation (e.g. rent statements, seller packs) generated significant numbers of complaints. This was a resultant issue from the cyber attack, where access to historic resident records, including email correspondence were lost. As a result of this, the Modern Tools For Housing programme prioritised the development of a new correspondence solution which now allows Housing Services to monitor replies to correspondence by officers across service areas. This has seen a significant reduction in the number of such complaints received.

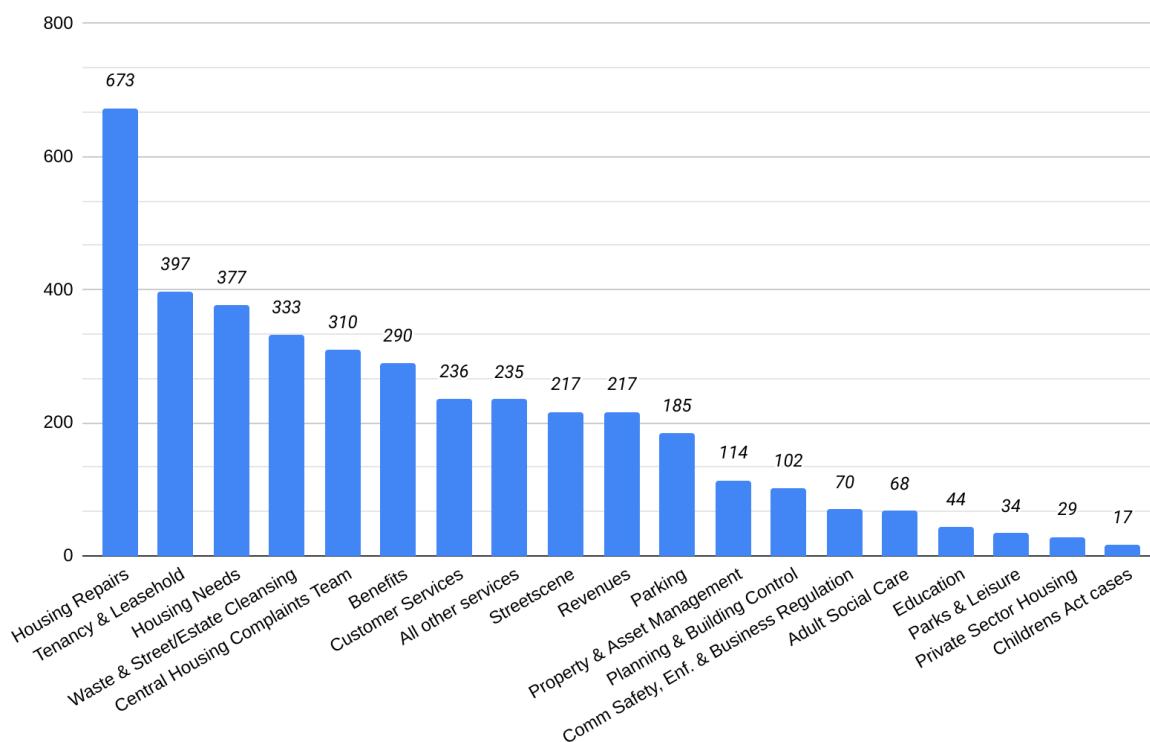
3.5 There were 253 stage 2 complaints in 2021/22, an increase of 67 cases compared to the year before. The Housing Service accounted for 132 (52%) of all stage 2 complaints in 2021/22. The majority were distributed across the following services – Housing Building Maintenance 59 (up from 47), Housing Tenancy & Leasehold 59 (up from 39), Benefits/Housing Needs 43 (up from 22), Parking 19 (down from 20) and Central Housing Complaints Team 14 (not reported last year).

3.6 More detail and data behind stage 1 and 2 complaints, including a focus on some of the higher casework generating services, can be found at appendix 2.

3.7 Stage 1 Complaints breakdown

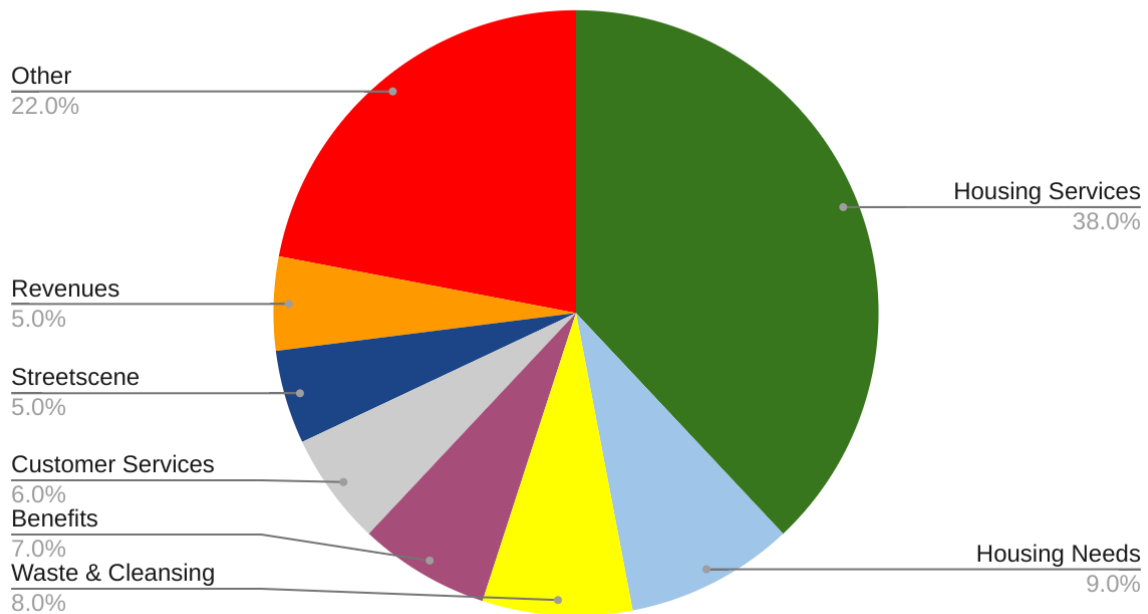
3.8 The chart below sets out the services in the Council that received the highest volumes of stage 1 complaints. It is based on 3,948 stage 1 complaints including those made under the statutory Adult Social Care and Children’s Act complaints processes.

Stage 1 complaints received 2021/22



3.10 The 55% total increase in complaints in 2021/22 is reflected by the services below receiving less or more complaints across all of the higher generating services. The chart below also shows a combined Housing Service share along with other high generating areas of complaints.

Service share of stage 1 complaints 2021/22



The table below also shows a brief summary of the key 'drivers' of complaints.

Service	Key issues driving complaints
Housing Repairs – up 29% (521 to 673)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● failure to deliver service/take action ● delays doing something/communication/answering ● availability of service/staff ● Disagree with policy/procedure
Housing Tenancy & Leasehold – up 46% (272 to 397)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communal issues on estates ● Noise/ASB ● Neighbour disputes/nuisance ● service charge disputes ● TMO services
Housing Needs – up 11% (341 to 377)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing Register ● size/suitability of accommodation ● Issues with TA i.e. ASB, infestations ● Homelessness advice
Waste & Street/Estate Cleansing – up 82% (183 to 333)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● waste strategy inc recycling ● missed collection (all types) ● recycling product delivery ● Street not swept ● Bins - location, lids not put back, etc ● Staff behaviour

<p>Central Housing Complaints Team (CHCT) - up 313% (75 to 310)</p>	<p>The Housing CHCT Team deals with cases that cut across multiple Housing departments and due to the OneCase system only allowing one team to be identified, these cases cannot be attributed to a particular service. Main cause of complaint;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delay in doing something/communications 96 ● Failure to do something/deliver service 72 ● Poor communication, info or advice 48
<p>Benefits – up 663% (38 to 290)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaint - payments 47, benefit decision/award 41, CTRS 28, DHP 28, suspension of claim 17, speed of processing 12
<p>Customer Services – up 131% (102 to 236)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repairs Contact Centre -159 - issues being; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer service 59, housing specific issues 57, wait times 10 ● Customer Service Operations - 70 - issues being; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quality of communication 45, response times to calls/emails/letters 12
<p>All other services - up 87% (126 to 235)</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>
<p>Streetscene – up 40% (155 to 217)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaint - low traffic neighbourhoods (LTN) 62, green/sustainable travel 30, highway repairs 23, road safety 16, trees 15
<p>Revenues – up 99% (109 to 217)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaint - Council Tax 115, refunds 48, Business Rates 13 - issues being; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Failure to do something/take action 112 ○ Delays in service/doing something 62
<p>Parking – down 24% (243 to 185)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaint - CEO conduct 28, process issues 27, policy issues 22, lack of enforcement 19, paid/cancelled pcn 13 - issues being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagree with decision 29 ○ Staff behaviour 25

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Failure to provide service/take action 21 ○ Disagree with policy 19 ○ Quality of work/service 17
Planned & Asset Management – down 22% (147 to 114)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaint - lifts 52, electrical 20, boilers 7, contractors 7 - issues being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delay/failure in works 47 ○ Loss of lift service 21 ○ Inadequate service 10
Planning & Building Control – up 73% (59 to 102)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaint - chasing decision 41, enforcement 12, consultation 10, BC inspection quality 5 - issues being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication failures 91
Community Safety, Enforcement and Business Regulation – down 20% (87 to 70)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main area of complaint - noise 23, ASB 7, FPNs 6 - issues being; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Failure to take action 23 ○ Staff behaviour 10 ○ Disagree with/wrong decision 6
Education 44 (not reported last year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaint - EHCP Planning, admissions and SEND travel - Issues being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delays 10 ○ Failure to do something/provide service 8
Parks & Leisure – up 26% (27 to 34)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaints - green spaces and leisure centres - Issues being; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagree with policy 11 ○ Staff behaviour (parks) 3 ○ Service not of standard expected 4
Private Sector Housing 29 (not reported last year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaints - property licensing and grants - Issues being; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delays in/poor info/comms/advice 13 ○ Delays in doing something/work 10
Adult Social Care (statutory complaints) - down 7% (73 to 68)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main areas of complaints - communications 26, standard of service delivered (non care) 11,

	<p>standard of care delivered 10, outcome of assessment or care package implemented 7, delay in delivering service 7, other i.e. finance/direct payments 5, staff behaviour 2</p>
<p>Children's Act cases (stage 1 complaints) – up 13% (15 to 17)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● communication ● staff conduct ● information included in assessments

Ombudsman Complaints

3.11 Following conclusion of the Council's process, a complainant can approach one of two Ombudsman to ask for their case to be reviewed - the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) or the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). In addition, those making a landlord related housing complaint can ask a Designated Person, primarily Cllr McKenzie, to decide whether he can help in reaching resolution of the issue without the need for the Housing Ombudsman to be involved.

3.12 There were 53 formal investigations undertaken by both the LGSCO and HOS, in 2021/22. 38 (72%) of these were upheld i.e. fault was found.

3.13 Of the 38 upheld Ombudsman investigations, 22 were LGSCO cases and 16 HOS.

- Of the 22 LGSCO cases;
 - 9 cases - they found fault where the Council found none
 - 6 cases - Council and LGSCO found fault but they offered more redress primarily by way of compensation
 - 2 cases had same outcome
 - 5 cases - n/a i.e. case taken on by LGSCO with no Council investigation
 - The LGSCO awarded compensation in 16 of the 22 cases
- Of the 16 HOS cases, only 14 correspond to our records, of these;
 - 5 cases - they found fault where the Council found none
 - 8 cases - Council and LGSCO found fault but they offered more redress primarily by way of compensation
 - 1 case had same outcome
 - The HOS awarded compensation in 13 of the 14 cases

3.14 The LG&SCO has published their Annual Report for 2021/22 and reports that they undertook 28 formal investigations in Hackney last year of which 22 (79%) were upheld. This compares to an average of 71% in similar organisations. The rate of upheld cases has fallen from 90% in 2020/21 although the number of upheld cases

has increased from 18. The LG&SCO have provided detail on the 22 upheld cases which are broken down as follows –

- 8 x Housing (up from 6 last year)
- 2 x Education & Children (up from 1 last year)
- 5 x Adult Social Care (down from 6 last year)
- 2 x Planning & Development (up from 1 last year)
- 2 x Highways & Transport (up from nil last year)
- 2 x Benefits & Tax (up from nil last year)
- 1 x Community Safety, Enforcement & Business Reg. (down from 3 last year)

Total compensation offered by the LGSCO was £8,950 - this is in addition to that offered at stage 1 and 2.

3.15 The table below sets out benchmarking data from neighbouring boroughs based on 2021/22 reports published by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman on all local authorities and shows how Hackney compares.

Council	Detailed Investigations	Upheld (rate)	Public Reports in last 8 years (LGO benchmark)
Hackney	28	22 (79%)	*4
Haringey	44	29 (66%)	8
Islington	15	11 (73%)	2
Newham	43	31 (72%)	0
Tower Hamlets	31	19 (61%)	3
Waltham Forest	22	14 (64%)	0

*Last Public Report issued in April 2019

3.16 There were 14 housing related cases where the complainant formally asked for Designated Person (DP) assistance in resolving matters following the conclusion of the Council's formal complaints process. This is down on the 27 cases referred to the DP in 2020/21. In all 14 cases, the DP determined that there was no more to be added to the resolution already offered through the complaint process, allowing the complainant to approach the Housing Ombudsman if they wished to. The escalation rate of stage 2 Housing related complaints going to the Designated Person was 11% (14 of 132) in 2021/22 down from 26% (27 of 102) in 2020/21.

3.17 The Housing Ombudsman has this year started to publish an annual landlord performance data report. The Council had 25 formal investigations by the HOS in 2021/22 (up from 22 in 2020/21). Of the 25 cases determined, 9 found maladministration (10 in 2020/21), 7 found partial maladministration (none in 2020/21), 3 found no maladministration (7 in 2020/21), 1 found reasonable redress

had been made (2 in 2020/21), 1 went to mediation (none in 2020/21) and 4 were determined to be out of jurisdiction (2 in 2020/21).

The 16 cases finding some form of maladministration were subject to 21 separate determinations (findings). These determinations relate to property condition (9), complaint handling (8), anti-social behaviour (2), charges (1) and health & safety (1).

Total compensation ordered by the Housing Ombudsman in 2021/22 was £5,450 - this is in addition to that offered at stage 1 and 2.

Members Enquiries

3.18 Members Enquiries consist of requests for a service or information for residents, requests for action initiated by the Councillor and sometimes reports of service failure.

3.19 Average time taken to respond to Members Enquiries was 26.3 days in 2021/22, an increase of 8.5 days on the previous year with a 92% increase in volume compared to the year before as shown in the table below.

MP and Members Enquiries	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Members/MP Enquiries Received	1,908	2,077	1,847	2,035	3,917
Average time taken to respond	15.5 working days	18 working days	24 working days	17.7 working days	26.3 working days

3.20 There have been 3,917 ME/MP Enquiries this year of which 572 were MP Enquiries and 246 were Member Enquiries made to external organisations i.e. TfL, NHS, Police.

A headline breakdown of these cases is as follows;

- Casework raised
 - 3,345 made by Councillors
 - Of which 246 were to external organisations
 - 40% of Member Enquiries made by just 10% of Councillors
 - 572 made by MPs
 - Diane Abbott, MP - 235
 - Meg Hillier, MP - 291
 - Other - 46
- Service breakdown of 3,671 Member/MP Enquiries
 - 651 (18%) Benefits - up from 93 last year
 - 496 (13%) Housing Tenancy & Leasehold - up from 268 last year
 - 417 (11%) Housing Building Maintenance up from 138 last year
 - 383 (10%) Streetscene - up from 366 last year
 - 345 (9%) Housing Needs - up from 191 last year
 - 218 (6%) Comm. Safety, Enf. & Business Reg. - up from 184 last year

- 160 (4%) Planning - up from 159 last year
- 148 (4%) Parking - down from 163 last year
- 132 (4%) Environmental Services - up from 104 last year
- 110 (3%) Property & Asset Management - up from 65 last year

Mayor and Cabinet Member Enquiries

3.21 Each Mayor and Cabinet Member's Enquiry represents a comprehensive, personal response sent from the Mayor or Cabinet member to what are often wide ranging and complex enquiries, involving multiple service areas.

Mayor's & Cabinet Members Enquiries	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Enquiries received (inc referrals)	1,900	1,859	1,904	2,647	1,552
Average time taken to respond	26.8 working days	27.9 working days	36.2 working days	31.5 working days	42.7 working days

*It should be noted that these figures represent the mean average, and as such are disproportionately impacted by the closing of cases that have been, for example, with the relevant service area for an extended period. Were the median average employed, showing more accurately the typical resident's experience, the average time taken to respond in 2021/22 would be 26 days.

3.22 Responses from the Mayor and Cabinet are subject to extensive quality assurance by the Mayor & Cabinet Office and the Mayor or relevant Cabinet member before the response is sent, and drafts are returned to departments in cases where the resident's query has not been fully answered. Until a full response is obtained, the case will not be concluded, and therefore this process puts significant pressure on response times.

3.23 The priority for Mayor and Cabinet casework continues to be resolving issues before responses are sent and ensuring a comprehensive and personal reply, and whilst this has meant that the quality of responses sent by the Mayor and Cabinet remains consistently high, this has had an ongoing impact on response times; the increasing complexity of cases raised with the Mayor and Cabinet, and ongoing demands on the Mayor and Cabinet Members' availability to sign-off responses, also has an impact.

3.24 The total number of enquiries received fell significantly in 2021/22 compared with the previous year to a total of 1,552 but the average time taken to respond increased to 42.7 days (mean average), but 26 days (median average). While this is clearly disappointing, analysis shows that the oldest 100 cases (all over 50 days old, with 30 over 100 days old) are overwhelmingly awaiting service area responses from

the Housing Services and Benefits and Housing Needs services. As noted above, the closure of these older cases has a disproportionate impact on average response times.

Adults Social Care & Children' Social Care Complaints

3.25 Processes for dealing with complaints relating to the social care of both adults and children are set down in specific legislation meaning they are managed differently from complaints about all other Council services. Although they are held on the corporate complaints system and are managed in line with all other complaints if they escalate to the Ombudsman, the different stages, timeframes and the confidential nature of investigations means they are handled separately by officers in those services.

Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints

3.26 The table below shows the figures related to complaints covered by the statutory Adult Social Care (ASC) process.

Complaints	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Numbers Received	120	84	74	73	68
Average time taken to respond	28 working days	55 working days	35 working days	26 working days	25 working days

3.27 Whilst the number of complaints received has remained relatively stable over the past two years, the average time taken to respond to complaints has decreased by ten working days. Before 2018/19 our figures included simple complaints that could be dealt with very quickly. In 2018/19 we excluded these pre-stage complaints, resulting in a fall in cases alongside an apparent increase in response times. Since 2018/19 Adult Social Care have focused on improving processes to drive down response times.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman states that up to 12 weeks is a reasonable time for a Council to respond to a complaint. It also takes into consideration that this may be longer for complaints about social care, which follow a statutory process. On that measure, Adult Social Care is performing well within the timeframe. However, Adult Social Care aims to resolve complaints within 20 working days where possible. Although we are not yet meeting that expectation, these figures do still demonstrate a progressive improvement in response times.

There are occasions, particularly where a complaint involves more than one team or has several strands to address, when cases take longer to investigate. Where more time is needed the complainant is made aware and kept updated throughout the process.

3.28 The complaints received in 2021/22 were raised in relation to:

- The standard of care delivered (14%)
- The outcome of an assessment or the care package implemented (11%)
- Communication i.e. delays/incorrect information given (37%)
- Delay in delivering service (11%)
- The standard of service delivered (non-care) (16%)
- Staff behaviour (3%)
- Other i.e. finance/direct payments (8%)

3.29 In 2021/22, the LG&SCO contacted Adult Social Care about seven complaints in total. Following initial enquiries four were closed with no further action. However, two were formally investigated of which two were upheld. One complaint is currently still under investigation.

Children's Social Care Complaints

3.30 The data below for 2021/22 excludes pre-stage complaints and includes those investigations at the different stages that were concluded in 2021/22 (so does not include those complaints that started in 2021/22 and carried over to 2022/23 or did not progress to formal investigation in 2021/212).

Children's Social Care Complaints	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Stage 1 Local Resolution	32	32	25	15	17
Stage 2 Investigation	10	9	8	3	1
Stage 3 Review Panel	1	5	6	1	0

3.31 The complaints data for 2021/22 continues to be affected by the cyber attack the Council experienced in October 2020. In April 2021 Children and Families Services regained partial access to children's files and complaint investigations resumed in April 2021. There was a temporary recording system in children's services during 2021 but it was not until March 2022 that the formal Mosaic social care database was reinstated, though some functionalities in the system remained unavailable. Between March and May 2021 the former Safeguarding and Learning Team was restructured into the current Quality Assurance and Improvement Team (QAIT), introducing four specialist hubs and bespoke roles within these. In May 2021 stage 1 investigations moved from the responsibility of 'safeguarding and learning service' and became the responsibility of first line managers and Service Managers within the associated Children and Families Service. This is in keeping with National standards.

3.32 In terms of the nature of complaints, issues related to communication and staff conduct were the most prevalent reasons for complaints in 2021/22. The majority of complaints were in relation to the Family Intervention and Support Service, which is the largest service area as this correlates with previous years.

3.33 There were also 4 corporate Stage 1s in 2021/22.

Casework Review

3.34 A project to review and improve the handling of casework is about to begin. This review is one of the manifesto commitments. This will look at end to end processes particularly around Members Enquiries to ensure that there are a range of actions and processes available rather than the one size fits all approach as well as dealing with channels outside of current processes such as social media. Early work on this has seen implementation of a new casework software system and delivered new dashboard access to Members to both log and track their casework. Members will be engaged at the appropriate stages to ensure their views and ideas are actioned.

Appendix 2

Stage 1 and 2 Complaints Date 2021/22

Stage 1

3.35 Based on the data we have from the OneCase system we have the following analysis against the 3,863 stage 1 investigations received in 2021/22 with details as follows;

- 3,362 were determined of which;
 - 1,393 (41%) found fault (resolved by way of - 852 apology, 412 remedial action, 129 financial redress)
 - 1,615 (48%) found no fault
 - 354 (11%) resolved upon receipt
- Total compensation awarded at stage 1 - £23,164
- Channel complaints were received through
 - 1,922 (50%) on-line self serve by complainant
 - 1,534 (40%) email
 - 271 (7%) phone
 - 13 (0%) letter/complaints form/in person
 - 123 (3%) unknown

3.36 The highest generating areas of complaint are Housing repairs (Building Maintenance), Housing Tenancy & Leasehold, Housing Needs, Environmental Services, Central Housing Complaints Team, Benefits and Customer Services. A breakdown of complaints covering these areas is set out below;

- **Housing Building Maintenance** - 673 stage 1 investigations
 - Main teams complained about (team)
 - DLO 282
 - Customer Relationship Team 211
 - Contractors 42
 - Surveyors 41
 - Communal works 17
 - Main function or service complained about (primary classification ID)
 - Communal works 304
 - DLO 61
 - Gas 44
 - Plumbing 50
 - Purdy 38
 - Main cause of complaint (primary cause)
 - failure to deliver service/take action 111
 - delays doing something/communication/answering 336
 - availability of service/staff 52
 - Disagree with policy/procedure 49

- Fault was found in 66% (443) of cases, no fault found in *11% (75) cases and 15% (103) cases were resolved upon receipt, 8% (51) were not determined
- Where fault was found, it was resolved by
 - 50% (221) cases by remedial action i.e. putting it right
 - 29% (130) by way of apology
 - 21% (92) by financial redress i.e. compensation
- Compensation was paid in 166 cases totalling **£13,933

* Just 11% of stage 1 complaints determined as no fault found following investigation compared with 48% for the whole Council

** £13,933 equates to 60% of the total stage 1 compensation figure of £23,164

- **Housing Tenancy & Leasehold - 397 stage 1 investigations**

- Main teams complained about
 - Leasehold & RTB 74
 - Neighbourhood Offices 106
 - TMOs 86
 - Estate Safety & ASB 28
 - Income Services 33
- Main function or service complained about
 - Communal issues on estates 54
 - Noise/ASB 21
 - Neighbour disputes/nuisance 41
 - service charge disputes 41
 - TMO services 58
- Main cause of complaint
 - failure to deliver service/do something/take action 133
 - no/poor communication/info/advice 136
 - Delays in doing something/answering calls, etc 25
- Fault was found in 24% (97) of cases, no fault found in 60% (240) cases, 11% (42) were not determined and 5% (20) were resolved upon receipt
- Where fault was found, it was resolved by
 - 85% (82) by way of apology
 - 14% (14) cases by remedial action i.e. putting it right
 - 1% (1) by financial redress i.e. compensation
- Compensation was paid in 8 cases totalling £1,057

- **Housing Needs - 377 stage 1 investigations**

- Main teams complained about
 - Temporary Accommodation 67
 - Housing Register Team 114
 - Housing Advice/Homelessness 45
 - Lettings 33
- Main function or service complained about
 - Housing Register 74
 - size/suitability of accommodation 41
 - Issues with TA i.e. ASB, infestations 37

- Homelessness advice 26
 - Main cause of complaint
 - delays 79
 - poor communication/information/advice 109
 - poor customer service 51
 - disagree/unhappy with decision 46
 - Fault was found 6% (21) of cases, no fault found in 79% (296) cases, 7% (27) were not determined and 9% (33) were resolved upon receipt
 - Where fault was found, it was resolved by
 - 19 by way of apology
 - 2 case by remedial action i.e. putting it right
 - Compensation in 3 cases totalling £775
- **Environmental Services 333 stage 1 investigations**
 - Main teams complained about
 - Refuse, recycling, bulky waste 121
 - Strategy team 40
 - Street cleaning 23
 - Estate cleaning 10
 - Hygiene services 7
 - Environmental Services (other services) 126
 - Main function or service complained about
 - waste strategy inc recycling 34
 - missed collection (all types) 71
 - recycling product delivery 23
 - Street not swept 29
 - Bins - location, lids not put back, etc 25
 - Staff behaviour 24
 - Main cause of complaint
 - failure to deliver service/do something/take action 117
 - staff behaviour/inappropriate behaviour 56
 - quality of work 29
 - service/staff availability 49
 - Fault was found in 57% (191) of cases, no fault found in 36% (121) of cases, 1% (4) were not determined and 3% (9) were resolved upon receipt
 - Where fault was found, it was resolved by
 - 26% (50) cases by remedial action i.e. putting things right
 - 74% (141) by way of apology
 - Compensation was paid in 1 case totalling £15 (refund)
- **Central Housing Complaints Team (CHCT) 310 stage 1 investigations**
 - The Housing CHCT Team deal with cases that cut across multiple Housing departments and due to the OneCase system only allowing one team to be identified, these cases cannot be attributed to a particular service
 - Main cause of complaint
 - Delay in doing something/communications 96

- Failure to do something/deliver service 72
 - Poor communication, info or advice 48
 - Fault was found in 33% (101) of cases, no fault found in 21% (66) of cases, 23% (72) were not determined and 23% (72) were resolved upon receipt
 - Where fault was found, it was resolved by
 - 34% (34) cases by remedial action i.e. putting things right
 - 42% (42) by way of apology
 - 25% (25) by financial redress i.e. compensation
 - Compensation was paid in 10 cases totalling £1,650
- **Benefits 290 stage 1 investigations**
 - Main teams complained about
 - Benefits 236
 - DHP Team 39
 - Processing 8
 - Main cause of complaint
 - payments 47
 - benefit decision/award 41
 - CTRS 28
 - DHP 28
 - suspension of claim 17
 - speed of processing 12
 - Fault was found in 9% (26) of cases, no fault found in *82% (237) of cases, 7% (21) were not determined and 2% (6) were resolved upon receipt
 - Where fault was found, it was resolved by
 - 8% (2) cases by remedial action i.e. putting things right
 - 92% (24) by way of apology
 - Compensation was paid in 4 cases totalling £5,000

*82% of cases investigated by the service at stage 1 find no fault however, of the 7 cases escalating to stage 1 all 7 (100%) have fault found

- **Customer Services 236 stage 1 investigations**
 - Main teams complained about
 - Repairs Contact Centre 159
 - Customer Service Operations 70
 - Main cause of complaint
 - RCC customer service 59
 - RCC Housing specific issues 57
 - RCC wait times 10
 - CSO quality of communication 45
 - CSO responsiveness 12
 - Fault was found in 56% (132) of cases, no fault found in 12% (28) of cases, 20% (48) were not determined and 11% (27) were resolved upon receipt
 - Where fault was found, it was resolved by
 - 5% (6) cases by remedial action i.e. putting things right
 - 92% (122) by way of apology

- 2% (4) by way of financial redress i.e. compensation
- Compensation was paid in 6 cases totalling £734

Stage 2

3.37 Of the 253 stage 2 investigations in 2021/22, details of 241 are held on the OneCase system.

- Of the 241 stage 2 investigations conducted and held on OneCase,
 - 128 (53%) found fault
 - 103 (43%) no fault found
 - 10 (4%) not determined/withdrawn
 - Total compensation offered at stage 2 £15,814 - this is in addition to that offered at stage 1
 - *90 (37%) found additional fault at stage 2 compared to stage 1 findings

* Fault is found in 128 (53%) of cases investigated at stage 2 but in 90 of those cases, the fault found is additional to that found at stage 1

The 4 highest generating areas of stage 2 complaints are Building Maintenance (54), Tenancy & Leasehold Service (55), Housing Needs (34) and Parking (18). A breakdown of detail covering these 4 areas is as follows;

- Housing Building Maintenance, 54 investigations
 - Main function or service complained about - Communal works 21, Trades (gas, electrical, plumbing, etc) 10, DLO 6, Purdys 3
 - Main cause of complaint - delays 15, failure to deliver service 14, work not to quality expected 5
 - Fault found 39, no fault found 10, undetermined 5
 - Fault addressed by financial redress 24, apology 8 and remedial action 7
 - Compensation awarded in 23 stage 2 cases totalling £5,301
 - 27 (50%) found additional fault at stage 2 compared to stage 1 findings
- Housing Tenancy & Leasehold Services, 55 investigations
 - Main function or service complained about - Service charges 14, neighbour dispute/ASB 14 re-housing/change of tenancy/succession 5
 - Main cause of complaint - failure to deliver service/do something 18, no/poor communication 14, staff behaviour 7, delays 6
 - No fault found 33, fault found 20, undetermined 2
 - Fault addressed by apology 8, financial redress 6 and remedial action 6
 - Compensation awarded in 5 stage 2 cases totalling £619
 - 16 (29%) found additional fault at stage 2 compared to stage 1 findings
- Housing Needs, 34 investigations
 - Main function or service complained about - housing register/homelessness advice 6, size/suitability of accommodation 5,

- housing needs other 14 (these 14 cases have not been categorised to a dedicated team by Housing Needs)
- Main cause of complaint - communication/info/advice 12, delay doing something 8
- Fault found 16, no fault found 15, undetermined 3
 - Fault addressed by apology 10, financial redress 3 and remedial action 3
- Compensation awarded in 3 cases totalling £775
- 16 (47%) found additional fault at stage 2 compared to stage 1 findings
- Parking, 18 investigations
 - Main function or service complained about - policy issues 4, lack of enforcement 3 and process issues 3
 - Main cause of complaint - failure to take action/do something 5, policy issues 3
 - No fault found 11, fault found 7
 - Fault addressed by apology 3, financial redress 2 and remedial action 2
 - Compensation awarded in no stage 2 cases
 - 6 (33%) found additional fault at stage 2 compared to stage 1 findings