

Housing Management Performance – Annual Report

Introduction

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code became statutory from 1 April 2024, which means that social housing landlords are now obliged by law to follow its requirements.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a legal duty on the Ombudsman to monitor social housing landlord's compliance with the Code. Section 8 of the Housing Ombudsman's Service Complaint Handling Code requires that landlords must produce an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for scrutiny and challenge.

This annual report provides an analysis of the complaints received by the Council's Housing Management Team during 2023/24. This process and these complaints are different and separate from complaints received by other Council services, that are reported through a separate process.

This report seeks to provide information on the performance of the Council's complaint handling in terms of the volume and timeliness of the responses. In addition, the report seeks to identify themes, trends and lessons learnt in order to bring about service improvements.

The Housing Ombudsman Service has a two-stage complaint handling process which requires:

- All Complaint Acknowledgements responded within 5 working days.
- A first stage complaint must be responded to within 10 working days.
- A second stage complaint within 20 working days.

Cherwell District Council operates a 3 stage complaint process.

Stage 1 – Informal Complaint

Stage 1 complaints cover oversights or human error that can be quickly resolved by contacting the service rather than awaiting formal investigation.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

A formal complaint involves a senior officer within the service concerned investigating the matter. A stage 2 complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days and a full response will be sent within 10 working days.

Stage 3 – Formal Review

Appendix 1

A Stage 3 formal review involves a member of the Extended Leadership Team within the Council (Assistant Director). It will also be someone who has not been involved in the matter before.

The acknowledgement for the Stage 3 request will be provided within 3 working days and a full response will be sent within 10 working days.

The Council's corporate policy for handling and managing complaints is not fully aligned with the Housing Ombudsman framework. Therefore, for the purpose of this report, Housing Ombudsman Stage One complaints consist of both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints made to the Council. The timescale compliance is also shown separately within tables. Taking this approach does not affect the outcomes within the report.

In addition, as part of the new Regulatory Framework, the Council collects and reports on a number of performance and service measures that relates to its small stock holding. Specifically, the Tenants Satisfaction Measures and Management Information Measures. This report also provides the results and progress made against these measures.

Scope of report

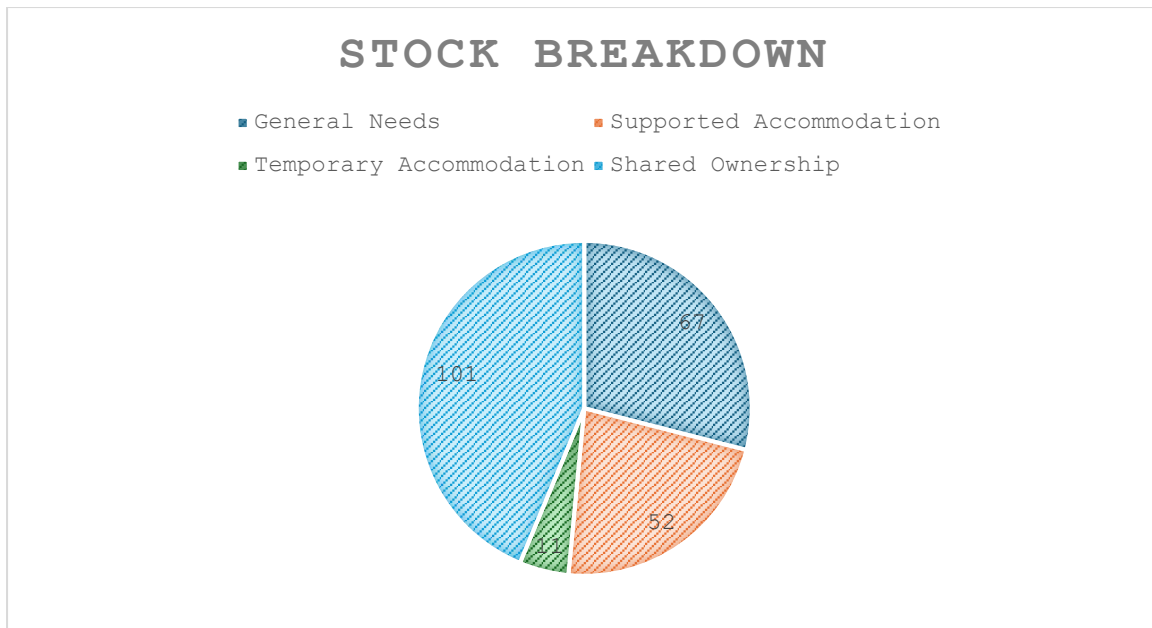
The Council has a small stock holding of 231 units. As 101 properties are Shared Ownership and the Council's share is less than 50%, the effective units that the Council owns and manages is under 200. This is made up of a mix of Supported Accommodation, Temporary Accommodation, General Needs Housing and Shared Ownership.

Throughout the period covered by the report, 36 units of general needs accommodation was unoccupied as long term void due to renovation works taking place. Therefore, the number of rented properties that the Council is managing with tenants within them currently is reduced.

Complaints and other data presented as part of this report relate to the Council's stock holding and to the residents within.

The breakdown of the properties is shown in **Figure 1**

Figure 1 – Cherwell District Council Housing Stock Breakdown



Definition of a Complaint

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code, a complaint is an

“expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or groups of residents”

The word complaint does not have to be used by the resident for it to be treated as such.

There is a difference between a complaint and a service request. This is outlined within the Council’s complaints procedure.

Types of complaints within scope of this report

Within scope of the report are complaints that are raised by residents or raised by residents through an appropriate third party.

The Council receives enquiries from Members of Parliament and elected members, sometimes on behalf of customers or to enquire on their behalf. Where appropriate, the enquiry received may be escalated to a complaint and handled as such if it is clear that there is a service failing that needs to be investigated and addressed. Not all enquiries that are made by MP’s or Councillors are treated as complaints. They are primarily dealt with as requests for information and through part of day to day communications.

Tenants Satisfaction Measures

Appendix 1

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard requires all registered providers to generate and report Tenants Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) as specified by the regulator.

The TSMs are a core set of performance measures against which all providers must publish their performance. The TSM Standard includes the required outcome that providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlords performance. The TSM provide greater transparency about landlord performance and inform the regulator about how a landlord is complying with consumer standards.

As part of the TSM's, there are survey questions for residents that are standard across all providers. There are 12 core questions. Additionally, there are a suite of 10 Management Information Measures that are reported that cover performance on complaints, neighbourhood issues, repairs and maintenance performance and the safety and compliance of accommodation.

Volume of Complaints

The data below summarises the Council's performance regarding complaints and the compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code regarding timescales and complaint handling.

This shows that of the complaints we have received regarding and relating to our stock holding have been compliant with internal processes and our Policy as well as the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. It should be noted that the scope of the stock to which the Code relates is small, as outlined in previous sections.

Figure 2a - Number of Housing Management related complaints received and compliance with response times - acknowledgement

Complaint Stage	Number Received	Acknowledgment sent within 5 working days
Informal Stage 1 (Housing Ombudsman Stage 1)	0	N/A
Formal Stage 2 (Housing Ombudsman Stage 1)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)
Stage 3 Formal Review (Housing Ombudsman Stage 2)	0	N/A
Logged as complaint but closed as service request	1	1

Figure 2b - Number of Housing Management related complaints received and compliance with response times

Complaint Stage	Response within CDC timescales	Response within Housing Ombudsman Timescales
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Appendix 1

Informal Stage 1 (Housing Ombudsman Stage 1)	0	N/A
Formal Stage 2 (Housing Ombudsman Stage 1)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)
Stage 3 Formal Review (Housing Ombudsman Stage 2)	0	N/A

Complaints by Theme

When analysing the themes of the complaints received, **Figure 3** shows the nature of the complaints that were received in 2023/24.

Complaint Theme	Number of complaints
Poor handling or progression of housing case	1 (50%)
Staff attitude/behaviour	1 (50%)
Failure to attend appointment	0
Condition of property	0
Poor workmanship	0
Relating to performance of a contractor	0
Other	0

Complaints by Tenure

The Council holds a small but varied stock holding, as outlined in previous sections. The breakdown of the complaints by tenure of property is shown below in **Figure 4**

Tenure	Number of complaints
Shared Ownership	1 (50%)
Supported Accommodation	1 (50%)
General Needs Housing	0
Temporary Accommodation	0

Method in which a complaint is received

The below table shows the method in which complaints were received by the Council during 2023-24. It shows that the Council's digital channels are most prevalent when reporting complaints.

Figure 5 – Method in which complaints are received

Complaint Type	Number Received	Received by Email	Received by phone	Received by letter	Received in person

Appendix 1

Complaint logged as per Housing Ombudsman Code	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	0	0	0
Logged as complaint but closed as service request	1	1	0	0	0

Complaint Outcomes

As part of complaint handling, the Council wishes to learn lessons where possible from the feedback it receives from customers. The below table shows the number of complaints that the Council upheld in 2023-24.

Figure 6 - Number of complaints that were upheld by the Council

Number of complaints	Reason for complaint	Percentage upheld
1	Staff attitude/behaviour	0%
1	Poor handling or progression of housing case	0%

Findings of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

There are no instances of non-compliance with the code. All complaints were acknowledged and handled within the timescales provided by the Housing Ombudsman within the code.

There are some small additions or clarifications that are required to be made to Complaints Policy and Procedure, the Council will look to review these and act accordingly.

Service Improvements

Contact Management

Staff within the Housing Management Team are and will receive regular briefing and training updates regarding identification and recording of complaints.

This is to ensure upon first point of contact they establish whether the enquiry is a complaint or service request and adapted to ensure that all relevant data can be gathered clearly.

Appendix 1

The customer services team, who handle all complaint communications and also receive complaints when not received directly to staff, have refresher training as part of their roles.

There is a culture within the Housing Management Team of wanting to resolve issues that customers raise as quickly as possible, but the code should be followed when matters stray from a request for service and normal landlord and tenant dialogue to where a complaint should be recorded. It is positive that there is an approach and emphasis on early intervention and being proactive with the customer to ensure their issues and concerns are resolved at the earliest opportunity, it is important that the team retain this, and this continues to be encouraged.

Communication

The Council will signpost or make clear how to make complaints more clearly to customers, particularly on communication that is more likely to generate comments. This will include when communicating rent and service charge increases to tenants or service charge increases to shared owners.

Newsletters that are sent out all will now reference how to make complaints.

In all contracts that the Council has entered into over the last year, how complaints will be managed and what we expect from contractors is within the specification of each.

Responses

The Council is performing strongly when it comes to responding to complaints within timescales. The templates in place are compliant with the code for the staged responses. The acknowledgement that the customer receives needs to show more clearly what customers can expect, how they can escalate and what their response will include.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) Performance 2023-24

The following section shows the Council's performance and results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and the associated Management Information Measures.

In accordance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, landlords were required to commence collecting TSMs and the Management Information Measures from April 2023. Landlords with more than 1000 homes were required to submit their first year of TSM data in summer 2024.

As the Council is below the 1000 home threshold, it was not required to submit the data in the timescale. However, the Council elected to be part of a Small Landlord Pilot that was ran in Autumn 2023/Winter 2024, to assist and scope the ability, viability and feasibility for small landlords to report this data. The Council therefore

Appendix 1

submitted TSMs in Summer 2024, like larger landlords. As small landlords, like Cherwell District Council, only have small samples, the results in some measures can be distorted.

The survey of all residents, including Shared Owners, was conducted in spring/summer 2024. The Council received 38 responses. This is a response rate of around 19%. Some of the questions that are asked are not asked to shared owners, such as repairs reporting, because of the different contractual relationship the Council holds with shared owners as opposed to tenants in general needs housing, for instance, where tenants have a Right to Repair in accordance with their tenancy agreement. In all cases where there are 2 sets of tables, the shared ownership is the second graph presented against the measure.

As a general observation, the satisfaction amongst clients receiving the rented service is higher.

The satisfaction with repairs services shows the most positive results. The performance of repairing within targets is positive within the Council's performance measures, so this perhaps has correlation.

Where there are lower satisfaction rates, there is a high prevalence of respondents reporting that they don't know or who haven't answered. Therefore, whilst respondents are not advising that they are satisfied, they are not responding that they are dissatisfied in high numbers.

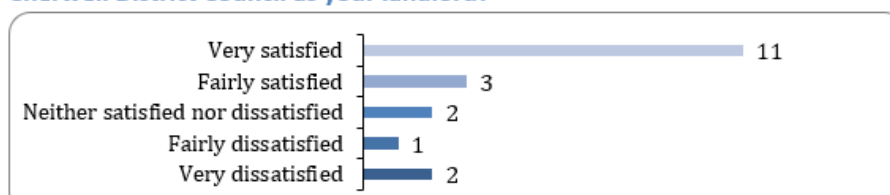
Performance against the Measures

Measured by Tenant Perception Survey

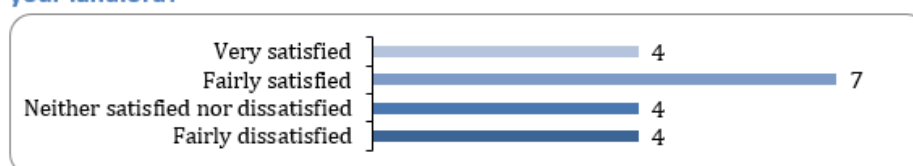
TP01 - Overall Satisfaction.

74% Rented Stock. 58% Shared Ownership. 66% Overall satisfied

1: Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Cherwell District Council as your landlord?



1: Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by your landlord?

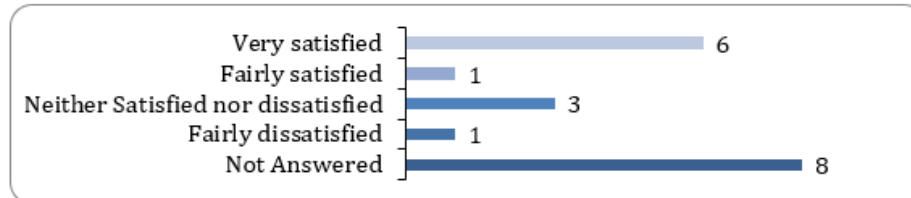


TP02 – Satisfaction with Repairs

Appendix 1

64% satisfied. Only 1 response advised specifically that they were dissatisfied. This question is only asked of tenants in rented property as shared owners do not have the right of repair.

3: If yes, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall repairs service from your landlord over the last 12 months?

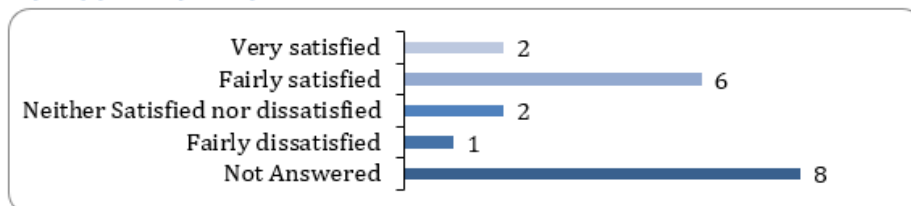


*The 8 responses that are “not answered” are from tenants that advised they had not had a repair completed in the timeframe requested.

TP03 - Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

73% satisfied. Only 1 response advised specifically that they were dissatisfied. This question is only asked of tenants in rented property as shared owners do not have the right of repair.

5: If yes, how satisfied, or dissatisfied are you with the time taken to complete your most recent repair(s) after you reported it?

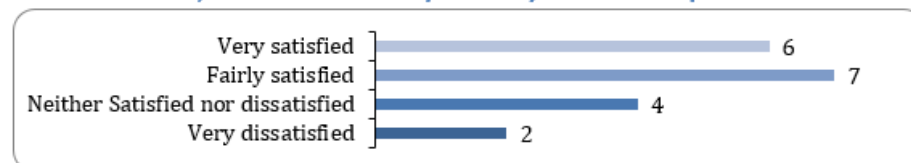


*The 8 responses that are “not answered” are from tenants that advised they had not had a repair completed in the timeframe requested.

TP04 - Satisfaction that the home is well maintained

68%. This question is only asked of tenants in rented property as shared owners do not have the right of repair. The Council is undertaking a stock condition survey during 2024 to ensure that its properties are maintained and investment is planned accordingly.

6: How satisfied, or dissatisfied are you that your landlord provides a home that is well maintained?

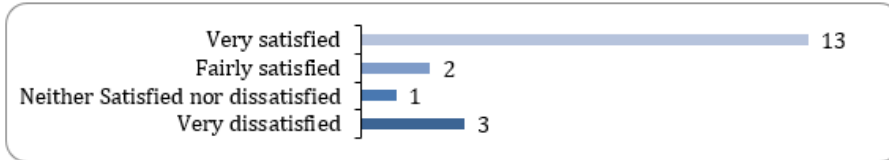


TP05 – Satisfaction that the home is safe

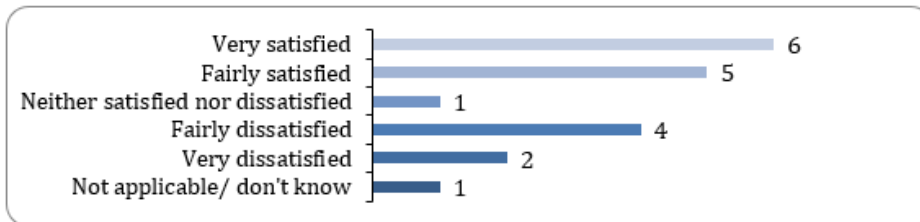
Appendix 1

Performance within our rented properties, where we have more responsibilities, is 79%. It is only 61% for shared owners. An overall 68% satisfied.

7: Thinking about the condition of the property or building you live in, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord provides a home that is safe?



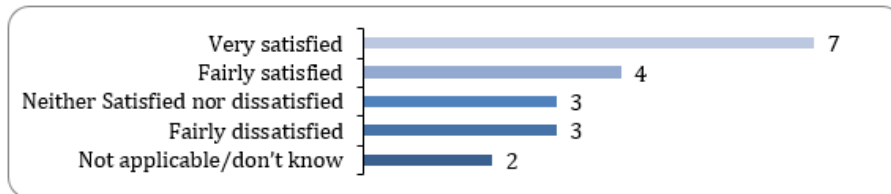
2: Thinking about the condition of the property or building you live in, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord provides a home that is safe?



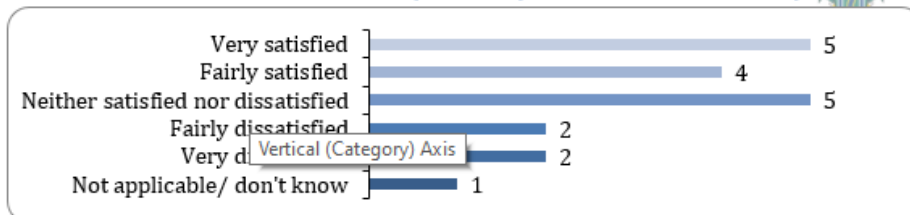
TP06 – Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant’s views and acts upon them

The combined result is 57% satisfied. However, 23% have responded neutrally.

8: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord listens to your views and acts upon them?



3: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord listens to your views and acts upon them?

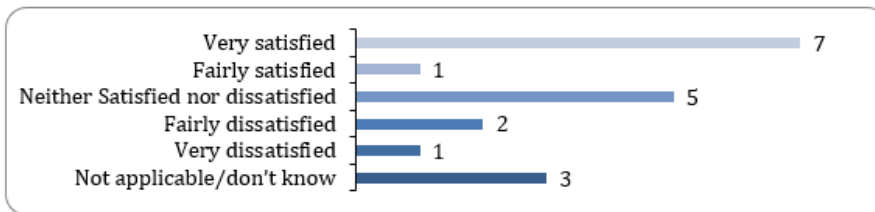


TP07 - Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to you

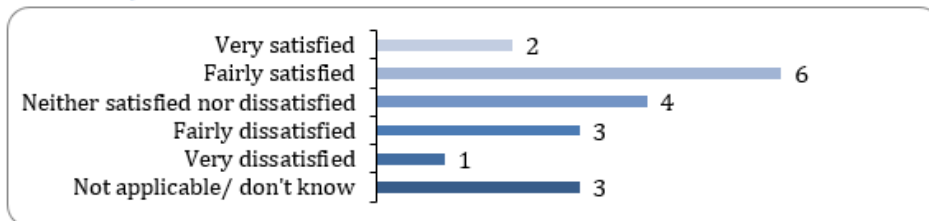
A combined result of 50% satisfied. However, 28% have responded neutrally

Appendix 1

9: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord keeps you informed about things that matter to you?



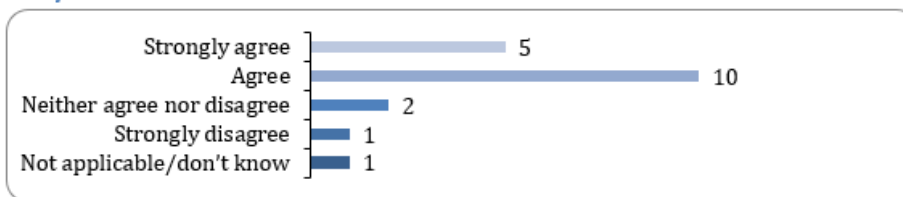
4: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord keeps you informed about things that matter to you?



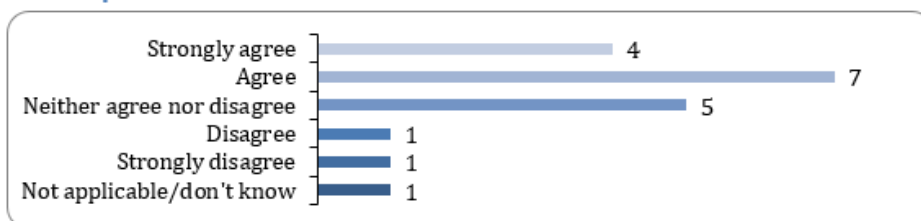
TP08 - Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect

A combined result of 72% satisfied. 19% responded neutrally.

10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "My landlord treats me fairly and with respect."



5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: "My landlord treats me fairly and with respect."



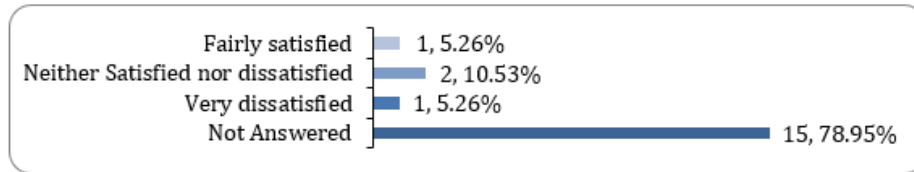
TP09 - Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints

As outlined within the complaints report, the Council has only received two complaints that related to its housing stock. However, in the responses, 6 respondents with Shared Ownership have advised that they made a complaint and 3 within the rented stock.

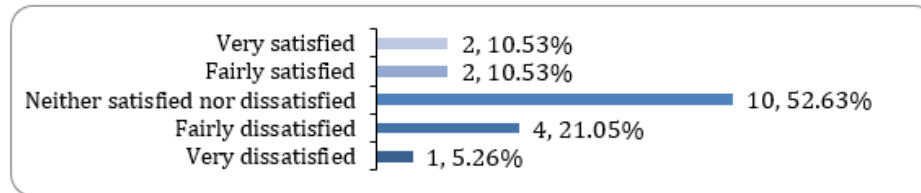
It is therefore difficult to draw conclusions from this data and results. The Council will seek further guidance in the future when reporting this measure.

Appendix 1

12: If yes, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your landlord's approach to your complaints handling?



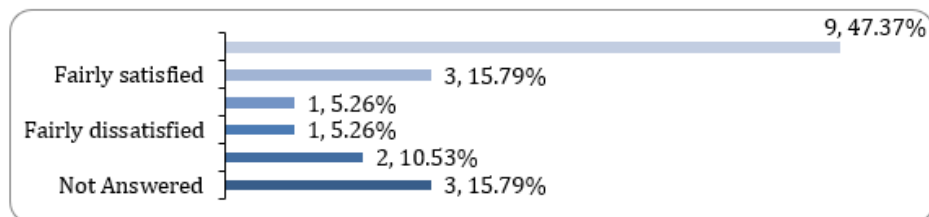
7: If yes, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your landlord's approach to your complaints handling?



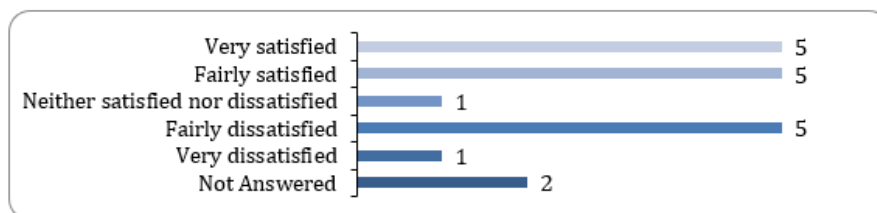
TP10 - Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

The combined result is 67% satisfied. Shared owners pay service charges for the services that they receive.

14: If yes, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord keeps these communal areas clean and well maintained?



9: If yes, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord keeps these communal areas clean and well maintained?

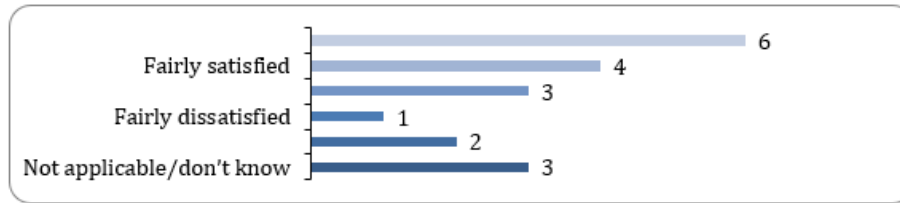


TP11 - Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

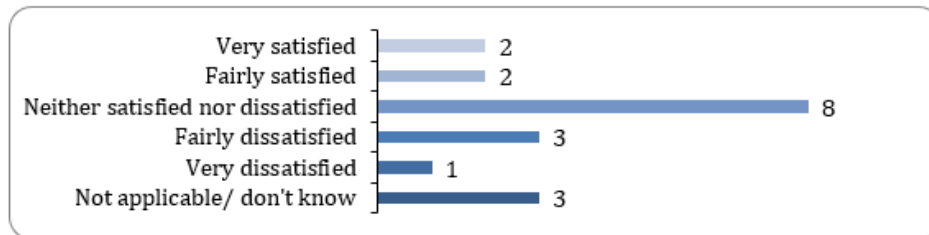
Of the combined total, 44% were satisfied with this measure. However, 34% of respondents provided a neutral response.

Appendix 1

15: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?



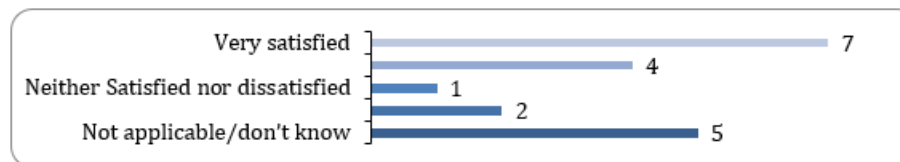
10: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?



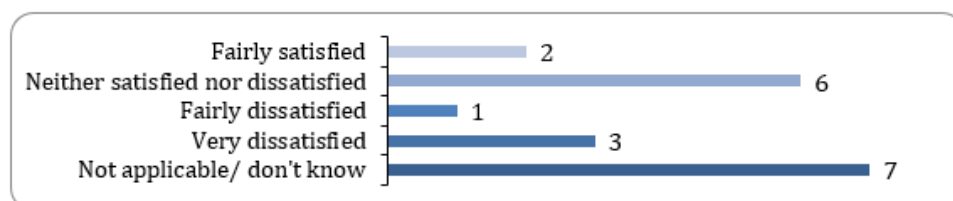
TP12 - Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour

Of the combined, 50% were satisfied. However, 27% of respondents provided a neutral response.

16: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour?



11: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour?



Measured by landlords directly

The following measures are measured by landlords directly as part of the Management Information Measures.

RP01 Homes that do not meet the Decent Home Standard

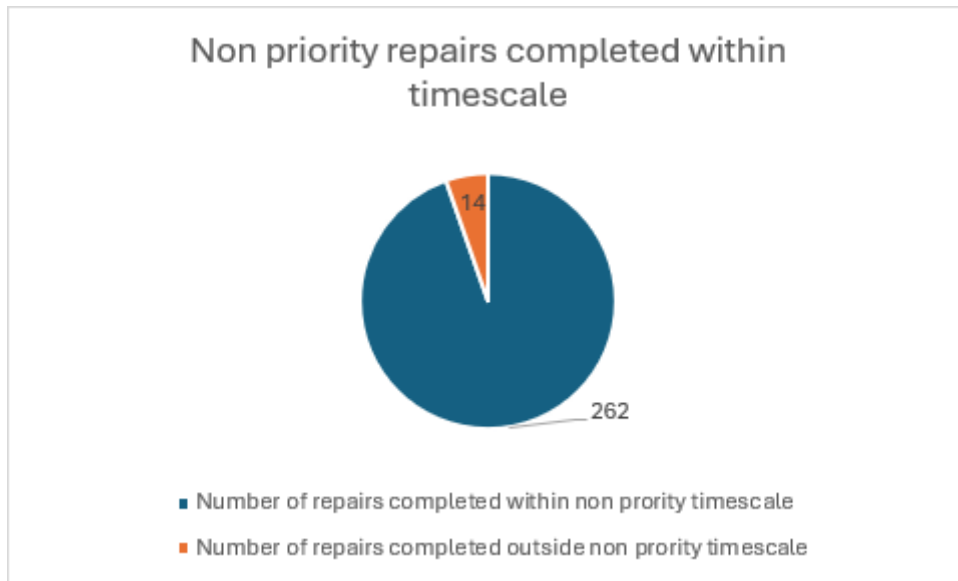
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The Council has a largely modern stock holding, most of which has been developed over the last decade. However, it does not have data currently to accurately report this measure.

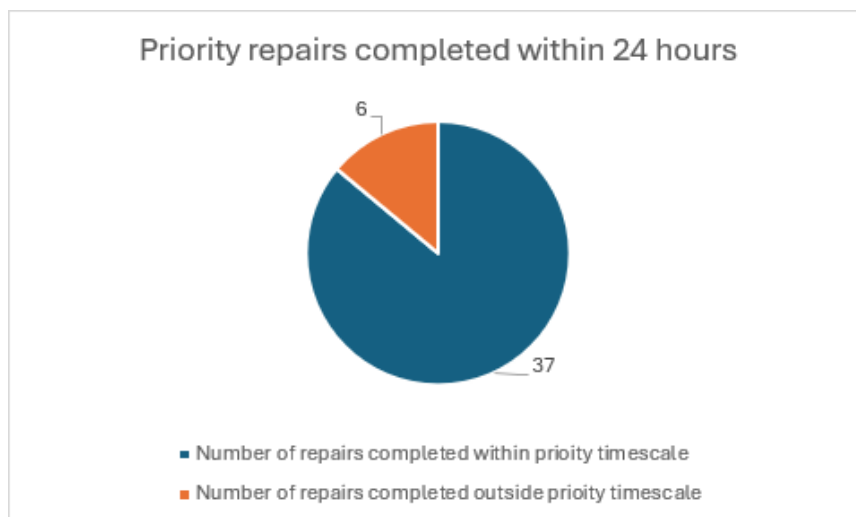
A stock condition survey is being undertaken during 2024 to provide accurate data against this measure and also enable the Council to fully understand its capital and revenue investment needs in relation to its housing stock within the forthcoming years.

RP02 - Repairs completed within target timescale

For non-emergency repairs, the result is 95%



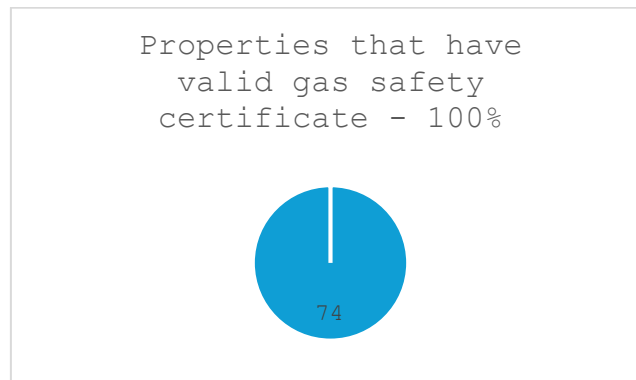
For emergency repairs, the result is 86%.



BS01 - Gas safety checks

Appendix 1

This measure is based on the percentage of homes that have had all the necessary gas safety checks.



BS02 - Fire safety checks

This measure is based on the percentage of homes in buildings that have had all the necessary fire risk assessments.



BS03 - Asbestos safety checks

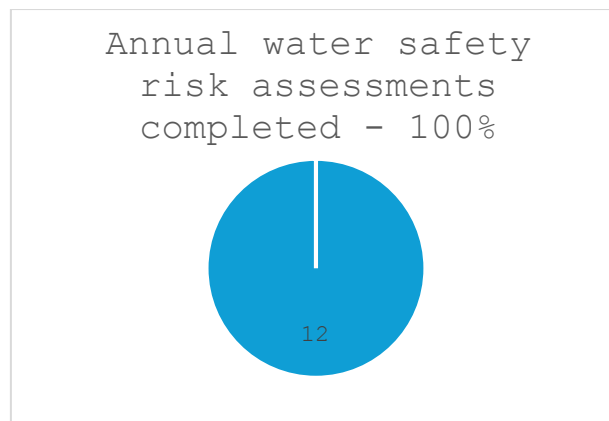
This measure is based on the percentage of homes in building that have all the necessary asbestos management surveys or re-inspections.

The Council has the necessary asbestos surveys for the domestic properties it owns and manages. The measure is therefore 100%.

BS04 - Water safety checks

This measure is based on the percentage of homes that have had all the necessary legionella risk assessments.

Appendix 1



BS05 – Lift safety checks

The Council does not have any communal passenger lifts within its properties, so is not reporting against this measure.

CH01 - Complaints relative to size of landlord

This measure is based on the number of complaints the landlord receives for each 1000 homes they own

Complaint Stage	Response within CDC timescales	Response within Housing Ombudsman Timescales
Informal Stage 1 (Housing Ombudsman Stage 1)	0	N/A
Formal Stage 2 (Housing Ombudsman Stage 1)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)
Stage 3 Formal Review (Housing Ombudsman Stage 2)	0	N/A

The Council manages fewer than 1000 properties, therefore all complaints received that relate to its stock are expressed as a proportion of 1000. The result is therefore 8.65 for Stage 1 and 0 for stage 2.

CH02 - Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales

This measure is based on the percentage of complaints the landlord responds to within the times set within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

The result against this measure is 100%

NM01 - Anti social behaviour cases relative to the size of landlord

This measure is based on the number of anti-social behaviour cases for each 1000 homes the landlord owns.

The Council recorded 12 cases within 2023-24. The result is therefore 51.9. 0 were recorded as hate incidents.