AGENDA FOR

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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To: All Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors : J Southworth, M Rahimov, T Pilkington, L Ryder, A Chaudhry, N Bayley, S Haroon, C Birchmore, J Sheppard, J Rydeheard (Chair) and J Roith

Dear Member/Colleague

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will be held as follows:-

Date:	Tuesday, 24 November 2026
Place:	Council Chamber, Bury Town Hall
Time:	7.00 pm
Briefing Facilities:	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
Notes:	

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider whether they have an interest in any matters on the agenda and, if so, to formally declare that interest.

3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A period of 30 minutes has been set aside for members of the public to ask questions on matters considered at the last meeting and set out in the minutes or on the agenda for tonight's meeting.

4 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

Questions are invited from Elected Members about items on the agenda. 15 minutes will be set aside for Member Question Time, if required.

5 MINUTES *(Pages 3 - 48)*

Minutes from the meeting held on 13th October 2026 are attached for approval.

6 OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS REPORT *(Pages 49 - 76)*

Report attached to be supported by Jacqui Dennis Monitoring Officer

7 CORPORATE PLAN Q2 2026/27 *(Pages 77 - 100)*

Report and Appendices attached

8 HOUSING SERVICES UPDATE *(Pages 101 - 130)*

Report attached to be supported by Councillor A Arif Cabinet member for Housing Services

9 HRA (HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT) SAVINGS PROGRAMME *(Pages 131 - 136)*

Report attached to be supported by Councillor A Arif Cabinet member for Housing Services

10 URGENT BUSINESS

Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair agrees may be considered as a matter of urgency.

Agenda Item 5

Minutes of: **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 13 October 2026

Present: Councillor J Rydeheard (in the Chair)
Councillors J Southworth, M Rahimov, T Pilkington, L Ryder, N Bayley, C Birchmore, J Sheppard, J Roith, C Hunt and M Rubinstein

Also in attendance: Councillor Thorpe Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services
Lynne Ridsdale Chief Executive
Kate Waterhouse Executive Director Strategy and Transformation
Will Blandamer Executive Director Health and Adult Care
Neil Kissock Director of Finance
Jacqui Dennis Monitoring Officer
Adrian Crook Director Community Commissioning
Jon Hobday Director of Public Health
Ben Dunne Director of Education and Early Years
Linda Evans Director of Social Care and Early Help
Rob Summerfield Director of Regeneration and Project Delivery

Public Attendance: Three members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor A Chaudhry and Councillor S Haroon

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OSC.131 APOLOGIES

Apologies are noted above

OSC.132 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

OSC.133 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions were received:

Jill Budgen asked:

Given Bury Council has no money left to spend will Bury Councils Management team agree that they will not take pay rises and bonuses in the future? I have reworded slightly please advise if this is correct?

In response Councillor Thorpe stated:

There are no plans to stop senior managers receiving future pay awards. Any pay increases are considered through the Council's normal governance processes and, where relevant, national pay agreements.

The Council needs to offer competitive pay to attract and retain experienced leaders who run complex services and deliver improvements and savings. If pay falls too far behind the market, it can become harder and more expensive to recruit and retain the right people.

Senior management costs have not increased disproportionately. The proportion of senior managers in the workforce, and the share of the overall pay bill spent on senior management, have remained broadly unchanged. The Council remains committed to ensuring pay is fair, transparent, affordable and provides value for money for residents.

Jill asked a follow up supplementary question which was a personal matter which was agreed to be dealt with outside of the meeting.

OSC.134 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

The following questions were submitted in advance of the meeting by:

- Councillor Vernon
- Councillor Zaman
- Councillor Martin

Councillor Vernon Question

Councillor Vernon stated that the Council had rightly recognised the importance of paying its lowest-paid employees the Real Living Wage and that he was not questioning the principle of providing a fair wage to Council employees.

However, he noted that the Council faced a remaining 2027/28 budget gap of £9.585 million and was considering significant workforce reductions, including voluntary exits and potentially compulsory redundancies.

He further noted that the budget report identified the Real Living Wage as a significant financial pressure, with £5.329 million included in the 2027/28 budget assumptions, principally relating to commissioned Adult Social Care.
Councillor Vernon asked whether the Council had fully quantified the savings that could be achieved by temporarily suspending or deferring implementation of the 2026/27 Real Living Wage rate until the financial position had stabilised, or until the National Living Wage had substantially narrowed the gap. He also asked whether any such savings could contribute towards reducing potential redundancies.

Finally, he asked, if this option had been considered, what the annual recurring saving would be, including any impact on commissioned services and employer on-costs, and why it had not been included alongside other savings options currently under consideration.

Response

Councillor Thorpe advised that the £5.329 million pressure included within the 2027/28 budget related to Real Living Wage increases within commissioned Adult Social Care and Children's Services contracts. The cost of pay awards for directly employed Council staff was reflected separately within the Council's pay inflation assumptions. Whilst the Council was not legally required to apply the Real Living Wage, the budget assumed continuation of the Council's existing commitment.

He explained that a detailed assessment would be required to determine the exact financial impact of any change in policy. However, as a broad illustration, if the Council were to move from the Real Living Wage to the National Living Wage, the current 2027/28 budget gap could

reduce by approximately £3.7 million. The actual impact would depend on a range of factors, including contractual arrangements and associated income assumptions. He further noted that the Real Living Wage figures were currently estimates and would be updated following the annual announcement of the Real Living Wage rates.

Councillor Thorpe added that moving from the Real Living Wage to the National Living Wage would represent a significant change in the rates paid, and therefore in the annual cost of care. Any such transition could be implemented over more than one financial year to smooth the impact on care workers, meaning pay rates might either be frozen or increase more slowly than they would under continued adoption of the Real Living Wage. Approximately 3,000 Adult Social Care workers would be affected.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Vernon commented that the matter ultimately came down to affordability and what the Council could reasonably fund on behalf of Bury residents. Referring to the estimated £3.7 million cost associated with implementing the Real Living Wage, he welcomed confirmation that the issue had been examined and asked whether assurances could be given that all options would continue to be explored as part of the budget-setting process. He further asked whether the proposal could be reconsidered should resources become available in the future.

Response

Councillor Thorpe advised that he could not rule out the proposal being revisited in the future. He confirmed that all options would continue to be considered as part of the Council's budget-setting process and noted that, whilst any decision not to proceed with the Real Living Wage would be regrettable, difficult choices had to be made within the context of the Council's overall financial position.

Councillor Zaman Question

Councillor Zaman referred to the forthcoming Cabinet decision to delegate responsibility to the Director of Finance to negotiate and submit the Council's Exceptional Financial Support application to Government.

He asked whether an unelected officer would be deciding whether to seek permission for a council tax increase above the current 4.99% referendum threshold and, if not, whether the Deputy Leader would rule out such an increase.

Response

Councillor Thorpe explained that a council tax increase above the current referendum limit of 4.99% was one of the three primary mechanisms available through conditional Exceptional Financial Support. The other options were additional prudential borrowing and the use of capital receipts flexibilities.

He emphasised that council tax increases remained a matter for elected Members to determine as part of the annual Budget Council meeting and that this position had not changed. The report merely outlined the implications of each option. Additional prudential borrowing would increase the funding gap due to the associated interest and Minimum Revenue Provision costs. Capital receipts represented a non-recurrent resource and would neither increase nor reduce ongoing funding. By contrast, an additional council tax increase would increase the Council's tax base and provide a permanent reduction in the funding gap.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Zaman asked whether an increase in council tax above 4.99% was being ruled out and, if the Council was not seeking a loan, how it intended to address its financial position.

Response

Councillor Thorpe explained that the current Exceptional Financial Support framework provided three primary options. He stated that the Council intended to increase council tax only up to the standard 4.99% level. Whilst he could not completely rule out Government imposing alternative requirements, he regarded this as the least likely outcome. He noted that any higher increase would have a significant impact on residents.

Councillor Thorpe further advised that the available flexibilities were intended to support the revenue budget and that the Council had plans in place to deliver a balanced budget for the current year. Discussions with Government would commence following Cabinet consideration of the matter. He stressed that the Council was not seeking a bailout and was not proposing a council tax increase above the current limit.

Councillor Martin

Question

Councillor Martin stated that the Council was seeking Exceptional Financial Support from Government and noted that, once the current year's overspend had been addressed, approximately £6 million of usable reserves would remain against a forecast funding gap of £9.6 million.

He asked whether, if the Government refused the Council's request, the Deputy Leader would rule out the possibility of a Section 114 Notice in the following year.

Response

Councillor Thorpe advised that the reserves forecast was based on the Quarter 1 projected outturn and might not reflect the final position. Officers were continuing to work to reduce the in-year pressure and identify additional savings options. These proposals would be brought back to Cabinet and Council as part of the budget-setting process.

He stated that the position remained fluid. However, if usable reserves proved insufficient to address any remaining funding gap and a request for Exceptional Financial Support was unsuccessful, the Council would be unable to set a legal budget for 2027/28. In those circumstances, the issuing of a Section 114 Notice would be the next step. He emphasised that this was not considered a likely scenario.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Martin asked whether the possibility of a Section 114 Notice remained and whether alternative budget reductions were being prepared should the Council receive less support than requested.

Response

Councillor Thorpe stated that he could not rule out the possibility entirely but confirmed that every effort was being made to avoid such an outcome. He advised that the Council was working closely with Government to be able to develop a balanced and practical budget in the face of unprecedented pressures.

Additional Questions from members

Councillor Hill attended the meeting and asked a question regarding the proposed £145,000 saving within the Youth Service. He queried how the Council had assessed the risks associated with removing an early help provision and whether this could lead to increased demand for higher-cost or higher-risk services in the future.

Councillor Thorpe explained that, following further consideration and the development of the Families First programme, alternative funding arrangements had been identified. As a result, the proposed reduction to the Youth Service would not be going to cabinet for consideration at this stage.

Members were advised that the recommendation before the Committee no longer included a reduction to the Youth Service at this stage. And would be discussed further in the meeting at the budget item.

Councillor Zaman raised a question regarding the £144,000 figure and asked the Cabinet Member to confirm whether any council buildings, services, or services supporting vulnerable residents would be affected.

A discussion followed regarding the sale of assets/access Adrian Crook Director of Community Commissioning stated that this is not a proposal that can be ruled out at this stage.

OSC.135 MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

There was a comment from Councillor Sheppard regarding ensuring names of Councillors are referred to throughout the minutes it was agreed that the minutes be signed off following this.

Matters arising from the previous meeting were discussed and ongoing actions were as follows

- The location and savings figure for the new 60 place SEND provision

Ben Dunne Director of Education and Early Years provided the following information

Willow Grove (SEMH Secondary School) – to be located at Redvales Playing Fields at the junction of Manchester Road and Radcliffe Road.

DfE Special Free Schools Programme scheme. The new 60 place school will provide specialist Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) facilities for children and young people aged 11-16 years.

Completion: Target scheme completion date is September 2028.

Savings: Not part of saving strategy but given secondary provision is limited across Bury at the current time and leaves the council vulnerable to placing CYP in costly independent specialist

provisions, the SEMH school will provide much needed capacity and will reduce pressure on SEND spending from 2028 onwards.

- The Separate HRA report on in-house savings –

For clarification this will be a standalone savings programme for the HRA and has been agreed to be brought to the November Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting

- Radcliffe Hub Cost Overrun figure

The committee was informed that the figures will be brought back to the committee when they have been fully calculated

OSC.136 COMMITTEE MEMBER PRE SUBMITTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Pages 11 - 46)

OSC.137 DRAFT 2027/28 BUDGET

A report was circulated ahead of the meeting by Councillor Thorpe deputy leader and cabinet member for Finance and Corporate Services, the chair invited Councillor Thorpe to present a brief overview of the report.

Councillor Thorpe outlined the key issues contained within the report, highlighting the ongoing financial challenges facing local government, the Councils budget pressures and the proposals being considered to achieve a sustainable financial position over the medium term.

The committee was reminded that question had been pre submitted in advance and the answers had been circulated, the chair advised the committee the procedure around these questions that they were to be used to prompt supplementary questions and won't be read out in the meeting.

Councillor Birchmore questioned Burys comparatively low core spending power, in response Councillor Thorpe explained that Burys position had been adversely affected by historical local government funding arrangements. He noted that previous funding and fair funding reviews had favoured areas with higher deprivation indicators and larger inner city populations. Bury had experienced lower funding growth whilst having a lower proportion of higher value Band D properties and a higher proportion of lower-banded properties reducing its ability to generate income through Council tax when compared with many other authorities.

It was further expanded that local government funding had increasingly become dependent upon Council Tax income rather than central government grants.

Neil Kissock Director of Finance advised that longer-term financial challenges facing local authorities, particularly those relating to Adult Social Care, continued to be a matter of national concern and were being actively considered by the Local Government Association.

Councillor Birchmore raised concerns regarding the subsidy provided to Ramsbottom Leisure Centre, noting that the facility currently required approximately £230,000 per annum in subsidy and that further refurbishment works of around £1 million had been identified.

In response, Members were advised that the Council remained committed to retaining Ramsbottom Leisure Centre due to its importance for health and wellbeing outcomes. It was explained that the estimated £1 million related to essential remedial and refurbishment works.

Councillor Birchmore sought clarification regarding the financial assumptions benind the business case, including whether income generated from the new Radcliffe facility was being used to offset shortfalls elsewhere and whether break-even assessments had been undertaken.

Jon Hobday Director of Public Health advised that the £1 million related primarily to remedial works that would require sequencing over the next 18 months.

Councillor Birchmore requested a detailed breakdown of the costs and sought assurance regarding what was included within the refurbishment programme.

Members also requested that consideration be given to concessionary and senior membership pricing. Councillor Thorpe advised that the Council's leisure offer differed from local competitors through the provision of facilities across three locations and that concessions would continue to be available.

Councillor Roith referred to references within the report regarding the Asset and Land Disposal Programme (ALDP), questioning what was meant by sites being listed as "under review" and noting that the publicly available information appeared not to have been updated since 2024.

Councillor Thorpe advised that a substantial programme of work remained ongoing and that engagement with partners continued.

Rob Summerfield Director of Regenation and Growth explained that the website had not yet been updated to reflect more recent activity. The ALDP had generated significant capital receipts through a number of successful property disposals and a written summary of completed transactions would be circulated to Members.

In response to further questions regarding future disposals, Members were advised that any proposed site disposals would be brought forward through the Council's established decision-making and scrutiny processes, including future Cabinet reports where appropriate.

Councillor Birchmore referred to proposals concerning school crossing patrols and the associated savings identified within the report.

Questions were raised regarding the future funding of crossing patrols, potential replacement measures and the consultation process that would be undertaken before any changes were implemented.

Councillor Thorpe noted that school crossing patrols were a non-statutory service and that a number of sites had experienced long-standing recruitment difficulties. He emphasised that no final decisions had been made and that the Council would work closely with schools and Transport for Greater Manchester to identify alternative arrangements where appropriate.

Ben Dunne Director of Education and Early Years reported that discussions were ongoing with school leaders regarding alternative staffing arrangements and recruitment options. He further advised that assessments of crossing sites were evidence-based and took into account pedestrian numbers, vehicular flows and formal crossing counts scheduled for November. The Committee was advised that six high-risk locations had been identified and that further information would be incorporated into a future report following completion of the assessments.

Councillor Rahimov queried proposals relating to street lighting dimming and expressed concern regarding public safety, particularly for women travelling at night. Councillor Rahimov suggested that motion-activated lighting could be explored as a possible alternative.

Councillor Thorpe acknowledged those concerns and confirmed that any proposals would be subject to thorough risk assessment. He agreed that officers would consider the suggestion regarding motion-activated lighting and assess whether new technologies could assist in achieving savings whilst maintaining public safety.

Councillor Birchmore sought clarification regarding income generated through parking charges and the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
Councillor Thorpe confirmed that any surpluses generated were subject to legislative restrictions and were effectively ring-fenced for specified transport-related purposes.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Sheppard regarding Council Tax arrears and affordability pressures, Councillor Thorpe stated that the Council was seeking a more supportive and people-focused approach to collection. He noted that work was ongoing nationally to advocate for greater flexibility in the Council Tax system.

Neil Kissock advised that the Council's priority was to intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent residents from falling into financial hardship and to ensure support mechanisms were available before arrears escalated.
Councillor Pilkington asked whether national reforms to Council Tax could result in a net gain or loss for Bury.

Councillor Thorpe responded that the present Council Tax system did not operate fairly for many authorities and residents. He noted that households in Bury were frequently paying higher Council Tax than comparable properties in parts of London despite significant differences in property values. He described the current system as outdated and in need of reform.

Councillor Sheppard sought assurances regarding the assumptions within the savings proposals relating to voluntary redundancy and workforce reductions.
Councillor Thorpe advised that the number of expressions of interest could not yet be disclosed.

In response to supplementary questions regarding severance costs, Neil Kissock confirmed that further details would emerge once the process had progressed and that capital receipt flexibilities could be utilised to support transformation and savings programmes where permitted.

Councillor Rydeheard asked whether assessments had been undertaken regarding the deletion of vacant posts.

Neil Kissock confirmed that the impact of vacancy deletions would continue to be assessed as proposals developed.

Councillor Rydeheard highlighted ongoing difficulties in recruiting to a number of corporate services positions.

Councillor Thorpe advised that certain professional sectors were experiencing shortages of suitably qualified and experienced candidates.

Jacqui Dennis monitoring officer explained that recruitment challenges were being experienced nationally, particularly within legal services and social care. Competition from the private sector, together with the complexity of the work involved, made recruitment and retention difficult. Members were advised that proposals had recently been developed to strengthen leadership capacity within Legal Services.

Councillor Birchmore questioned the potential impacts of charging for green waste collections, including the possibility of increased fly-tipping and reductions in recycling performance.

Councillor Thorpe advised that food waste collections would continue through the brown bin service but garden waste would become subject to a separate charge if proposals proceeded. He noted that approximately a large percentage of of councils already operated charged garden waste schemes and that the Council would need to examine all available options when considering budget reductions.

He acknowledged concerns regarding recycling performance and advised that detailed impact assessments and mitigation measures would form part of any future consultation and decision-making process.

When questioned whether the Council could ultimately lose more income than it gains through reduced recycling rates, Councillor Thorpe acknowledged that such risks existed and would need careful consideration. However, he stressed that all potential options needed to be explored as part of the budget-setting process before any final decisions were made.

Councillor Roith asked what level of capital receipts had been assumed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Neil Kissock advised that no capital receipts had been factored into the MTFS assumptions.

Councillor Rydeheard sought clarification regarding maturing loans and refinancing assumptions.

Neil Kissock explained that the Council actively managed its debt portfolio, taking professional treasury advice and seeking to delay borrowing where appropriate. A combination of short-term borrowing and future refinancing assumptions had been incorporated into financial planning.

Councillor Birchmore asked whether future borrowing costs associated with the Oak Learning Partnership had been incorporated into the MTFS.

Neil Kissock advised that these costs had not yet been included and would be reflected in future versions of the MTFS as the position became clearer. Officers were also exploring potential Department for Education funding opportunities and the use of underspends within the capital programme.

Councillor Rydeheard sought clarification regarding earmarked reserves and the Council's longer-term financial resilience.

Members were advised that reserves remained limited resources and that discussions were continuing with Government regarding financial flexibilities available to local authorities. Officers noted that Bury's position was not unique, with many councils facing similar challenges arising from the gap between income and expenditure.

The Committee noted the withdrawal of the proposed Children's Services consultation proposal and that it would not proceed to public consultation. Members further noted that proposals relating to the Youth Service would be considered separately at a later date and would not be brought forward as part of the current consultation process.

Councillor Rydeheard proposed a recommendation with regards to the school crossing patrol to which members expressed concerns and preferred to wait until further assessments had been made.

Members requested that future updates on the Asset and Land Disposal Programme, school crossing patrol assessments, leisure centre investment proposals and revised performance reporting templates be brought back to the Committee through the appropriate scrutiny process.

It Was Agreed:

- The update be noted
- The committee agreed with the recommendations put forward within the report to cabinet

OSC.138 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR J RYDEHEARD
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.50 pm)

Questioner	Question	Answer
	Financial Position	
Councillor Sheppard	1. How will the remaining £9.585m 2027/28 budget gap be closed, and when will Scrutiny receive a fully funded and deliverable plan for addressing it?	The £9.585m 2027/28 budget gap within the draft MTFS reflects the position after incorporating all currently identified savings proposals, totaling £17.56m. Work is continuing across all directorates to identify further savings options which may include workforce measures, service redesign opportunities and additional income generation. Whilst the Council remains focused on identifying further proposals to reduce the gap through local actions, given the current scale of the gap and reserve levels, Members are being asked to approve the exploration of Exceptional Financial Support to allow sufficient time to arrive at a conditional offer for EFS support in setting the 2027/28 budget should it be required. Any support granted would be subject to Government approval, may contain conditions in terms of decisions that the council would need to take, and could include flexibilities such as prudential borrowing or capital receipts to fund revenue expenditure or Council Tax increases above the referendum threshold. A number of councils already receiving EFS to support the 2026/27 budget have also recently received grants totaling £91m to support investment business cases targeted at delivering future years savings which is indication of an evolving approach to EFS. Further details are set out in Section 8 of the report. The Council's intention, and statutory requirement, is to present a balanced budget for 2027/28 in accordance with its statutory

		obligations. Further proposals will be developed and considered through the budget-setting process, with the final budget report considered by Scrutiny in advance of Cabinet and Council in February 2027.
Councillor Sheppard	2. What are the underlying reasons for the annual incremental budget gap changing from a £2.355m surplus in 2028/29 to a £10.278m gap in 2029/30, and what does this indicate about the Council's longer-term financial position?	The movement between the £2.355m surplus in 2028/29 and the £10.278m budget gap in 2029/30 is partly driven by the end of the current multi-year Local Government Finance Settlement, which concludes in 2028/29. As a result, funding assumptions beyond that point are subject to greater uncertainty. The MTFS currently assumes that the Recovery Grant (£2.488m) and Extended Producer Responsibility Grant (£0.645m) cease in line with the end of the settlement period. In addition, the savings programme includes £9.159m of recurring savings in 2028/29 compared with £0.533m currently identified for 2029/30, reflecting that further savings proposals will need to be developed as part of future budget-setting processes. Funding growth from Council Tax and Business Rates is expected to continue; however, expenditure pressures are forecast to increase at a faster rate, particularly in relation to demand-led services, contract inflationary pressures and Real Living Wage, as shown in Table 4 of the report. The movement highlights the ongoing structural challenge facing local government as a whole whereby expenditure growth is forecast to outpace funding growth.
Councillor Sheppard	3. The report refers to an "underlying structural budget gap". What evidence demonstrates that the proposed measures will eliminate that structural pressure rather than simply defer the	The Council has identified £27.251m of recurring savings proposals within the MTFS. The Council continues to face expenditure pressures outside of its direct control, including demand growth, inflation and increases in the Real Living Wage. These pressures are forecast to increase at a faster rate than the Council's funding and, whilst this position continues,

	need for further savings and income measures into future years?	the Council will need to continue to identify further recurring savings, efficiencies and transformation opportunities. To ensure budget gaps are not simply carried forward into future years, the Draft Budget Report does not propose the use of reserves to support ongoing expenditure. However, any use of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) would represent a one-off measure and would not eliminate the underlying structural challenge. Whilst EFS may assist in addressing a short-term funding gap, any prudential borrowing approved through EFS would increase budget gaps in future years. It is therefore imperative that the 2027/28 budget gap is closed as far as possible through recurring measures to avoid creating further financial pressure in subsequent years. The Council recognises that there is a structural imbalance between recurring expenditure commitments and available recurring funding. Consequently, the savings programme included within the MTFS is focused on delivering recurring reductions in expenditure and recurring increases in income rather than one-off solutions.
Councillor Sheppard	4. Given that the MTFS assumes ongoing 4.99% annual Council Tax increases, what action is the Council taking to improve recovery of outstanding Council Tax debt, and what proportion of the current debt does it consider realistically recoverable through improved collection and enforcement?	The Collection and Support Service has initiated a Council Tax Collection Improvement Plan focused on increasing recovery rates, reducing debt levels and ensuring recovery action is taken earlier and more effectively. The overarching principle of the plan is to maximise recovery of collectible debt while ensuring that vulnerable residents are appropriately supported and that recovery action remains proportionate and targeted. The key measures within the plan include:

		• Earlier intervention with taxpayers showing signs of non-payment, including proactive contact and targeted communications before accounts progress to summons stage. • Segmentation of debtors so recovery activity is tailored according to individual circumstances, payment history and debt value. • Greater use of statutory recovery remedies such as Attachments of Earnings and Attachments of Benefits where appropriate. • Improved debt prioritisation to focus resources on debts with the highest likelihood of recovery and the greatest financial value. • Enhanced tracing and data-matching activity to locate debtors and improve contact rates. • Stronger performance management of enforcement activity, including regular monitoring of enforcement agent performance and recovery outcomes. • Better management information and exception reporting to identify stalled cases and to maximise collection opportunities. • The aim and expectation of the plan is to therefore improve the Council's overall Council Tax performance by increasing collection rates, reducing outstanding arrears and recovering a greater proportion of realistically collectable debt. This will be achieved through earlier intervention with customers, more

		effective use of data and debt segmentation, and a targeted recovery approach that matches enforcement activity to the circumstances and recoverability of individual cases. A key objective is to prevent debt from escalating by identifying payment difficulties earlier and providing appropriate support, while ensuring that statutory recovery and enforcement powers are used effectively where residents have the means to pay but do not engage. The improvement plan also aims to focus resources on higher-value and higher-probability debts, supported by improved tracing, debt prioritisation and performance management. Ultimately, the programme seeks to maximise income from the existing Council Tax base, reduce the level of historic debt, improve cash flow and strengthen the sustainability of the Council's financial position, whilst maintaining a supportive and proportionate approach to collection that balances revenue recovery with support for vulnerable residents.
	Savings, Reserves and Delivery	
Councillor Sheppard	5. Of the £27.251m total savings programme, what proportion has been secured, what proportion remains dependent on future management action	£17.451m of the £27.251m proposed savings programme are new savings proposals with the remainder being approved in previous budget cycles. Of the £17.451m new savings proposals the majority are for management actions as they do

	or policy decisions, and what assessment has been made of the risk of non-delivery?	not require policy decisions with the remaining £2.686m being proposed policy decision savings (detailed in Appendix 2 of the report) and are subject to consultation. It is recognised that it is unlikely that any savings programme of this scale will deliver exactly in line with what is being proposed. The savings programme comprises a mixture of proposals requiring management action, initiatives designed to reduce demand and associated costs, income generation through planned increases in fees and charges, and proposals that require further policy decisions before implementation. The programme therefore contains savings at different stages of development and delivery. All savings proposals included within the MTFS have been subject to review by the Executive Leadership Team and Strategic Finance Leads, including assessment of deliverability, achievability, implementation timescales and associated risks, but a number are necessarily based on best estimates and assumptions. To further strengthen governance and oversight, the Council is establishing a Savings Delivery Group which will meet on a monthly basis and report through to the Finance Board. The Group will allocate risk ratings, monitor progress against delivery milestones and provide challenge where delivery is at risk. Savings delivery will also be reported regularly to Cabinet through the budget monitoring process. Where delivery risks are identified, mitigating actions will be required to be developed (alternative savings options) and actioned to minimise any impact on the overall financial position. The Council recognises that delivery of the savings

		programme represents one of the key financial risks within the MTFS and this is reflected within the overall financial risk assessment.
Councillor Sheppard	6. Given the £5.691m forecast 2026/27 overspend, what additional assurance has been undertaken that the proposed 2027/28 savings are realistic, achievable and recurring?	The forecast 2026/27 overspend primarily reflects ongoing demand and cost pressures being experienced across local government, particularly within demand-led services. However, a small number of previously agreed savings have been delayed and work is continuing to both identify mitigations and a revised delivery profile. In developing the 2027/28 MTFS, expenditure budgets have been reviewed and updated to reflect the latest forecast demand, inflationary pressures and other known cost drivers. This provides confidence that savings proposals have been developed against expenditure forecasts that reflect the latest known demand and cost pressures.
Councillor Sheppard	7. With the Budget Stabilisation Reserve forecast to fall to £5.977m, what level of reserves does the Council consider prudent, and what contingency is available if savings or income assumptions are not achieved?	The adequacy of reserves is assessed and reported annually within the final budget report by the Section 151 Officer having regard to the Council's financial risks, spending commitments and overall financial resilience. The forecast reduction in the Budget Stabilisation Reserve demonstrates the importance of reducing reliance on reserves to support the revenue budget. The Council's longer-term objective remains to restore financial resilience and maintain reserves at a level adequate with the risks facing the organisation. There is no national statutory minimum level of reserves for UK councils. Each council sets its own minimum reserve balances based on local risk assessments and the advice of the s151 officer. Bury currently holds a general fund reserve of £10m

		which is c4% of the net revenue budget (some councils hold lower %'s than this) and is effectively the current minimum prudent level but will be subject to review and updated in the February budget report. Where savings delivery or income generation assumptions are not achieved, mitigations may include in-year spending controls, alternative savings measures, utilisation of any available contingencies and, as a last resort, the use of reserves where considered appropriate by the Section 151 Officer. The council is working hard to reduce the level of forecast overspend reported at Q1 and reduce the forecast impact on the budget stabilisation reserve.
	Workforce and Services	
Councillor Sheppard	8. What specifically is included within the £14.765m of "non-policy savings", and how much relates to staffing reductions, service capacity or activity?	Non-policy savings primarily comprises efficiency measures, demand control, income generation, contractual savings and other operational changes that do not require Members to make a policy decision to reduce or cease a service. Appendix 1 and Table 7 sets out the total new savings proposed for 2027/28 to 2029/30 of £17.451m, of which £14.765m relates to non-policy savings. The remaining £2.686m relates to proposed policy savings identified in Annex 2. Of the total £17.451m new savings, £5.480m relates to non-policy decision workforce measures, including £3.119m in relation to vacancy management and funding switches. A directorate breakdown of the savings programme is provided in Appendix 1.

		Any staffing implications will be subject to the Council's workforce policies, consultation requirements and equality impact assessment processes where applicable.
Councillor Sheppard	9. The Council's workplan identifies further saving proposals, including significant workforce reductions, to reduce the current £9.585m 2027/28 gap. What is the full anticipated scale and financial cost of these reductions, including redundancy and other workforce transition costs?	Further work is currently being undertaken to develop proposals required to address the remaining budget gap. As a result, the scale of any potential workforce reductions has not yet been finalised. Where workforce changes are proposed, the associated financial implications, including redundancy costs, will be fully assessed as part of the development of each proposal. The Council's approach remains to minimise compulsory redundancies wherever possible and to consider alternative measures including voluntary exit scheme and redeployment opportunities.
Councillor Sheppard	10. What assessment has been made of the cumulative impact of the proposed savings, service reductions and increased charges on vulnerable residents and those least able to absorb additional costs, and how will Equality Impact Assessments influence final decisions? Will those assessments be available to Scrutiny before Cabinet considers the final budget proposals?	The Council has established an officer group to consider the collective impact of the staffing and non-staffing-related decisions contained within this report. This group will co-ordinate the production of an overarching Equality Impact Assessment for the budget as a whole, and quality assurance of non-staffing-related EIA changes. These will be brought forward with the final budget report. Staff-related changes will follow relevant policies, which have already been assessed for impact.
	Specific Service Proposals	
Councillor Sheppard	11. Before the proposed School Crossing Patrol reductions are finalised, will Scrutiny receive the November 2026 recounts/reassessments, location-specific risk assessments and road-safety	The Council assesses crossing points against established School Crossing Patrol Service guidance. Sites are reviewed every two years, or where circumstances change, taking account of factors including pedestrian and traffic volumes,

	evidence underpinning those decisions, particularly for the three sites still requiring review?	vehicle types and speeds, visibility, lighting, road markings and the age of children using the crossing. The service has used local knowledge to RAG rate each crossing point and have determined that the high-priority points will be retained, however the medium and low-priority points are proposed to be disestablished. The current school crossing points have been categorised according to priority as follows: • 6 high priority • 6 medium priority • 26 low priority • 3 requiring further review and traffic counts before a recommendation is made. Where possible these counts will take place during November 2026. However, there is one point at The Heys which is currently out of action as there is a sinkhole adjacent to the crossing point. The whole road is closed off to vehicles, so no traffic is permitted to go down the road, although pedestrian access is still available. This site has been vacant since the patrol retired. It is proposed to retain crossing points designated as high-priority only and disestablish those assessed as medium or low priority. All points have a site specific risk assessment. Copies of these can be shared with Scrutiny. All risk assessments are reviewed for the start of the new academic year in September and at points throughout the academic year if any changes to the site arise.

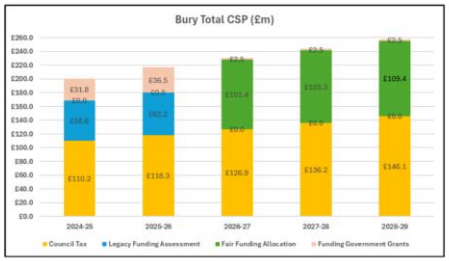
		The Council's Department for Place (Highways/Engineering Division) collate road-safety data, which can also be shared with Scrutiny
Councillor Sheppard	12. Given that the Youth Service proposal identifies a risk of losing preventative provision for vulnerable young people, what assessment has been made of whether reducing Youth Service capacity could increase demand for Early Help, Youth Justice and safeguarding services?	The template included within the budget report does not reflect the latest position. The proposed reduction in spending of £145k is aligned to our Families First Partnership proposal (which is also to be presented at Cabinet on the 14th October), which proposes the establishment of an adolescent offer, and will not impact upon the current youth offer. Scrutiny may wish to consider removing this budget template ahead of Cabinet. Any proposed changes to youth service delivery will be subject to consultation and co-production with our children and young people.
Councillor Sheppard	13. The MTFS relies on additional income from leisure price increases, including an assumption of 2,500 additional members. What evidence supports this assumption, and what contingency exists if membership growth or income falls below forecast?	SLC (a specialist Leisure Consultancy firm) were commissioned to produce a report on the business continuity plan for Leisure services, as well as different management options. They summarised the membership based on 2,220 for the gym area only, not including pool and studio areas. The additional 280 was to cover the sites for these areas over the maturity of the membership development. Based on performance since 2022 membership is stable with existing sites, and membership growth is forecasted for Radcliffe or back fill of movement across sites. Actual membership and income levels will need to be closely monitored to plan, and any under or over performance will be factored into annual MTFS refreshes.
Councillor Sheppard	14. The garden waste proposal identifies risks around participation, fly-tipping and recycling performance. What is the expected net financial benefit under different uptake scenarios, and how will	The principal risks identified relate to lower than anticipated participation levels, changes in recycling performance, increased use of Household Waste Recycling Centres,

	the financial impact of these risks be monitored?	potential impacts on future EPR funding and any increase in fly-tipping or inappropriate waste disposal. Should the proposal proceed, subscription levels, recycling performance, waste tonnages, customer demand, fly-tipping trends, disposal costs and any impacts on EPR funding would be monitored through existing performance management arrangements which are very thorough and detailed. Financial assumptions would be reviewed and updated as actual data becomes available to ensure that the ongoing financial performance of the scheme is understood and any emerging risks are appropriately managed.
	Exceptional Financial Support and long-term sustainability	
Councillor Sheppard	15. The Council is seeking approval to explore Exceptional Financial Support. What further local measures must be exhausted before EFS would be relied upon, and what would be the long-term financial consequences of any capitalisation or additional borrowing?	The report is asking permission for EFS to be explored with MHCLG – that process is intended to achieve a conditional offer of support in advance of the budget setting in February. The terms of those conditions including any local measures which may be required to be actioned are necessarily not known at this stage until we have been through the EFS assessment process. If approved by Government, EFS can take a number of forms: a) **Council Tax increases above the referendum limit** – This would generate additional recurring income for the Council and therefore provide a more sustainable solution than one-off measures. As the additional funding would continue into future years, it would help address the underlying budget gap rather than creating further pressure in subsequent years. *Note a 1%*

		increase in Council Tax is approximately £1.311m of additional funding. b) **Revenue costs to be funded through receipts** This allows qualifying revenue costs to be funded from capital receipts. Whilst this can provide one-off support in 2027/28, it does not create ongoing funding. For example, if £9.5m of capital receipts were used to support the 2027/28 budget, an equivalent pressure would remain to be addressed in 2028/29 unless recurring savings or income were identified. c) **Revenue costs to be funded from borrowing** This allows qualifying revenue expenditure to be funded through borrowing. As with the use of capital receipts, this provides one-off budget support rather than a recurring funding solution. In addition, borrowing creates ongoing financing costs, including interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges, which place further pressure on future budgets. Any use of EFS, particularly where it involves either capital receipts or borrowing, would therefore need to form part of a wider financial recovery strategy focused on delivering recurring savings, increasing recurring income and restoring long-term financial sustainability.
Councillor Sheppard	16. What is the Council's credible long-term route to eliminating the underlying structural budget gap, rather than repeatedly relying on further service reductions, increased charges, reserves, asset disposals or Exceptional Financial Support? What contingency plans are in place if EFS is not forthcoming?	The Council's long-term strategy is centred on bringing recurring expenditure into line with recurring funding through a combination of demand management, service redesigns, prevention, continued review of how services are delivered, digital transformation and growing our funding taxbase. Identifying additional savings and additional income generation necessarily form part of that strategy, the objective is to

		achieve a sustainable financial position that reduces dependence on reserves, asset disposals and other one-off measures. The report sets out that officers are working to identify further budget proposals in advance of budget-setting with exploration of EFS being undertaken as a fall back position if the current forecast gap for 2027/28 cannot be closed sufficiently. In the event that the gap cannot be sufficiently closed through the identification of additional local measures and the council did not receive a conditional offer of Exceptional Financial Support, then the council would be at risk of being unable to set a legal budget with the issue of a Section 114 notice by the s151 officer a potential consequence. The risk of not being accepted for EFS is considered low at this stage informed by there being 36 councils already in receipt of that support in 2026/27 and that number is expected to increase significantly in 2027/28. Recent announcements include c£91m of EFS grants being allocated to 14 councils to help modernise high-cost services and cut emergency dependence and the council will look to develop suitable business cases as part of the EFS process.

Questioner	**Question**	**Answer**
Councillor Birchmore	1. Page 16, section 2.2.2 shows the following table with descriptor:	The reference to the figures being adjusted relates to the treatment of Government grant funding within the legacy Local Government Finance Settlement arrangements. For 2024/25 and 2025/26, legacy grant funding has been separated from the broader legacy assessment to provide a consistent basis

	2.2.2. The graph below sets out the figures for local authority CSP from 2024/25 through to 2028/29. [Note figures for 2024/25 and 2025/26 have been adjusted to ensure a consistent measure of local authority income over time]. The published CSP includes four consolidated service grants which are ringfenced for specific service delivery and have therefore been excluded from the graph below.  8 Please can you explain what is meant by "*figures for 2024/25 and 2025/26 have been adjusted to ensure a consistent measure of local authority income over time*"? The way I read this is: 2024/25 non-council tax funding is £90.40 million 2025/26 non-council tax funding is £98.70 million (9% increase on previous year) 2026/27 non-council tax funding is £103.90 million (5% increase on previous year)	for comparison with the fair funding allocation figures shown for 2026/27 onwards. Council Tax income is forecast to increase as a proportion of the Council's overall funding, meaning the Council is becoming increasingly reliant on locally raised taxation to fund services. The Council is not alone in this position and the trend is reflected across much of local government. For Bury, this challenge is compounded by relatively low growth in the Council Tax Base.

	2027/28 non-council tax funding is £107.80 million (4% increase on previous year) 2028/29 non-council tax funding is £111.90 million (4% increase on previous year) Is this correct? I assume so because you said we are increasingly becoming more reliant on council tax payments. With increasing employment costs and costs of materials, electricity and gas, is it inevitable that all councils in this position will need to make cuts?	
Councillor Birchmore	2. Page 51 (43 in the Revenue Budget Strategy) states the following: "*Ramsbottom is a well-used and substantially utilised facility, with around 1,300 members, but it still operates at an estimated net cost to the Council of around £230k per year*. *In addition to this, remedial capital works are required at Ramsbottom, that are estimated to cost c£1m*	There is a building age and capacity limit at Ramsbottom. Current income generated through memberships, swimming and other activities does not fully cover the costs of running and maintaining an ageing facility and addressing the remedial works required. The building is relatively well used and ongoing performance and reviews of the leisure centre and its membership are in place. There are limits to its potential for growth inactivity – limited pool space due to the closure of Radcliffe – which will be addressed by the new Radcliffe hub - but of course there is a pressure of inflationary costs across the whole of the leisure centre estates including new Radcliffe.

	which equates to an additional £100k revenue cost per year to cover the cost of prudential borrowing, resulting in a total ongoing estimated net cost of £330k. *The centre is valued and active, but financially unsustainable in its own right. Following an assessment of the market (see section on Impact on Fees and Charges) the preferred course of action is to retain the site but increase the charges for Leisure facilities across the estate, to cover the MTFS gap.*" Please can you explain the following: • What do you believe the causes of Ramsbottom being a loss-making facility? • Have any studies been carried out to investigate facility usage at Ramsbottom? • If usage of Ramsbottom was to increase could the facility handle the increased footfall?	Ramsbottom can accommodate additional lessons and usage within the pool area, however this may impact on the number of public swimming sessions and associated income. There is opportunity for weekend and daytime gym growth, however gym growth in peak times is limited by gym capacity. There is limited indoor dry space. A review of additional classes has been explored and being further considered to generate more income, for example chair based activities. But there is a real limitation of indoor space capacity. We have explored potential expansion of the gym areas but it would require additional upfront capital costs and would take a a number of years to be viable. We have explored padel courts but consideration concluded but would require significant upfront capital investment and would take several years before generating a positive return. A wide range of operational options have been explored as part of the leisure review, including opportunities to reduce subsidy through efficiencies, increased income and service redesign. However, the analysis undertaken indicates that the scale of the financial challenge is such that relatively modest operational changes alone would not be sufficient to address the subsidy requirement and address inflationary pressure such as energy costs across the leisure centre estates Overall in the light of the financial position of the council we believe in the need to try and keep Ramsbottom open for the positive and valued contribution it makes the town and the

	• I assume that the increase in fees will apply to fees for use on all sites, is that correct? • Have alternative uses for the facility that could operate alongside its use as a leisure centre been considered to generate funds towards running, what is currently being seen as a loss-making facility? • Have reduced hours openings to make cost savings been considered? • Does the adjoining land (also owned by the Council) have any commercial value?	borough but we need to ensure the three leisure centres operate at least breakeven and are not loss making.
Councillor Birchmore	3. Am I correct in assuming that the £1 million to be invested in Ramsbottom Leisure Centre will be needed to cover the following: • Fixing the exterior of the building, plus gym and pool roof maintenance. • System upgrades: Improving plant and mechanical systems, electrical infrastructure, and ventilation.	Yes to points: Fixing exterior, System upgrades, Interior updates. All of the essential work has been outlined in previous building reports commissioned. Equipment upgrades are not part of this scope of works. Yes - Leisure are working with Place colleagues to lead and support the capital repairs program that needs careful planning and implementation across all sites. Condition Surveys outlined that the works highlighted at both Castle and Ramsbottom are all essential - required from a compliance position. Works will need to be phased. Place Directorate are supporting procurement and programming of all essential

	• Interior updates: Replacing worn flooring, upgrading the changing village, and minor redecoration. • Equipment and commercial improvements: Replacing old equipment and supporting commercial activities to boost membership and income. Please can you provide answers to the following: • Do you have a breakdown of how much this work will cost? • Given the current situation is all this spend considered to be essential at this moment in time? • Would it be possible to postpone some of the work until a later date? • Would carrying any part of this work reduce the	works. Need to ensure that all building compliance is maintained and not deferred further. Yes the majority of the work is to do with plant and machinery improvement that will then reduce repairs and maintenance cost and support improved energy performance. However scheduling of this work required to minimise impact on members and income levels.

	running costs of this facility?	
Councillor Birchmore	4. Core improvements for £3.57 million investment for t. Castle Leisure Centre (page 54) are given in other documents as: • Core Infrastructure: Upgrading vital mechanical systems, plant equipment, and flooring. • Facilities: Improving the condition of areas such as the changing village. • Commercialization: Enhancing spaces to support increased rental offering, new programs, and overall income-generation activities. Please can you answer the following questions: • Do you have a breakdown of how much this work will cost?	Yes - Leisure are working with Place colleagues to lead and support capital the repairs program that needs careful planning and implementation across all sites. Condition Surveys outlined that the works highlighted at both Castle and Ramsbottom are all essential – and required from compliance position. Works will need to be phased. Place Directorate are supporting the procurement and programming of all essential works. Need to ensure that all building compliance is maintained and not deferred further. Yes the majority of the work is to do with plant and machinery improvement that will then reduce repairs and maintenance cost and support improved energy performance. However, scheduling of this work required to minimise impact on members and income levels.

	• Given the current situation is all this work considered to be essential at this moment in time? • Would it be possible to postpone some of the work until a later date? • Would carrying any part of this work reduce the running costs of this facility?	
Councillor Birchmore	5. Page 53 (45 in the Revenue Budget Statement) suggests the following in relation to leisure services: "*If we increase the prices by 20% per year for the next two years (additional 10%) this would incrementally increase the price of a membership from the current cost of £35.75 per month to £42.90 in 27/28, and to £51.48 Per Month in 2028/29. The 2029/30 rates would then go back to a 10% annual increase,*	The options presented in the report are not based solely on increasing prices. The wider leisure strategy is built around a combination of increasing memberships, targeted marketing, expanding swimming lessons, improving utilisation of facilities and developing additional income streams. The intention is to reduce the overall leisure subsidy whilst retaining access to leisure services across the borough. The reports also note that leisure services currently provide support to targeted and vulnerable groups, including subsidised access and concessionary arrangements. These social benefits form part of the wider consideration when decisions are being made about future pricing and service provision. This proposal meets with the LET's principle of enterprise and strengths to allow the authority to be able to maintain its level of service offering wide across the brough. The service offers discount memberships, lessons and session to qualifying residents, along side compliment memberships to serving and veteran of the armed forces. The Service undertakes

	resulting in a cost of £56.63 for 2029/30." Put another way, the cost of membership would increase from £35.75 per month to £56.63 per month in 3 years (or £429 to £679). This represents a 58% increase. The report compares the cost to other commercial facilities and ignores the obvious possibility that residents in some areas may simply stop using the gym altogether. This is a serious concern for less affluent areas and may result in poorer health outcomes, that would ultimately impact on the Council. Please answer the following: • What are the Council's plans to avoid a potential drop of in usage in less affluent areas? • How does this fit with Bury Council's "Let's Do It!"	benchmarking too with other operators in Bury and Greater Manchester. Forecasted fees and charges have been assessed around the estimated increase in members (see earlier information linked to the 2500 membership forecast), which is reflected in the MTFS to account for the incremental estimated supply and demand. Close monitoring of income and membership levels will be carried out, with over or underperformance reflected in annual MTFS refreshes.

	health and wellbeing strategy which claims to focus on community-led health improvement? • Have you analysed this with an estimated supply and demand curve to determine break even points for each price rise, given the potential reduction in usage?	
	Green Waste Subscription	
	6. On paper this may seem like a good idea but there are several significant risks that need to be considered. The report refers to the loss of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding. The following observation was made: "*Evidence from neighbouring GM authorities indicates that charging for garden waste leads to a reduction in kerbside garden waste collections. Following the introduction of charges, garden waste tonnages reduced by*	At present, the Council isunable to quantify any potential impact on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) payments arising from the introduction of a chargeable garden waste service. EPR funding is intended to reimburse local authorities for the net efficient costs of collecting, managing and disposing of household packaging waste and is not specifically allocated to garden waste collections. Whilst evidence from other authorities suggests that the introduction of a garden waste subscription service may reduce garden waste tonnages collected, the effect this may have on future EPR funding remains uncertain. The EPR scheme is still being implemented and the methodology used by PackUK to determine local authority payments will continue to develop. As a result, the Council is not currently able to identify a specific EPR funding value attributable to garden waste collections or accurately quantify any future financial impact.

	16.62% in Stockport and 10.24% in Trafford, despite both authorities providing a weekly food waste collection service." In the past all GM authorities have been beneficiaries from EPR funding, a decrease in green waste could result in a decrease in EPR funding which could potentially offset some of the income raised from subscription-based waste collection. Do we currently know how much EPR funding we get in Bury from green waste collection?	
	7. Page 62 of the agenda acknowledges the risk of "*Increased fly tipping or inappropriate disposal of garden waste*". Unfortunately, there is no real evidence of how the Council proposes to address this other than stating "*Implement proactive communications promoting legal disposal routes, home composting and Household Waste Recycling*	The potential for an increase in fly-tipping and inappropriate disposal of garden waste has been identified as a risk and is reflected within the report. The Council recognises that fly-tipping has environmental, operational and financial impacts and will continue to monitor reports and trends should a chargeable garden waste service be introduced. A range of mitigation measures would be available to residents. These include continued access to the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centre network, promotion of home composting, and clear communications regarding the legal disposal options available for garden waste. Residents would also continue to have the option of subscribing to the garden waste collection service.

	Centres". The reality is that in some areas this is an issue seen fairly regularly. Clearing up fly-tipped waste is fairly costly and time consuming. That should be balanced off against the potential income raised. What realistic plans does the Council have to address potential increased fly-tipping? Have any calculations of additional costs relating to fly-tipping of green waste been made?	It should be noted that garden waste can be disposed of free of charge at Household Waste Recycling Centres and therefore a chargeable kerbside collection service does not remove residents' ability to dispose of garden waste legally. At this stage, no specific financial provision has been included for an increase in fly-tipping related to garden waste. Whilst the risk has been recognised, it is difficult to accurately predict any potential increase in incidents or associated costs. The Council will continue to review evidence from other authorities and monitor local data should the proposal be implemented. The financial assessment contained within the report is based on projected subscription income, implementation costs and service delivery costs. Any future impacts, whether positive or negative, would be monitored as part of the ongoing management of the service.
	8. Page 60 gives an estimate of income generation in 2028/29 of £0.562m. Please answer the following: • How has that figure been arrived at? • How many sign-ups to the scheme would be needed? • What percentage of households in Bury MBC would that represent?	The estimated net income of £0.562m in 2028/29 is based on financial modelling undertaken as part of the development of the proposal. The model assumes an annual subscription charge of £50 per brown bin and a participation rate of approximately 25,000 households. This represents around 50% of the estimated 50,000 households that currently use the garden waste element of the brown bin service. Under these assumptions, the scheme would generate gross annual income of approximately £1.25m per annum (25,000 subscriptions x £50). From this income, allowance has been made for ongoing operational and administrative costs associated with delivering the service, including collection operations, permit administration, customer support,

	• What are the figures for estimated take-up based on?	communications, ICT system support, permit production and distribution, and contract management. These costs are estimated at approximately £688,000 in the first full year of operation. This results in an estimated net saving of £0.562m in 2028/29. The estimated take-up rate has not been presented as a forecast of actual resident behaviour. Rather, it is a planning assumption used for financial modelling purposes and is informed by benchmarking, comparator authority experience and scenario modelling undertaken as part of the business case development. Actual subscription levels could be higher or lower and would be influenced by the final charging structure, consultation outcomes, resident preferences and the detailed design of the scheme.
	Parking Fees 9. Is it correct to say that under Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 section 55 that any money made from council parking accounts must be reinvested into transport, road improvements, or local environmental projects?	Yes, any surplus generated after allowable expenditure, such as direct staff and civil enforcement officer salaries, premises and maintenance costs for car parks and supplies, equipment and administrative support services, should be reinvested into parking services, public transport or highway and road improvements.
	School Crossing Patrol Re-design 10. Page 65, under the heading Workforce states the following:	It is proposed to disestablish 32 crossing points. Of these 32 points, 15 are currently staffed. If this proposal is implemented, these posts would be disestablished and, further to staff consultation, there would be approximate staffing savings of £187,242, based upon an average cost of a SCP at £5,674.

	"*A total of 32 points would be disestablished if high risk only points remain operational, resulting in 15 staffed posts being deleted, 1 post would be redeployed to a vacant high-priority crossing. Points differ in the number of staff hours, based on an average cost of a SCP at £5,674 staffing savings of £187,242.*" • My reading of this is that 32 crossing would no longer be manned. Cost of manning each crossing is on average £5,674 per annum hence the £187,242, is this correct? • Please can you explain the statement regarding 15 staffed posts being deleted, and what relevance this has? • What criteria are you using to define as a "high risk" point? • How many of the 32 points you want to disestablish serve primary schools?	Of the 32 points proposed for disestablishment, 30 currently serve primary schools. The Council assesses crossing points against established School Crossing Patrol Service guidance. Sites are reviewed every two years, or where circumstances change, taking account of factors including pedestrian and traffic volumes, vehicle types and speeds, visibility, lighting, road markings and the age of children using the crossing. The service has used local knowledge to RAG rate each crossing. This is based upon low-priority points having a score less than 10 million, medium priority between 10 million and 20 million, high priority 20 million and over As a non-statutory service under sustained budget pressure, school crossing patrol provision is increasingly being reviewed. When reviewing future options, consideration of wider road safety and active travel measures must be taken into account. Common alternatives include zebra or signal-controlled crossings, traffic calming and, in some areas, school street models. This points to a move away from relying on staffed patrols towards a broader mix of engineering, traffic management and behaviour-change measures. It is ultimately a parent/carer responsibility for ensuring children are safe travelling to and from school. TfGM/Bee Network also publish guidance on safe travel and travelling independently. The current SCP service has reduced over time and has longstanding staffing/ recruitment issues which are common across the country. This coincides with significant GM

	• Although termed as "*non-statutory school crossing patrols*" with a drive to encouraging pupils to walk and cycle to school do you not believe this may be potentially counterproductive? • Does the statement "*parental responsibility for ensuring children are safe travelling to and from school*" not go against encouraging independence for children travelling to and from school? Could this simply be seen as an opt out position for the Council? • Page 65 states the following: "*Whilst school crossing patrols have been seen as an important element in meeting the Council's duties to prevent accidents, promote road safety and sustainable travel to schools, these duties can also be met in other ways.*"	activity linked to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) which includes funding for a road safety activity such as automated crossings. With regards to site prioritisation for new potential controlled crossings, Place colleagues have advised that this is based on several factors as listed below which is fed into a matrix scoring system viz: i) Existing Injury Collision Records ii) Vulnerable Road users at risk iii) Existing Speed records information iv) Existing Traffic Volumes v) Classification of Road / Road Hierarchy vi) Level of Community concern at a particular location vii) Depravation Index viii) Proximity to schools / high footfall generator locations ix) Feasibility / Deliverability to physically introduce a new controlled crossing on site. x) Estimated Costs for any proposed scheme.

	Please can you explain what those other ways are and how those will be funded?	

Questioner	Question	Answer
Councillor Roith	1. Three things were promised at the last meeting and none are in tonight's pack: the location and savings figure for the new 60-place SEND provision, the separate HRA report on in-house services, and the Radcliffe Hub cost overrun figure. When will Members receive each of them?	These questions will be picked up under Matters Arising at the meeting.
Councillor Roith	2. "The report proposes authorising the Section 151 Officer to explore Exceptional Financial Support. Can the Cabinet Member tell us precisely what level of EFS the Council is currently anticipating it may need, what form that support is likely to take, and what conditions MHCLG may impose on Bury in return?"	The report identifies a funding gap of £9.585m which is effectively the current estimate of the maximum level of EFS that would be required. As outlined in the report, however the council is looking to identify additional savings proposals in advance of 2027/28 budget-setting which would then reduce the level of any requirement for EFS support. If approved by Government, EFS can take a number of forms: a) **Council Tax increases above the referendum limit** – This would generate additional recurring income for the Council and therefore provide a more sustainable solution than one-off measures. As the additional funding would continue into future years, it would help

		address the underlying budget gap rather than creating further pressure in subsequent years. *Note a 1% increase in Council Tax is approximately £1.311m of additional funding.* b) **Revenue costs to be funded through receipts** This allows qualifying revenue costs to be funded from capital receipts. Whilst this can provide one-off support in 2027/28, it does not create ongoing funding. For example, if £9.5m of capital receipts were used to support the 2027/28 budget, an equivalent pressure would remain to be addressed in 2028/29 unless recurring savings or income were identified. c) **Revenue costs to be funded from borrowing** This allows qualifying revenue expenditure to be funded through borrowing. As with the use of capital receipts, this provides one-off budget support rather than a recurring funding solution. In addition, borrowing creates ongoing financing costs, including interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges, which place further pressure on future budgets.
Councillor Roith	3. "Can Cabinet confirm whether the EFS being explored by Bury would actually provide the Council with additional government cash, or whether it would simply give Bury permission to fund its revenue	The Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) currently being explored by Bury would not provide additional government funding/grant to support the Council's budget gap. Instead, EFS typically provides flexibilities such as the use of capital receipts, additional borrowing or council tax increases, subject to Government approval.

	shortfall through asset sales and/or additional borrowing?"	While the Government has recently provided EFS grants to some authorities, these have been limited to councils already receiving EFS and must be used to fund specific and additional transformation activity rather than to fund an in-year budget gap.
Councillor Roith	4. "The report says the Council is refreshing and expanding its Accelerated Land and Property Disposal Programme to generate capital receipts, at the same time as it is exploring Exceptional Financial Support. Can Cabinet confirm how much it expects this disposal programme to raise, and whether those capital receipts are now being relied upon to help close the £9.585 million 2027/28 funding gap?"	The potential scale and delivery profile of additional capital receipts through land and property sales is currently being reviewed. The report notes that the preference under an EFS arrangement would be to use capital receipts to support any budget gap rather than prudential borrowing, as prudential borrowing would need to be repaid and increase the forecast funding gap.
Councillor Roith	5. "The report says that EFS could involve a capitalisation direction and potentially borrowing, while also acknowledging that additional borrowing would increase the budget gap because of interest costs. Given that the Council is already forecasting higher borrowing costs as loans are refinanced at current interest rates, can Cabinet state the maximum	As per the previous response, use of capital receipts would be preferred to prudential borrowing given the revenue implications of additional borrowing. Based on the current estimated budget gap of £9.5m for 2027/28 (which officers are working on additional proposals to reduce), borrowing that amount over 20 years at an assumed interest rate of 6% would result in additional annual revenue costs of approximately £1.045m, including both interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). On this basis, every £1m of additional borrowing would generate ongoing annual revenue costs of around £110k.

	additional borrowing that it would be prepared to undertake under EFS, and what annual revenue cost that borrowing would impose on future budgets?"	Budget assumptions will be refreshed ahead of the Final Budget Report and, therefore, the budget gap and any associated financing requirement may increase or decrease.

Questioner	**Question**	**Answer**
Councillor Rydeheard	1. Point 4.2.8 confirms we have a number of loans which are reaching maturity. Please can you confirm what loans we have which are reaching maturity and how much is left to pay on them?	All maturity loans, mixture of lenders PWLB and other Local Authorities. 2026/27 - £50.55m 2027/28 – £37m 2028/29 – £10m 2029/30 - £40m
Councillor Rydeheard	2. Appendix 1 on page 41 of the agenda pack notes a new "*Review of discretionary payments to external organisations (The Met, Fusiliers Museum, Citizens Advice Bureau)*" to take place. Please can you confirm what this review will entail?	The review is to discuss impacts with the relevant organisations. CAB is unaffected as although the PH contribution will stop, the contract within Corporate Core is able to continue at the current levels through existing budgets. MET and Fusiliers have been contacted to start conversations around these contributions and the proposal to stop them.
Councillor Rydeheard	3. Appendix 1 on page 41 of the agenda pack notes a new "*Increase to grant income linked to additional bids and applications*" being reviewed –	It will involve monitoring what new grants are announced, and then ensuring that where possible/applicable we bid for the funding that would support existing services. So we are not able to specify which grants at this stage, as depends on what

	please may you confirm what grants to which this refers?	is announced and the conditions imposed by the granting body re additionality. The expertise in the team to support wider services with grant bids will be utilised, aiming to maximise the likelihood of successful bids and generate associated financial benefits to the councils bottom line.
Councillor Rydeheard	4. Appendix 1 on page 42 of the agenda pack notes a £53,000 saving being down to a strengthened counter fraud approach. I am concerned by this, as it implies that we have spent £53,000 at least, in previous years, on potentially fraudulent spending – is this right? Please can you clarify this?	The proposal is to expand the Fraud team on an invest to save basis with the potential financial savings being achieved across wider council budgets through fraud identification and financial recovery and pro-active fraud (and related costs) avoidance. The outcome of the work already undertaken and the financial benefits are reported regularly to the Audit Committee. The investment will help to build on the positive counter fraud work already undertaken through the annual National Fraud Initiative which, once data matches have been reviewed often results in the recovery of overpayments, prevention of future losses, and the identification of savings. Common areas at risk of fraud where the additional resource will enhance coverage includes: o Targeted audit reviews of high-value or high-risk Direct Payment expenditure. o Independent peer review of Direct Payment audits completed by the section, strengthening assurance and consistency.

		o Targeted review of duplicate or anomalous payments processed through the Unit4 financial system. o Proactive checks on purchase card expenditure. o Proactive checks on Council Tax awarded support. o Proactive checks on the Crisis and Resilience Fund (merger of Welfare Payments and Discrete Housing Payments). o Proactive checks on the current White Account Forms and C61 payments.
Councillor Rydeheard	5. Appendix 1 on page 35 of the agenda pack notes a £258,000 saving being down to catering at the Radcliffe Hub café. What is the option being explored here, exactly?	The saving reported is to be achieved through income generation. The figure reported is the net operating surplus that will contribute to the corporate overheads and hence support the council's bottom line. The introduction of a cafe at the new Radcliffe Hub would be an additional service provided to users of the new Hub and delivered by the school and commercial catering team. The business case, as reported to the Commercial Board, will deliver these savings subject to the assumptions on footfall and minimum spend being met. These were set at prudent levels to ensure the risk of non-delivery was minimized and will be reviewed through the normal monthly monitoring process. As reported in the business case there is scope to mitigate any non-delivery through variance of operating hours and services provided should the foot fall not be achieved.

Councillor Rydeheard	6. Appendix 1 on page 35 of the agenda pack notes a £75,000 saving being down to the removal of a waste collection route. Please could more details be provided by this and reassurance to residents who regularly experience missed collections?	The £75,000 saving reflects the removal of one waste collection route through operational efficiencies and revised deployment of resources across the service. The saving is based on the service's assessment that collections can continue to be delivered effectively within a revised operating model, without reducing collection frequencies for residents. Maintaining service performance remains a priority and any changes would be carefully managed to minimise disruption and ensure residents continue to receive a reliable waste collection service.

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Agenda Item 6

Classification:	Decision Type:
Open	Non-Key

Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	**Date:** 24 November 2026
Subject:	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review 2025-26	
Report of	Director of Law & Governance	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to outline the findings and recommendations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for 2025-2026. Additional oversight and accountability for LGO supplied information is provided by the Council's Standards Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation(s)

(a) That the content of the Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter to the Council be noted; and:-

(b) That the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman referred to the Council during 2025/26 and their outcomes be noted.

Report Author and Contact Details:

Name: Michael Cunliffe
Position: Principal Democratic Services Officer
Department: Legal and Democratic Services
E-mail: m.cunliffe@bury.gov.uk

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1. Background

1.1. The Council received an Annual Report summarising all complaints dealt with by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ("LGO"). This report provides a brief commentary on the Ombudsman's Annual Review letter which is sent direct to the Council's Chief Executive, Leader and Chair of Overview & Scrutiny. (Attached as appendix A).
A report on this subject matter was also included at the Standards Committee meeting held on the 24th September 2026, which Members duly noted.

1.2. As with previous years, the statistics focus on three key areas:
- Complaints upheld
- Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority
- Compliance with recommendations

2. Ombudsman's Jurisdiction

2.1. The Local Government Act 1974 established the then Local Government Ombudsman for England and for Wales. The Act defines the main statutory functions:

- to investigate complaints against councils and some other authorities

- to investigate complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their own adult social care
- to provide advice and guidance on good administrative practice

The main activity under Part III of the 1974 Act is the investigation of complaints, which it states is limited to complaints from members of the public alleging they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration and/or service failure. The LGO jurisdiction under Part III covers all local authorities (excluding town and parish councils). The LGO changed its name to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2017 to reflect the full scope of their jurisdiction.

3. New changes for 2025/26

3.1 The LGO published a timely compliance statistic alongside the overall compliance rate. This statistic will show both the number and percentage of cases where agreed recommendations were recorded as completed on time. To be recorded as 'on time,' all parts of a multi part recommendation will need to have been recorded as delivered within agreed timescales.

3.2 The LGO understand the large majority of organisations achieve a 100% compliance rate with their recommendations, but a lower proportion are delivering agreed recommendations within the specified timeframes. The introduction of this new statistic provides further insight into the overall compliance rate and credits those authorities that adhere to agreed timescales, thereby ensuring prompt resolutions for individual complainants and service improvements that help prevent others from being similarly affected.

4. Key dates

20th May
Letters and information were issued to all authorities and the online map updated for 2025/26 statistics.

8th July
Letters were issued to authorities when the LGO had concerns or wanted to highlight exceptional practice. Bury Council received no further communications, therefore no matters needed to be raised.

15th July
Letters were published on the LGO website alongside the annual review of local government complaints. (Appendix C). The LGO Annual Review of Local Government Complaints in England for 2025-2026 pulls together the national picture of trends and common issues that have arisen from complaints over the last year.

5. Complaints and Enquiries Received by the Ombudsman in 2025/26

5.1. The Ombudsman provided, statistics on how complaints upheld against the Council were remedied and those not pursued. This year's letter and information again includes a breakdown, showing the complaints and enquiries received and decisions made. The letter is attached to the report as (Appendix A) and data available to view in the public domain (Appendix B). The number of complaints and enquiries received for 25/26 as compared to 24/25 has decreased slightly.

2024-2025- 100
2023-2024- 78
2022/2023- 72
2021/2022- 68
2020/2021 - 38 (Covid hit year)

5.2. The complaints received by the Ombudsman about the Council in 2025/26 were split across service areas as follows (Note- these are LGO designated service categories, see Appendix B). These are compared with last year's figures. (Appendix B) also lists the 83 cases decided.

Service Number of Complaints	**2025/26**	***Comparison to previous year***	***2024/25***
Adult Care Services	9	*No change*	*9*
Corporate & Other Services	5	*Decrease*	*9*
Education & Children's Services	33	*Increase*	*28*
Environmental & Public Protection & Reg	12	*Decrease*	*18*
Highways & Transport	16	*Increase*	*14*
Planning & Development	4	*Decrease*	*10*
Housing	12	*Increase*	*9*
Benefits and Tax	5	*Increase*	*2*
Other	1	*No change*	*1*

6. Ombudsman Complaint Decisions

6.1. The decision of "Upheld" is applied when the Ombudsman finds there is some fault in the way the Council acted – even if it has agreed to put things right during the course of the Ombudsman investigation; or had already accepted it needed to remedy the situation before the complaint was apparent to the Ombudsman. Upheld decision can be viewed online: Decision results - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

6.2. The LGO have advised on comparing statistics across the years and that they previously changed their investigation processes. This contributed towards an increase in the average uphold rate across all complaints. Members should consider comparing individual Council uphold rates against the average rate rather than against previous years.

For Bury **86%** of complaints investigated were upheld compared to an average of **83%** in similar authorities.

Decision of Ombudsman	**2025/26**	**2024/25**
Investigated – Upheld	18	*10*
Investigated – Not Upheld	3	*4*

6.3. The compliance data by the Ombudsman for the Council is also included within (Appendix B). There was a 100% compliance rate with recommendations and a 94% timely compliance rate compared to 79% in similar organisations.

7. Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter

7.1 The Annual Review letter provided an annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about this Council to the year ending 31 March 2026.

7.2 The LGO has an interactive map of performance. The map shows annual performance data for all Councils in England, with links to published decision statements, public interest reports, annual letters and information about service improvements that have been agreed by each Council. The intention of this tool is to place a focus on the authority's compliance with the recommendations. The interactive map can be accessed via the following link: Bury Metropolitan Borough Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

8. Other Information & Comparisons

8.1 It should also be acknowledged that complaints to the Ombudsman do not always involve the Council or its appeals processes of any wrongdoing; but that they come from people who would have liked something more, or better, or a different outcome. It is unlikely that public expectations of services will diminish in the short term and therefore there is no reason to suppose that complaints will fall significantly. Despite these challenges, Officers are making every effort to ensure that capacity to respond to the Ombudsman is maintained.

8.2 It is important that the Council takes even greater measures to ensure that it is able to evidence that it learns from complaints and uses this learning to improve and maintain the quality of the services it commissions and provides.

8.3 In comparison to other GM authorities, upheld data patterns for 2025-26 are as follows:-

Authority	Bury	*Rochdale*	*Bolton*	*Oldham*
Complaints Upheld	18 out of 21	5 out of 17	11 out of 13	6 out of 6

9. Monitoring complaints

9.1 Officers carefully monitor the LGO process and the large number of complaints especially in Children's Services. This can sometimes involve the same complainant with multiple complaints.

9.2 The LGO Link Officer and Monitoring Officer regularly review cases and the LGO have welcomed significant strides the Council has made over the last few years improving its complaint functions. This involves a centralised policy & complaints team that oversees all casework and compliance. Additional oversight and accountability is provided by both the Council's Standards Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

20 May 2026

By email

Ms Ridsdale
Chief Executive
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Ms Ridsdale

Annual Review letter 2025-26

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2026.

We recognise that local authorities continue to face significant pressures in delivering services to their communities. We hope the data and insight we share with you each year remains a useful tool for reflection and continuous improvement. Please consider it as part of your corporate governance processes.

Your annual statistics are available here.

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

We will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 15 July 2026.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

We remain committed to supporting the sector to embed effective systems of redress. Where authorities are navigating reorganisation and devolution, we are ready to help ensure that robust complaint handling is built into new arrangements from the outset. Please do get in touch if your organisation would benefit from our advice and guidance.

Our Complaint Handling Code, in force since April 2025, is now applied in our casework and offers structure and support to your local complaint system. Our training programme provides a flexible, expert-led route to building complaints capability across your teams, with courses open for individual delegates to book. Contact training@lgo.org.uk for more information.

Our Annual Review of Local Government Complaints will be published in July 2026, setting out the national picture of complaints, trends across service areas, and emerging systemic issues. We encourage you to read it alongside your own organisation's data.

Yours sincerely,

A. K. Clarke

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

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Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

Complaints and Enquiries Received (by Category) 2025-26

Authority Name	Adult Social Care	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environmental Services, Public Protection and Regulation	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	9	5	5	33	12	16	12	4	1	97

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

Complaints and Enquiries Decided (by Outcome) 2025-26

	Not for us / not ready for us			Assessed and closed	Investigated						
Authority Name	Invalid or Incomplete	Advice Given	Referred Back for Local Resolution	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Total	Upheld decisions per 100,000 residents	Average no of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents of similar authorities	Uphold rate (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	2	1	19	40	3	18	83	9.0	4.6	86%	83%

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

Remedy and compliance outcomes 2025-26

Authority Name	Number of upheld complaints	Uphold Rate (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities	Upheld cases where the authority provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman (%)	Average satisfactory remedy rate of similar authorities (%)	Number of cases with a compliance outcome recorded during the year	Number of compliance outcomes recorded as delivered on time	Percentage of compliance outcomes recorded as delivered on time (timely compliance rate) (%)	Average timely compliance rate in similar organisations (%)	Cases we were satisfied the authority successfully implemented our recommendations to remedy the complaint (compliance rate) (%)	Average compliance rate of similar authorities (%)
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	18	86%	83%	11%	16%	17	16	94%	79%	100%	100.0%

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Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2025-2026

July 2026





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Ombudsman's foreword

The scale of demand on our service this year should give every local authority pause for thought. The number of complaints we received this year has risen significantly and more sharply than at any time over the past 10 years. Last year we saw a 16% increase in the number of complaints we received. This year that figured has more than doubled to 33%. That increase is not concentrated in one area, it is consistent across all services.

This is not a picture unique to local government. There are rising demands across all UK public sector Ombudsman bodies and we are witnessing a broader crisis of public confidence in public services. When people cannot get the help they need, and feel they have no other recourse, they come to us. That so many are doing so tells us something important. It speaks not just about individual service failures, but about the gap between what residents expect and what they are receiving.

The picture painted by the complaints we deal with is consistent and concerning. In special educational needs services, in housing, and in adult social care, we are seeing the consequences of systems under sustained and serious strain.

I am acutely aware of the scale of reform currently underway. It is much needed and long overdue. The Casey Commission's work on adult social care, SEND reforms and the wider devolution programme all represent genuine opportunities to address problems that have been allowed to deepen for too long. But reform takes time to design, legislate and deliver. The children waiting for education support, and the vulnerable adults without adequate housing or care, cannot wait for those benefits to arrive.

This year, we welcomed the publication of independent research by the University of Manchester, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, examining how local authorities respond to our service improvement recommendations in SEND. The findings of that research, "Set Up to Fail?", echo much of what we see in our own data. The research confirms that many of the problems driving complaints to us are rooted in national systemic failures: inadequate funding, chronic shortages of educational psychologists, and demand that has consistently outpaced available resource. Local authority officers interviewed for the research described a SEND system that is, in their own words, "fundamentally broken" and a "national crisis". We believe these findings apply across many local services, particularly housing and adult social care.



Despite those pressures, the research demonstrates that our work makes a real difference.

Local authorities universally accept our recommendations, and our service improvement recommendations lead to real change at local level through increased focus and accountability, even in the face of national challenges. Good administration matters. It matters to the people who depend on these services, and we know it matters to the local authorities that are legally responsible for delivering them.

> *"When people cannot get the help they need, and feel they have no other recourse, they come to us. That so many are doing so tells us something important. It speaks not just about individual service failures, but about the gap between what residents expect and what they are receiving."*

That is why I want to speak directly to local authority Chief Executives and Leaders through this report. The responsibility to act does not rest solely with central government. The "Set Up to Fail?" research is candid that national pressures have shifted blame onto local authorities for failures that are, in significant part, not of their making. We understand that. But it also shows that the way local authorities respond to those pressures, and how seriously they engage with learning from complaints, makes a measurable difference to outcomes for residents. The authorities that work constructively with us, embed learning from our recommendations and invest in strong complaint-handling, consistently demonstrate better practice. That is not a coincidence.

The once-in-a-generation programme of local government reorganisation and devolution now under way presents a genuine opportunity to redesign services, break down the silos that have frustrated joined-up delivery for decades, and find locally-driven solutions to problems that have persisted through successive waves of national reform. New technology, smarter joint commissioning, and integrated approaches to health, care and housing have the potential to make a real difference now, while we wait for the wider benefits of national reform to take effect. A complaints service that works from day one gives new authorities an immediate window into inherited failures and a live gauge of their own performance, intelligence that, left uncaptured, cannot be recovered.

I also want to be direct about the financial dimension. Poor decisions, delayed action and inadequate services are not only harmful to residents, they are also costly. The cumulative expense of complaints, legal challenges and emergency interventions far exceeds the cost of investment in effective, well-managed services. Getting it right first time is both the right thing to do and, in the long run, the financially prudent course. For local authorities managing significant budget pressures, that is not a secondary consideration.

We see this in our casework. This year we saw a 20% increase in the number of complaints where we were happy with how the complaint was resolved locally. This is evidence of increased levels of good practice in complaint handling within the sector and I hope this will continue as local authorities embed our Complaint Handling Code in local practice and policy.

I recognise that local authorities are operating in genuinely difficult circumstances, with constrained resources, stretched workforces and rising demand. I do not underestimate the complexity of what is being asked of you. But strong and honest leadership, including a genuine commitment to learning from what goes wrong, makes a measurable difference in both efficient service delivery and improving public trust.

The problems documented here are serious. But they are not insurmountable. And the opportunity to address them, at pace and at scale, has rarely been greater.

Amerdeep Clarke
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
July 2026

Headline statistics

27,625
complaints received
33% increase on last year

22,006
complaints decided
12% increase on last year

4,335
complaints investigated

3,707*
complaints upheld

13%
satisfactory remedies**

99.9%
compliance with our recommendations

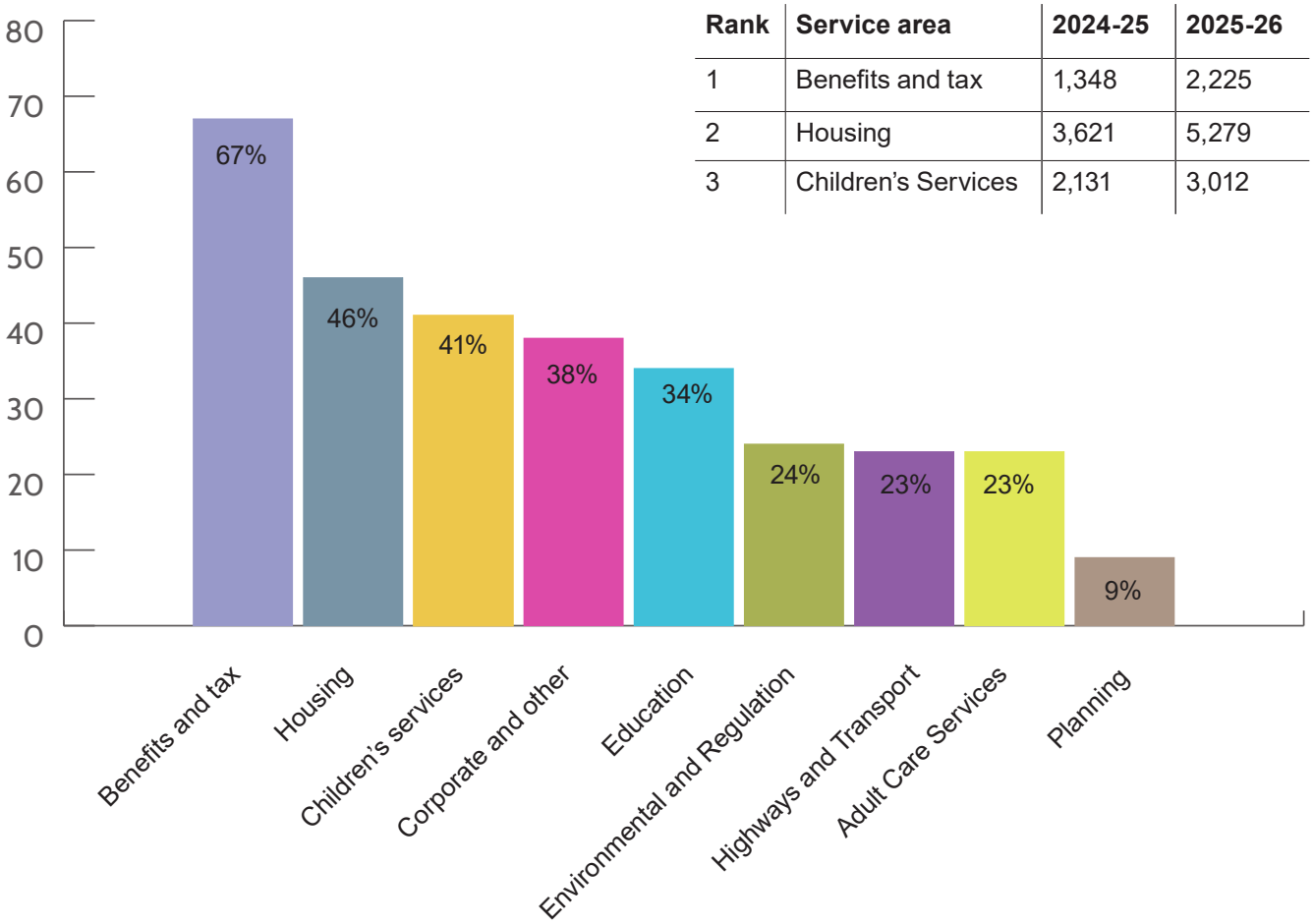
86%
uphold rate

6.3
upheld complaints per 100,000 residents***

*Includes cases where we found the organisation offered a suitable remedy early on
**We agreed with how the organisation had offered to put things right
***Includes the following authority types only: County Councils, District Councils, London Boroughs, Metropolitan Councils, Unitary Authorities

Complaints and enquiries received

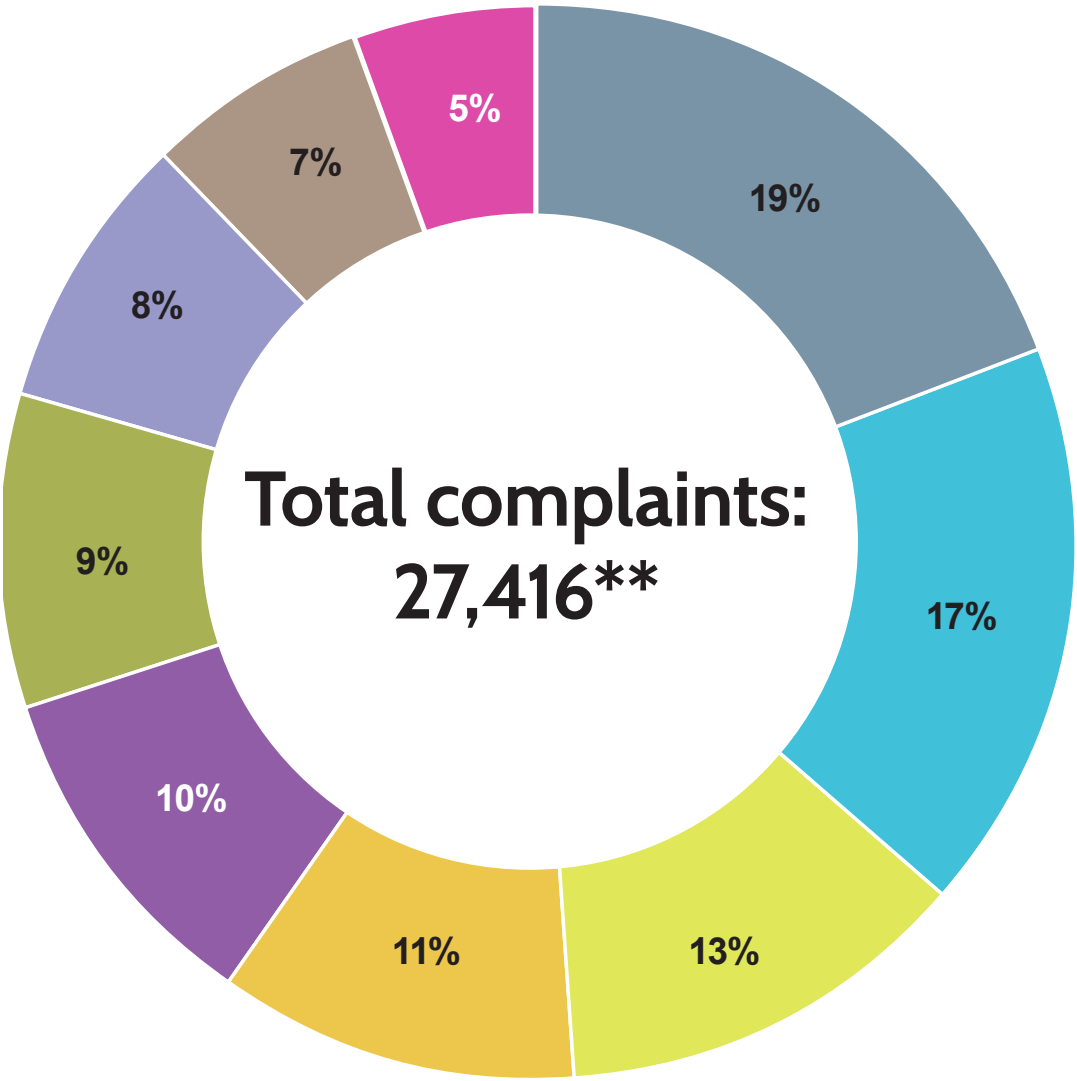
PERCENTAGE GROWTH ON PREVIOUS YEAR BY CATEGORY



Rank	Service area	2024-25	2025-26
1	Benefits and tax	1,348	2,225
2	Housing	3,621	5,279
3	Children's Services	2,131	3,012

Complaints and enquiries received

COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES BY SHARE OF TOTAL



Service area	Cases**
Housing	5,279
Education	4,721
Adult Care Services	3,429
Children's Services	3,012
Highways and Transport	2,818
Environmental and Regulation	2,559
Benefits and Tax	2,255
Planning and Development	1,870
Corporate and Other	1,473

Percentages add up to 99% due to rounding.
***This does not include 209 cases where we did not have sufficient information to categorise the complaint.*

Oversight and organisational learning

Local authority chief executives, directors and elected members should use the information we publish to strengthen complaint handling and assess the overall health of their local complaint system.

Our good practice guides for senior leaders and elected members explain how complaint data can be used to understand service performance and strengthen oversight.

USING DATA FOR OVERSIGHT

You can use our performance map to view key statistics that provide insight into an organisation's approach to complaint handling.

- Uphold rates show the proportion of investigations in which we found fault, including cases where the authority accepted fault and offered a suitable remedy early. How does your authority compare with similar authorities?
- Offering a satisfactory remedy shows an authority is recognising fault and putting things right before a complaint reaches us. How often does this happen in your authority, and how does that compare with others?
- Compliance rates show the proportion of cases in which we were satisfied recommendations had been implemented, based on the evidence provided. Compliance below 100% is uncommon. Does your authority have a 100% compliance rate? If not, what is in place to prevent further non-compliance?
- Timely compliance means recommendations were implemented within the agreed timeframes. How does your authority's timely compliance rate compare with others?
- Service improvement recommendations are intended to prevent the same fault recurring. How does your authority track implementation, and how does it assess whether the agreed changes are making a difference?

Best practice in complaint handling

Effective complaint handling builds public confidence, strengthens oversight and helps services improve.

We support organisations to achieve this through our recommendations, alongside guidance and resources that help strengthen local complaint oversight.

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

Timely compliance matters. Delivering remedies within the agreed timescale helps rebuild trust and shows that authorities take complaints seriously. This year, authorities were late in implementing agreed recommendations in more than 750 cases (23%). We now publish timely compliance rates on our website.

To ensure the timely delivery of recommendations, authorities should:

- set realistic timescales at draft decision stage
- track agreed recommendations and tell us promptly about any delay
- provide evidence as soon as a remedy has been completed
- have clear processes to ensure apologies and payments are made without delay.

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

- The Complaint Handling Code sets the standard for fair and effective complaint handling. Since April 2026, we have applied the Code in our casework about local councils. We also provide good practice guides and training resources to support implementation.
- Focus Reports and Good Practice Guides bring together case studies from our investigations on specific topics, highlighting key concerns and offering specialist guidance for practitioners. During the year, we published reports and guides covering disabled housing, supporting children out of school and planning enforcement. Our council performance map brings complaint statistics together in one interactive resource. Users can compare similar councils and review annual letters, investigation reports and agreed service improvements.
- We also publish data tables with complaint information at local authority level for further analysis.

Oversight and organisational learning

We want authorities to have complaint systems that are effective, trusted and able to drive service improvement. Where support is needed, we offer a range of online complaint handling training. To find out more, visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Authorities that took part in complaint handling training during 2025-26 are listed on our website.

Learning and Improvement

PUBLISHED DECISIONS AND REPORTS

We are one of the few Ombudsman schemes to publish every decision we make, supporting transparency and enabling wider learning from our casework.

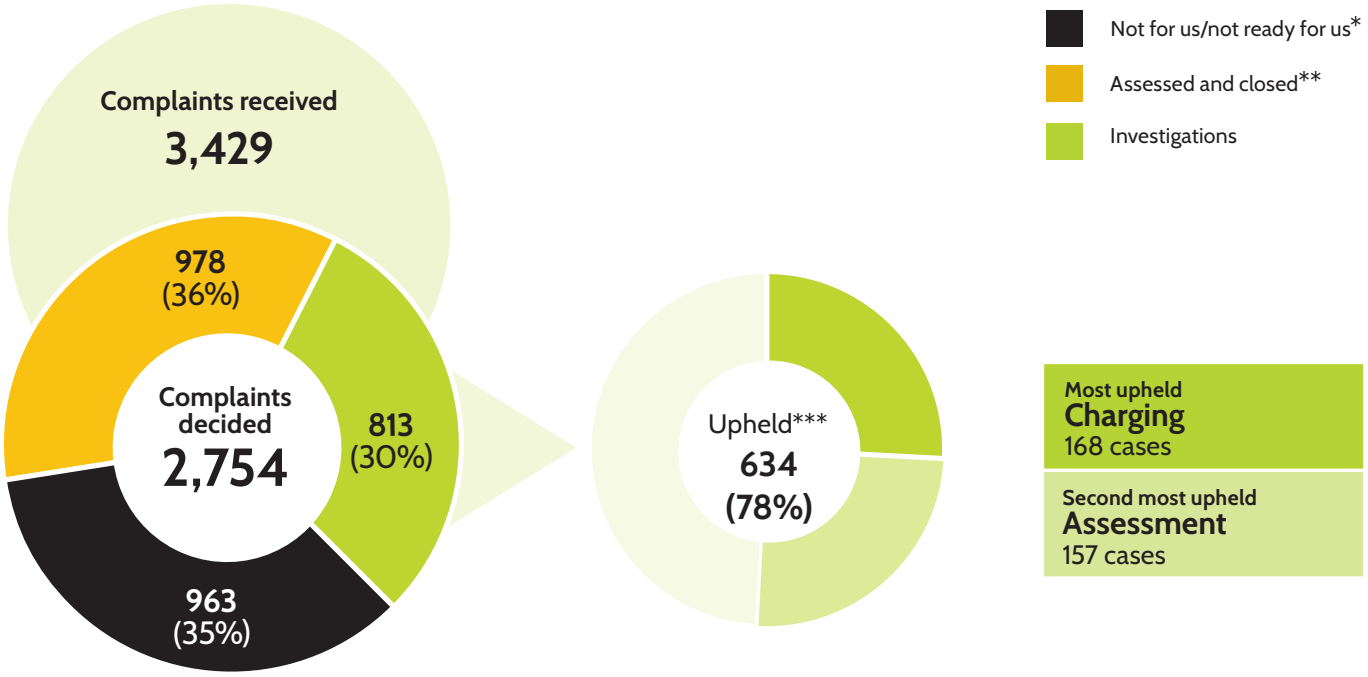
Cases that raise serious issues or matters of public interest are published as investigation reports. During the year, we published 27 reports and three further reports. These are listed at the end of this report.

A further report is issued when an authority refuses to implement a recommended remedy or fails to respond to an earlier report. It highlights the non-compliance and may lead us to require the authority to publish a statement of non-compliance in a local newspaper, setting out what action was not taken and why.

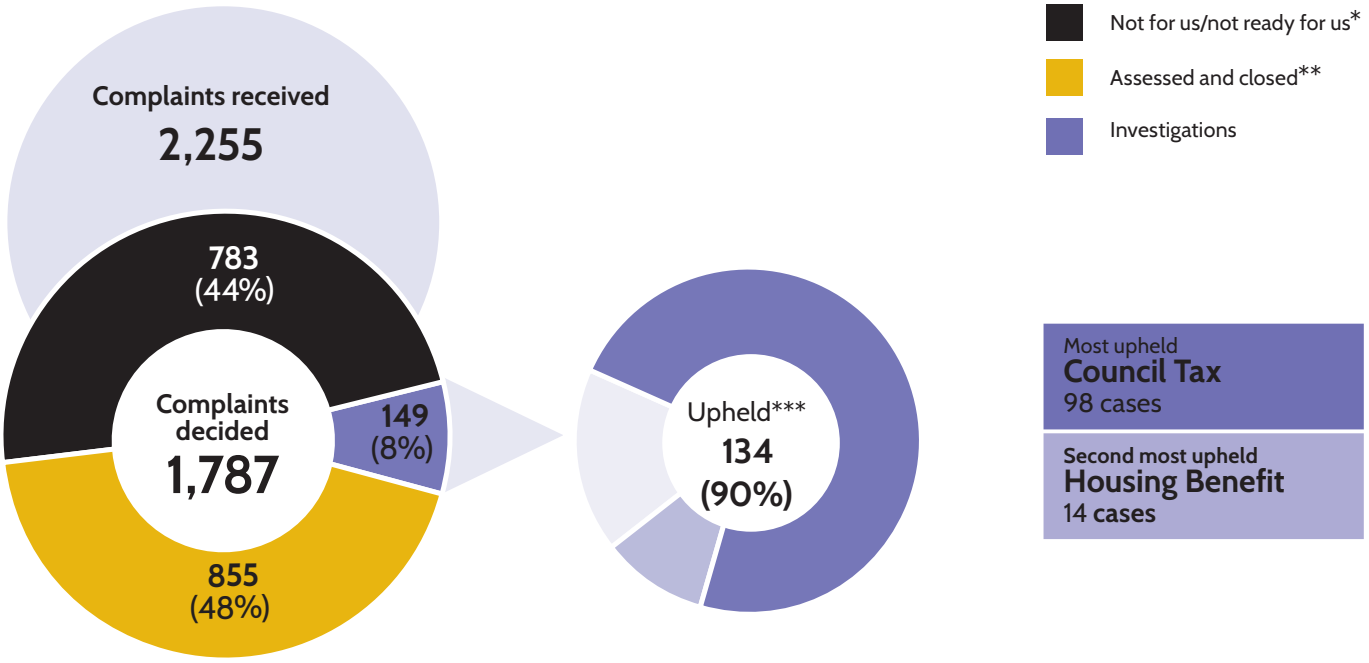
A statement of non-compliance promotes accountability by informing the public when an authority has failed to act on our recommendations.

2025-26
Statistics by service area

Adult Care Services



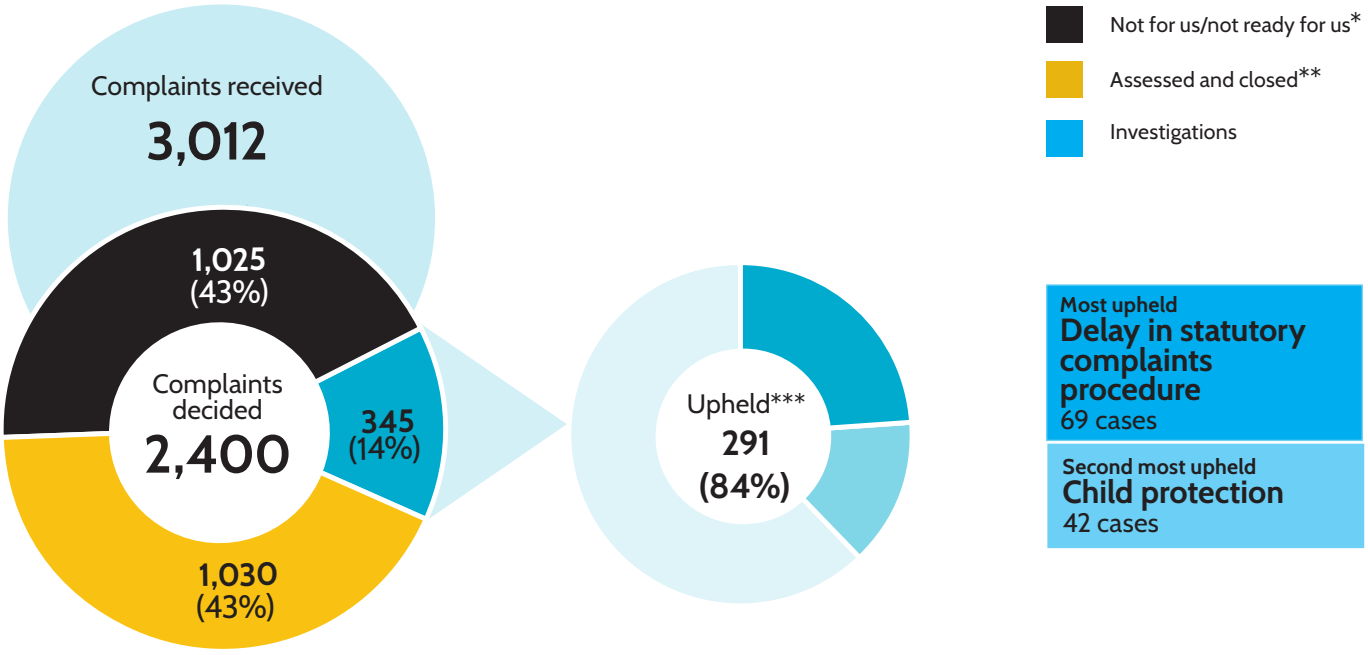
Benefits & Tax



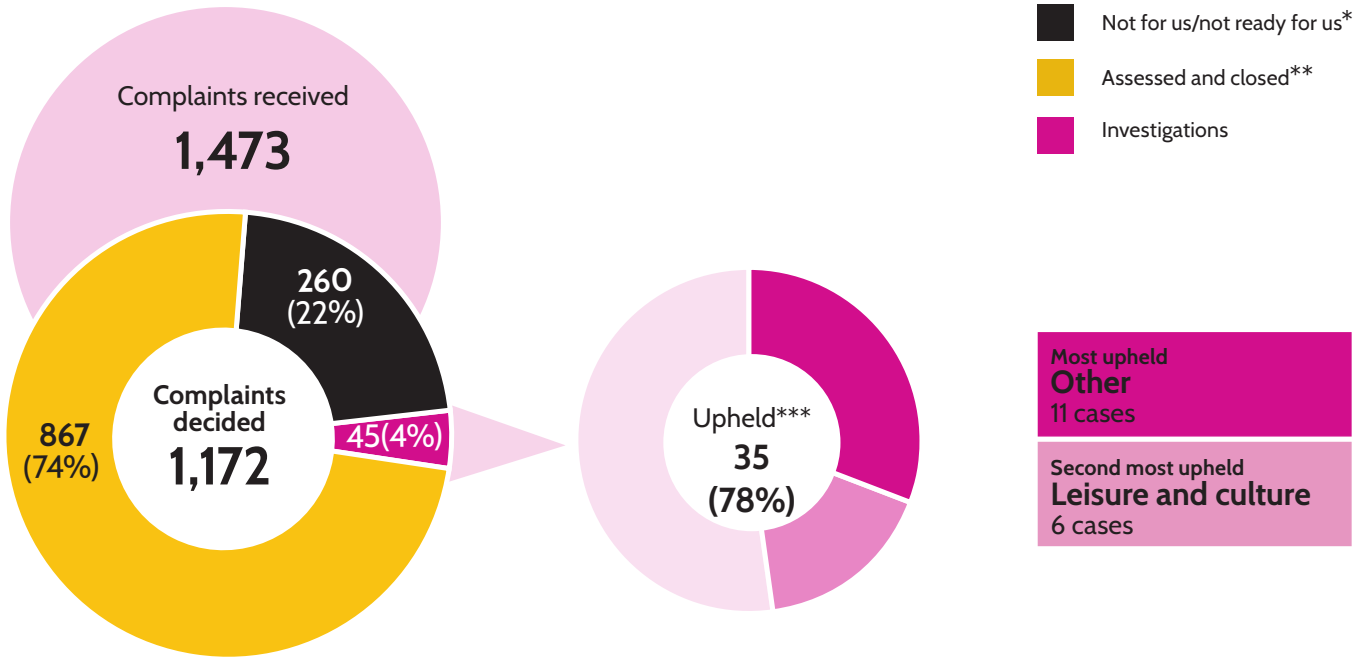
*Not for us – includes complaints brought to us before the organisation was given chance to consider it, or the complainant came to the wrong Ombudsman.
** Assessed and closed – we assessed the complaint but decided against carrying out a further investigation. This might be because the law says we're not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective use of public funds if we did.
*** Upheld: we completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or we found the organisation offered a suitable remedy early on.

2025-26
Statistics by service area

Children's Services



Corporate & Other Services



*Not for us – includes complaints brought to us before the organisation was given chance to consider it, or the complainant came to the wrong Ombudsman.
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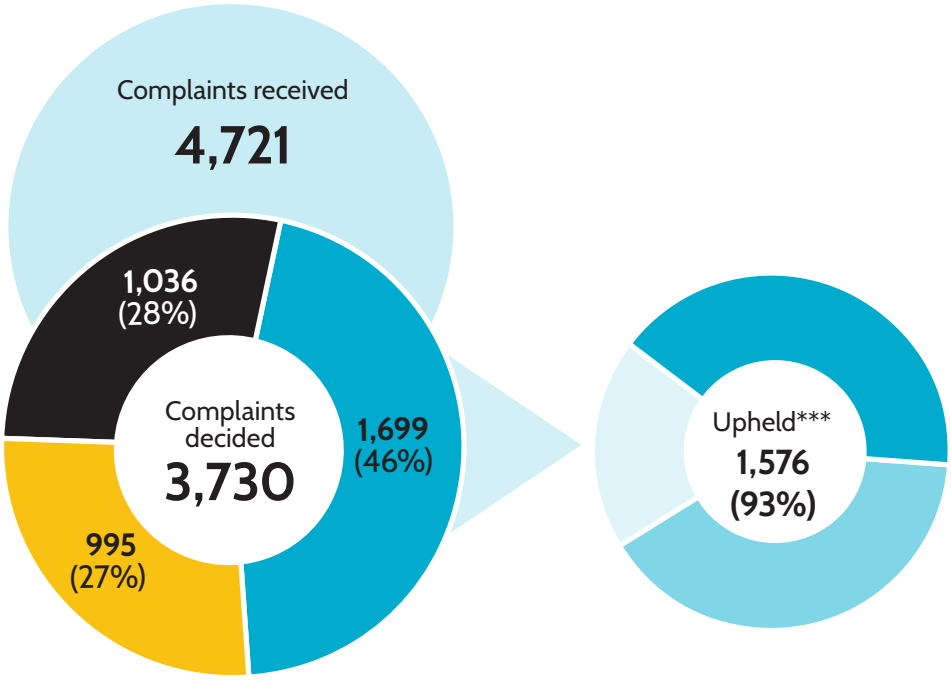
*** Upheld: we completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or we found the organisation offered a suitable remedy early on.

2025-26
Statistics by service area

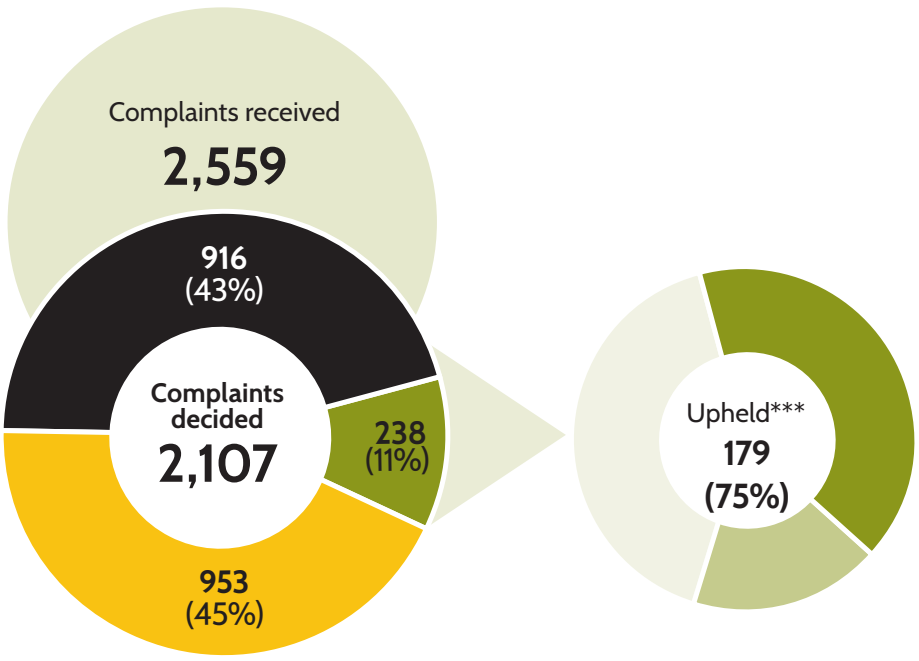
Education



Most upheld
SEN assessments and reviews
647 cases

Second most upheld
SEN provision and EHC plans
625 cases

Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation



Most upheld
Refuse and recycling
74 cases

Second most upheld
Antisocial behaviour
33 cases

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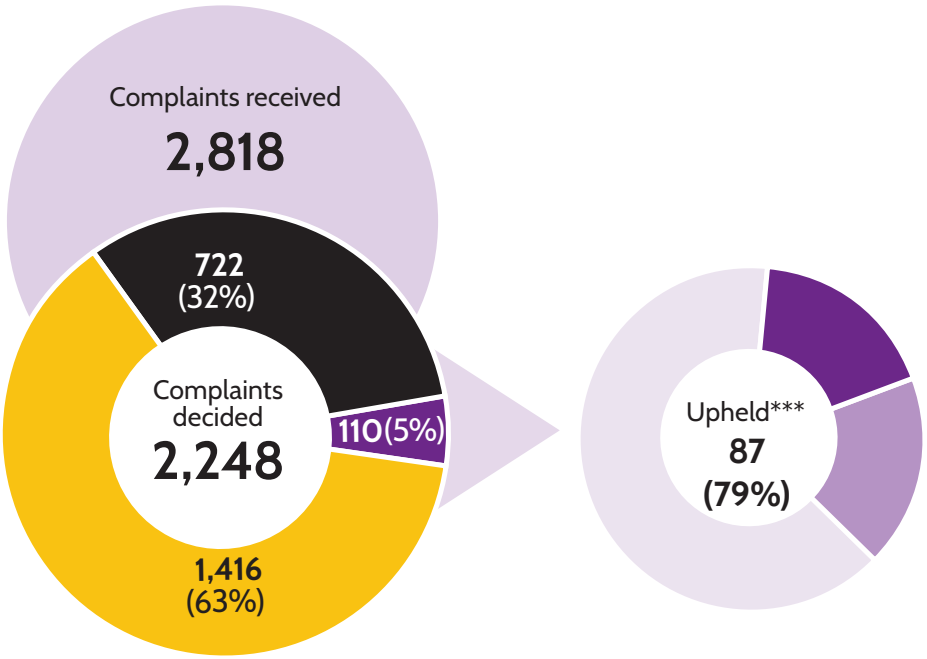
2025-26
Statistics by service area

Highways & Transport

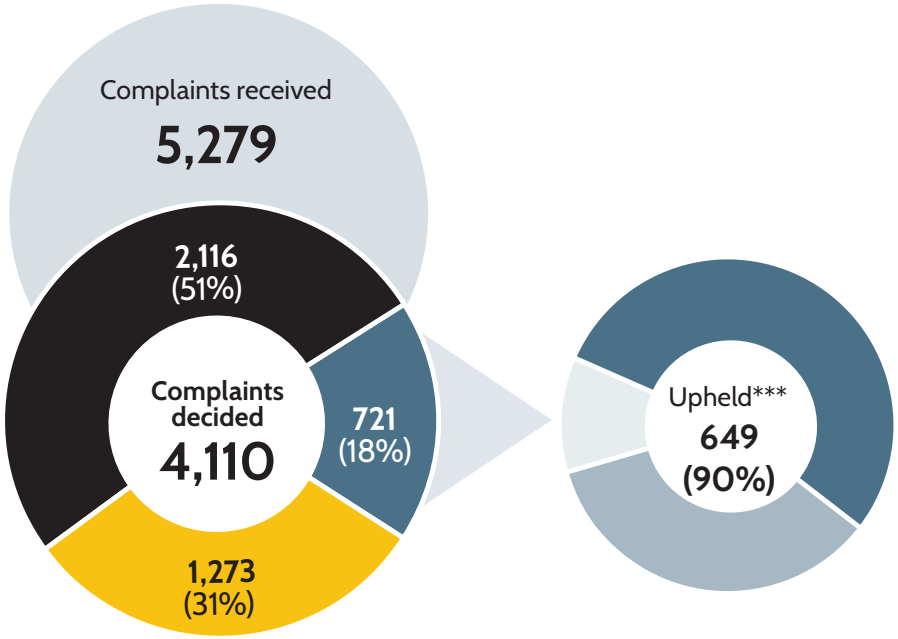


Not for us/not ready for us*
Assessed and closed**
Investigations

Most upheld
Parking provision
18 cases

Second most upheld
Moving traffic penalties
18 cases

Housing



Not for us/not ready for us*
Assessed and closed**
Investigations

Most upheld
Homelessness
349

Second most upheld
Allocations
225

*Not for us – includes complaints brought to us before the organisation was given chance to consider it, or the complainant came to the wrong Ombudsman.
** Assessed and closed – we assessed the complaint but decided against carrying out a further investigation. This might be because the law says we're not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective use of public funds if we did.
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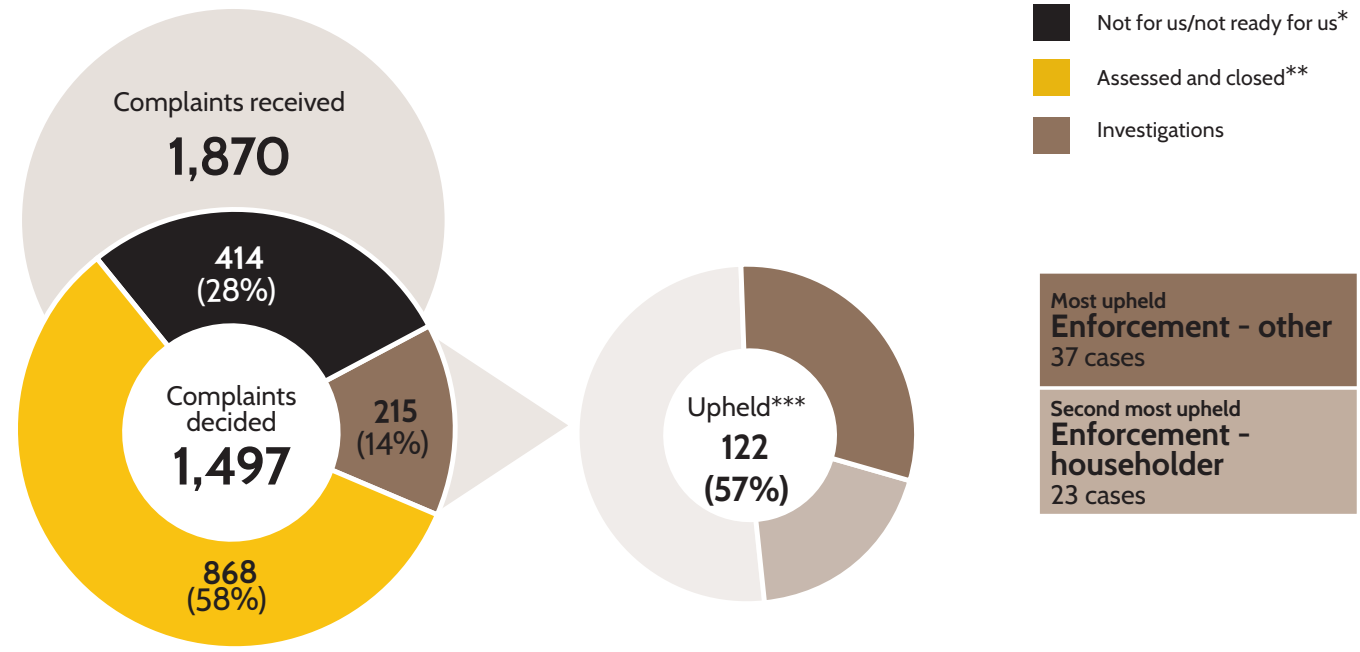
2025-26
Statistics by service area

Planning & Development



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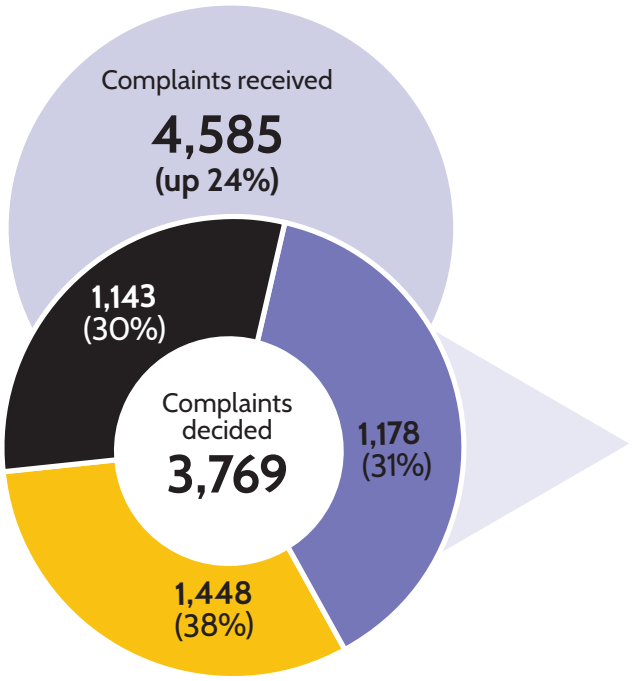
2025-26
Statistics by authority type

County Councils



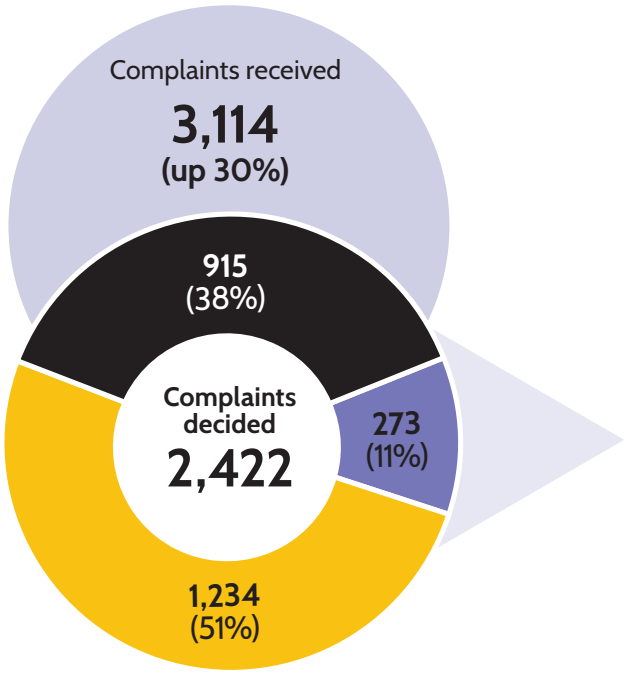
Not for us/not ready for us*
Assessed and closed**
Investigations

5.2
upheld complaints per 100,000 residents

Upheld***
1,045
(89%)

Most upheld by category	
Education and Children's Services	831 (80%)
Adult Care Services	193 (18%)

District and Borough Councils



Not for us/not ready for us*
Assessed and closed**
Investigations

1.0
upheld complaints per 100,000 residents

Upheld***
201
(74%)

Most upheld by category	
Housing	79 (39%)
Planning and Development	54 (27%)

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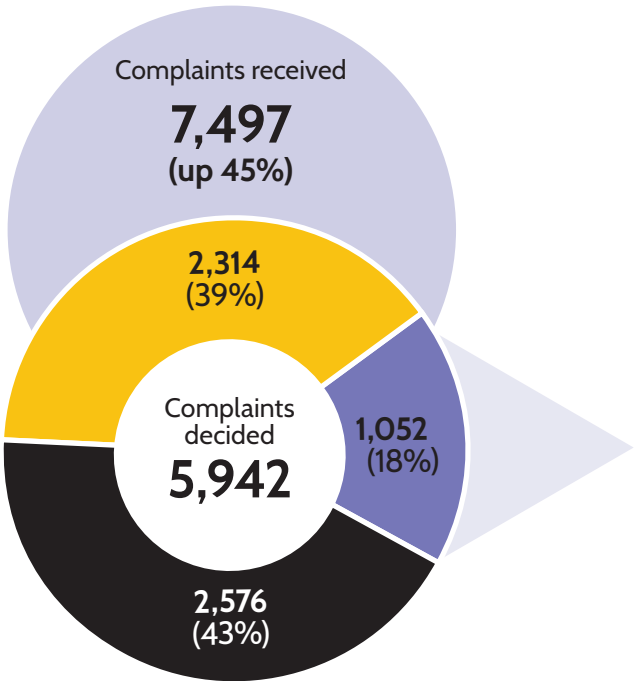
2025-26
Statistics by authority type

London Boroughs



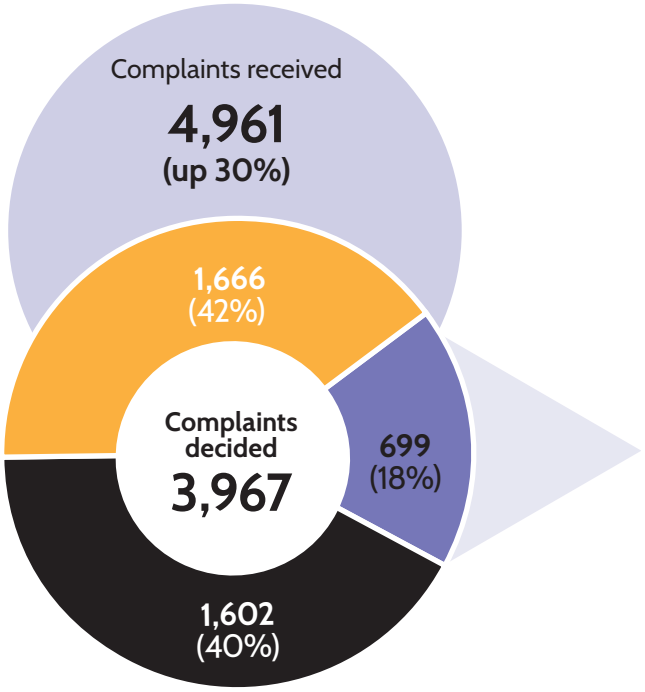
Not for us/not ready for us*
Assessed and closed**
Investigations

10.2
upheld complaints per 100,000 residents

Upheld***
923
(88%)

Most upheld by category	
Housing	412 (45%)
Education and Children's Services	210 (23%)

Metropolitan Councils



Not for us/not ready for us*
Assessed and closed**
Investigations

4.6
upheld complaints per 100,000 residents

Upheld***
578
(83%)

Most upheld by category	
Education and Children's Services	279 (48%)
Adult Care Services	112 (19%)

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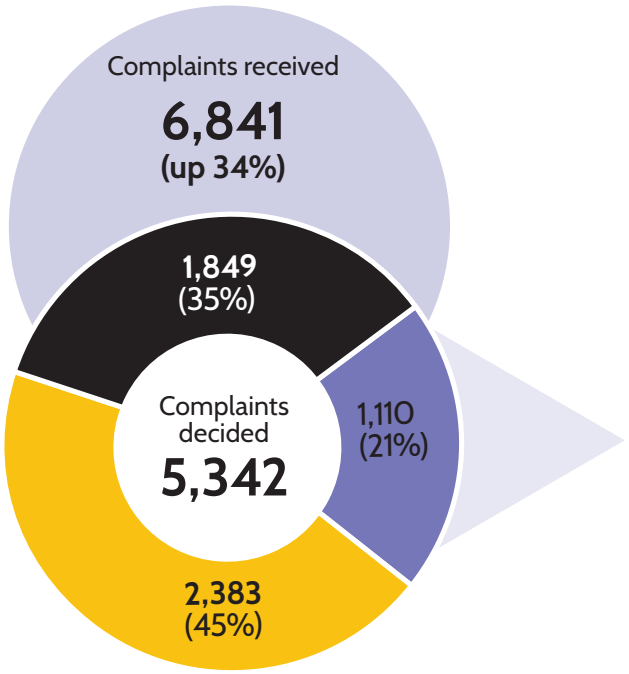
2025-26
Statistics by authority type

Unitary Authorities



Not for us/not ready for us*

Assessed and closed**

Investigations

Upheld***
942
(85%)

5.6
upheld complaints per
100,000 residents

Most upheld by category	
Education and Children's Services	547 (58%)
Adult Care Services	185 (20%)

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*** Upheld: we completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or we found the organisation offered a suitable remedy early on.

Investigation reports

Adult Care Services		
London Borough of Hackney	Transport	24003887
London Borough of Haringey	Safeguarding	24014203
West Sussex County Council	Transport	24009730

Children's Services		
Cheshire East Council	Child protection	24009262
London Borough of Harrow	Delay in statutory complaints procedure	24022000
London Borough of Lewisham	Delay in statutory complaints procedure	24015996
London Borough of Waltham Forest	Disabled child	24010138
Southend-on-Sea City Council	Disabled child	23004755

Education		
Essex County Council	SEN assessments & reviews	23003950
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	SEN assessments & reviews	24010066
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	School transport	23013127
Somerset Council	SEN personal budgets & direct payments	23017883
Somerset Council	SEN assessments & reviews	24003239
Suffolk County Council	SEN assessments & reviews	23005778
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	SEN assessments & reviews	24000621
Trafford Council	Alternative provision	23019685

Investigation reports

Environmental Services & Protection		
London Borough of Enfield	Antisocial behaviour	24017695

Highways & Transport		
Transport for London	Other	24021232

Housing		
Halton Borough Council	Homelessness	23005581
Leicester City Council	Homelessness	24005927
Leicester City Council - further report	Homelessness	24005927
Leicester City Council - further report	Domestic Abuse	23015268
London Borough of Croydon	Homelessness	23015996
London Borough of Hounslow	Homelessness	24001000
London Borough of Lewisham	Homelessness	24016564
London Borough of Waltham Forest	Homelessness	24000033
North Yorkshire Council	Disabled Facilities Grants	24012483
Norwich City Council	Allocations	24018523
South Kesteven District Council	Homelessness	24010719
South Kesteven District Council - further report	Homelessness	24010719

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

T: 0300 061 0614
W: www.lgo.org.uk

Local Government &
Social Care
OMBUDSMAN

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING:	**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
DATE:	**24th November 2026**
SUBJECT:	**Corporate Plan Q2 2026-27 Performance & Delivery**
REPORT FROM:	**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services**
CONTACT OFFICER:	**Sarah Hammersley, Performance & Intelligence Manager**

1.0 BACKGROUND

In April 2026, Cabinet approved the Council's Corporate Plan for 2026-27. The Plan sets out the Council's strategic priorities and delivery objectives for the financial year and our role in delivering the overarching vision of the borough's LET'S Do It! Strategy.

2.0 ISSUES

This report provides an overview of progress during Quarter Two (July to September 2026) and demonstrates continued positive progress in delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. Of the 31 objectives monitored through the Corporate Plan, 21 are assessed as on track and 9 are progressing with mitigating actions in place and 1 assessed as presenting a significant delivery risk. This is the same risk identified in the Quarter 1 position.

Performance data presents a mixed but generally positive picture with improvements across a number of key measures and continued progress in delivering priority projects and programmes.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Quarter 2 demonstrates continued positive delivery of the Corporate Plan, with the number of objectives assessed as on track increasing and one objective currently reporting a significant delivery risk. This is the same risk identified in the Quarter 1 position.

List of Background Papers:-

Corporate Plan 2026-27 Cabinet Report

https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s49331/Corporate%20Plan%202026-27.pdf

Contact Details:-

Sarah Hammersley, Performance & Intelligene Manager s.hammersley@bury.gov.uk

Executive Director sign off Date:_____

JET Meeting Date:_____

PDT Meeting Date: 10th November 2026

Corporate Plan Performance & Delivery Report
Quarter 2 2026-27

Executive Summary

Quarter 2 demonstrates continued positive progress in delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. Of the 31 objectives monitored through the Corporate Plan, 21 are assessed as on track and 9 are progressing with mitigating actions in place and 1 assessed as presenting a significant delivery risk. This is the same risk identified in the Quarter 1 position.
Performance data presents a mixed but generally positive picture, with improvements across a number of key measures and continued progress in delivering priority projects and programmes. Significant achievements have been made across regeneration, education, neighbourhood working, housing, health and organisational improvement activity.
While challenges remain in relation to housing demand, homelessness, workforce wellbeing and some complex transformation programmes, mitigating actions are in place and progress continues across all priority areas.

Driving Inclusive Growth

Performance Assessment

Performance against this priority remains strong, with six objectives on track and four progressing with mitigating actions. Significant progress has been made across regeneration, planning, infrastructure and town centre development activity.
Quarter 2 has seen continued advancement of major regeneration schemes, including completion of the Prestwich Travel Hub, progression of strategic housing developments, delivery of CRSTS-funded transport programmes and completion of consultation on the Publication Local Plan.
Housing delivery remains strong, with 312 annual housing completions recorded across the borough and 96% of housing completions delivered on brownfield land, significantly supporting the Council's regeneration ambitions and making effective use of previously developed sites. In addition, 88 new affordable homes have been completed, representing a substantial increase from the previous year.

Planning performance remains robust, with 86% of planning decisions granted and 100% of major development applications determined within statutory timescales or agreed extensions, demonstrating an efficient planning service that supports investment and development.

Environmental sustainability indicators continue to improve. 81% of street lighting has now been converted to LED technology, supporting reductions in energy consumption and carbon emissions. Waste collection volumes remain broadly stable at 5,177 tonnes, whilst the proportion of waste recycled stands at 48.4%, reflecting continued resident participation in recycling services. Household food waste contamination remains low at 8.7%.

Highway maintenance performance is mixed. Whilst 645 potholes were repaired during the period and 72% of highway repairs were completed on time, the number of potholes reported increased to 262.

What We Have Delivered

Key achievements during Quarter 2 include:

- Completion and handover of the Prestwich Travel Hub.
- Completion and handover of the Radcliff STAR Academy High School development.
- Completion of consultation on the Publication Local Plan.

- Progression of town centre regeneration programmes across the borough.
- Continued implementation of the Bury Town Centre Masterplan and housing delivery programme.
- Adoption and implementation of strategic development frameworks including Elton Reservoir, Walshaw and Simister/Bowlee.
- Continued progress on the Waste Management Strategy and borough-wide Parking Strategy.
- Approval of governance arrangements associated with Pride in Place.

What Residents Will Have Seen

Residents will have seen:

- Completion of major elements of the Prestwich Travel Hub and associated public realm improvements.
- Ongoing regeneration activity across Bury, Prestwich, Radcliffe, Whitefield and Ramsbottom.
- Visible progress on active travel and transport infrastructure schemes.
- Further housing and development activity across key growth sites.
- Consultation and engagement opportunities relating to future development and transport proposals.

Key Risks and Exceptions

Four objectives remain amber and continue to be actively managed. These principally relate to:

- Prestwich regeneration programme dependencies.
- Atom Valley governance and partnership arrangements.
- Sustainability projects including heat network development and EV infrastructure delivery.
- External partner dependencies affecting elements of the Bury Interchange programme.

Mitigating actions are in place across all projects and no objective within this priority area is currently assessed as high risk.

Improving Children's Lives

Performance Assessment

Performance against this priority has improved since Quarter 1, with six objectives now on track and two progressing with mitigating actions. Progress has continued across Family Hubs, SEND reform, educational inclusion and early help transformation.

Strong partnership working across education settings and children's services continues to support the delivery of improved outcomes for children and young people.

Early years performance remains a significant strength. 99% of childcare providers are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, maintaining exceptionally high-quality provision across the borough. In addition, 65.2% of children are assessed as ready for school, which is a slight improving trajectory from the previous year.

Access to childcare remains comparatively strong, with 62.1% of eligible children accessing their entitlement, this continues to be monitored through the service to ensure equitable uptake of the offer.

Demand indicators across children's social care present a mixed picture. Rates of Child Protection Plans have reduced to 46 per 10,000 children, whilst the rate of Children in Need has increased to 304 per 10,000. The rate of Children Looked After remains comparatively stable at 81 per 10,000 children.

What We Have Delivered

Key achievements include:

- Delivery of family, school, parenting and SEND sessions to progress the GLD plan.
- Staff relocation into the Whitefield Live Well Centre following opening in he summer.
- Continued mobilisation and development of Family Hub provision.
- Progression of the Families First implementation programme.
- Successful transition of Youth Justice Services back into Bury.
- Submittance of SEND reform plan to DfE and implementation of inclusion initiatives.
- Additional specialist school capacity and completion of key education capital projects.
- Development of Education and Inclusion governance arrangements.

What Residents Will Have Seen

Children, young people and families will have seen:

- Expanded Family Hub activity and support services.
- New and enhanced educational provision.
- Increased visibility of youth support and prevention services.
- Continued support for children and young people with SEND.
- Greater collaboration between schools, communities and children's services.

Key Risks and Exceptions

Two objectives remain amber:

- Delivery of aspects of the Best Start in Life programme.
- Residential and foster care sufficiency arrangements.

Recovery and improvement plans remain in place, with ongoing progress being monitored through established governance arrangements.

Tackling Inequalities

Performance Assessment

Five objectives are on track and two are progressing with mitigating actions. Delivery has continued across Live Well, neighbourhood working, employment support, health improvement and Adult Social Care transformation programmes. Challenges remain in relation to housing demand and homelessness, although strategic development work has continued throughout the quarter.

Health and wellbeing indicators show encouraging performance. 93.5% of adult social care providers are rated Good or Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission, and smoking prevalence amongst routine and manual workers has fallen to 16.7%, supporting the Council's wider public health objectives.

Adult Social care performance remains largely stable. The proportion of assessments requiring no further support after short-term intervention stands at 86.2%, whilst 71.1% of

people receiving long-term adult social care continue to live in the community, helping residents maintain independence.

A positive improvement can be seen in the proportion of council housing failing the Decent Homes Standard, which has reduced from 18.7% to 15.5%. Housing complaint compliance remains exceptionally high at 99.9%.

However, homelessness pressures remain one of the most significant challenges within the performance framework. Although the number of people rough sleeping reduced to 22, the number of statutory homelessness cases remains high at 962. Demand for temporary accommodation continues, with 10 families placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks. Positively, 15 households were prevented from becoming homeless, and 95 rough sleepers were supported into accommodation, demonstrating the effectiveness of preventative and support interventions despite sustained demand pressures.

What We Have Delivered

Key achievements include:

- Continued implementation of Live Well in Whitefield.
- Expansion of neighbourhood-based working arrangements.
- Delivery of employment support through Economic Inactivity and Work Well programmes.
- Progression of Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy development.
- Successful completion of the housing services inspection and commencement of associated improvement activity.
- Delivery of Health Inequalities Strategy actions.
- Continued Adult Social Care transformation activity and strengths-based approaches.

What Residents Will Have Seen

Residents will have seen:

- Increasing availability of neighbourhood-based support and services.
- Greater visibility of Live Well activity across communities.
- Employment and skills support delivered through local initiatives.
- Health improvement campaigns and community wellbeing activity.
- Further engagement on housing and homelessness priorities.

Key Risks and Exceptions

Two objectives remain amber:

- Embedding and maturing neighbourhood integration arrangements.
- Completion and adoption of the Housing and Homelessness Strategies.

Demand pressures relating to housing need, homelessness and temporary accommodation continue to require close monitoring, with increasing use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation reflecting sustained demand, challenging housing market conditions and limited availability of suitable accommodation. Mitigating actions include delivery of the B&B Elimination Plan, a review of homelessness and housing options services to strengthen prevention and early intervention, and continued partnership activity to support the objectives of the Rough Sleeping Programme by increasing access to appropriate accommodation and sustainable move-on opportunities.

Organisational Enablers

Performance Assessment

Performance has strengthened during Quarter 2. Four objectives are on track and two are progressing with mitigating actions. The Finance Improvement Plan remains at red despite strengthened governance arrangements and implementation of a revised delivery plan. Further mitigations are required to support this to stay on track.

Progress continues across workforce development, financial sustainability, digital transformation, estates management and equality, diversity and inclusion. Customer service performance also improved during the quarter, with more calls being answered within 10 minutes despite increased demand. This represents a positive shift in the resident experience and reflects operational improvements across customer contact services.

Performance across organisational measures is mixed. Staff wellbeing remains stable, with average sickness absence at 15.3 days per FTE but this is still high compared to previous trends. Contact volumes have reduced to 22,800 contacts received, potentially reflecting improved digital access and service resolution.

However, workforce stability remains a challenge. Staff turnover has increased to 12.5%, triggering an amber status and suggesting ongoing recruitment and retention pressures across parts of the organisation.

What We Have Delivered

Quarter 2 achievements include:

- Development of budget proposals and medium-term financial planning.
- Continued implementation of the Finance Improvement Plan and transformation activity.
- Approval and implementation of revised financial regulations.
- Progression of workforce strategy and organisational development initiatives.
- Advancement of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Roadmap priorities.
- Continued delivery of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion actions.
- Progression of corporate and commercial estate priorities.

What Residents Will Have Seen

Residents will have experienced:

- Continued improvements in service accessibility and digital capability.
- Improved responsiveness when contacting the Council, with more calls being answered within 10 minutes despite increased demand for services.
- Ongoing organisational improvement activity supporting service effectiveness.
- Delivery of services within an increasingly challenging financial environment.
- Further work to improve inclusion, accessibility and community cohesion.

Key Risks and Exceptions

One objective remains amber:

- Elements of the Digital Roadmap programme, including Housing QL implementation.

One objective remains red:

- Delivery of the Finance Improvement Plan, including Unit4 implementation.

Whilst these programmes continue to present challenges, strengthened governance and delivery planning provide confidence that progress is being made and risks are being actively managed.

Conclusion

Quarter 2 demonstrates continued positive delivery of the Corporate Plan, with the number of objectives assessed as on track increasing and one objective currently reporting a significant delivery risk. This is the same risk identified in the Quarter 1 position.

Strong progress has been achieved across regeneration, education, Live Well implementation, neighbourhood working and organisational improvement programmes. Residents continue to see visible investment in communities, improved accessibility to services and delivery against the Council's key priorities.

Challenges remain in several complex areas, particularly housing demand, homelessness, workforce wellbeing and major transformation programmes. However, mitigating actions are in place and the overall Quarter 2 position remains positive, providing confidence in the Council's ability to continue delivering the ambitions set out within the Corporate Plan.

2030 Vision	Council Priorities and Key Objectives – LET'S do it! 2026-27		
Achieving Inclusive Economic Growth and Reducing Deprivation LET'S Values & Behaviours	**Driving Inclusive Growth** • Open the **Radcliffe Hub**, **Radcliffe Enterprise Centre** and **STAR Academy High School**; progress the delivery of brownfield housing at East Lancashire Paper Mill; deliver CRSTS[1] funded transport infrastructure improvements and the plan for **Pride in Place**. • Complete Phase 1A (Travel Hub) of the **Prestwich** Village Regeneration Scheme and progress of Phase 1B (commercial and community space) to secure planning permission, demolish the Longfield Centre and start on site with delivery of the commercial and residential phase. • Launch the **Atom Valley Northern Gateway Mayoral Development Corporation** to progress the first phase of employment land and advance the **Western Access** highways infrastructure. • Update and progress the **Bury town centre masterplan**, including opening **Casewells** (Flexi Hall); supporting the TfGM rebuild of the **Bury Interchange** and advancing residential development across **Mill Gate**, the South of Markets area and **Pyramid Park**. • Following consultation, approve the **Bury Local Plan** subject to government examination. • Consult on, and adopt, the development frameworks for **Elton Reservoir, Walshaw** and **Simister/Bowlee**. Advance infrastructure planning to support future development to deliver around 6,000 new homes. • Progress the delivery of the **Whitefield and Ramsbottom Town Plans** and make use of Economic Development Regeneration Grant Funding to improve public realm, increase footfall and create vibrant town centres. • Deliver our **Annual Sustainability Plan and Climate Change Strategy** including EV[2] Charging point network and exploring design stage options for a Heat Network in Bury Town Centre. • Create a new **Waste Management Strategy** to increase recycling rates and meet national reforms. • Develop a borough-wide **Parking Strategy** that addresses capacity and cost across each neighbourhood.	**Improving Children's Lives** • Implement **Best Start in Life** including delivery of the local plan to improve Good Levels of Development. • As part of our 2030 commitment to establish a family hub in every neighbourhood, in this year we will step up **family hub delivery** at the LiveWell centre in **Whitefield** and from the **Radcliffe** Hub. • Deliver the **Families First** Partnership Programme by restructuring our support services, establishing **Family Help** teams and multi-agency child protection teams to deliver an end-to-end model of support to children and families. • Strengthen the **school led improvement system** by engaging all education settings in Bury to improve outcomes for children. • Transform and improve how we support **children with additional educational needs and disabilities** in Bury by implementing the national SEND reforms in partnership with NHS and education providers. • Build **new schools** Ashgrove (PRU), Redvales (SEMH primary) and increase specialist sufficiency within existing schools to provide enough high-quality and financially sustainable places in local settings to meet demand. • Establish a bespoke adolescent offer incorporating the return of **Youth Justice** services to Bury. • Increase the number and quality of local family-based and **residential homes** for children in care.	**Tackling Inequalities** • Accelerate **team working** maturity in each of our 5 neighbourhoods, connecting to the NHS reform programme of neighbourhood working in adults and designing multi-agency working in children's services. • Implement **Live Well in Whitefield** including the Live Well Centre operating by July 2026 and supporting voluntary sector infrastructure and investment in community capacity building. • Develop **Live Well in Radcliffe** connected to the hub opening, investment in the primary care centre and aligned to the family hub, and working with the Voluntary Community Faith Alliance (VCFA) to implement the Bury Fund to strengthen voluntary and community sector capacity. • Increase **working age employment** rates by implementing Work Well, NEET-reduction activity and the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer. • Reshape Bury's **Housing Strategy** to include increased quality of social and private housing, delivery of more affordable housing and improvements in homelessness prevention and support. • Implement the **Bury health inequalities strategy** including focus on tobacco control, physical activity, CVD[3] prevention, and screening and immunisation uptake, and report progress. • **Deliver Adult Social Care Business and transformation plan** reflecting learning from the CQC[4] review and with a further focus on strengths-based working, co-production and user engagement.
	Enablers • Deliver the **2026/27 Budget** and develop a strategy for Medium Term Financial Sustainability. • Complete the **Finance Improvement Plan** through implementing the finance restructure and new procurement operating model, achieving the upgrade of Unit 4 (core finance system) upgrade, and strengthened governance. • Develop a **Workforce Strategy** to drive high performance, talent management and improved HR policies and processes. • Implement the **Digital Roadmap** including upgrades to Unit 4; Liquid Logic and Housing QL systems and develop a strategy for appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence to improve productivity. • Finalise the **Estates Strategy** for the improvement of operating our corporate and commercial estate. • Progress **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion** priorities through becoming a neuro inclusive employer; championing anti-racism and promoting community cohesion.		

[1] City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements
[2] Electric vehicle
[3] Cardiovascular Disease
[4] Care Quality Commission

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Appendix Two: Corporate Plan 2026-27 Q2 Delivery Summary

Key:	On track - all milestones achieved	Not on track - risk addressed	Not on track - risk identified

Obj. Ref.	Priority	Objective	Quarter 2 Objective RAG Rating
1	Driving Inclusive Growth	Open the Radcliffe Hub, Radcliffe Enterprise Centre and STAR Academy High School; progress the delivery of brownfield housing at East Lancashire Paper Mill; deliver CRSTS funded transport infrastructure improvements and the plan for Pride in Place.	
2	Driving Inclusive Growth	Complete Phase 1A (Travel Hub) of the Prestwich Village Regeneration Scheme and progress Phase 1B (commercial and community space) to secure planning permission, demolish the Longfield Centre and start on site with delivery of the commercial and residential phase.	
3	Driving Inclusive Growth	Launch the Atom Valley Northern Gateway Mayoral Development Corporation to progress the first phase of employment land and advance the Western Access transportation infrastructure.	
4	Driving Inclusive Growth	Update and progress the Bury town centre masterplan, including opening Casewells (Flexi Hall); supporting the TfGM rebuild of the Bury Interchange and advancing residential development across Mill Gate, the South of Markets area and Pyramid Park.	
5	Driving Inclusive Growth	Consult on the Publication Local Plan and submit to the Secretary of state	
6	Driving Inclusive Growth	Review and take to Cabinet for approval and adoption the development frameworks for Elton Reservoir, Walshaw and Simister/Bowlee. Advance infrastructure planning to support future development to deliver around 6,000 new homes.	
7	Driving Inclusive Growth	Progress the delivery of the Whitefield and Ramsbottom Town Plans and make use of Economic Development Regeneration Grant Funding to improve public realm, increase footfall and create vibrant town centres.	

8	Driving Inclusive Growth	Deliver our Annual Sustainability Plan and Climate Change Strategy including EV charging point network and exploring design stage options for a Heat Network in Bury Town Centre.	
9	Driving Inclusive Growth	Create a new Waste Management Strategy to increase recycling rates and meet national reforms.	
10	Driving Inclusive Growth	Develop a boroughwide Parking Strategy that addresses capacity and cost across each neighbourhood.	
11	Improving Children's Lives	Implement Best Start in Life including delivery of the local plan to improve Good Levels of Development.	
12	Improving Children's Lives	As part of our 2030 commitment to establish a family hub in every neighbourhood, step up family hub delivery at the Live Well centre in Whitefield and from the Radcliffe Hub.	
13	Improving Children's Lives	Deliver the Families First Partnership Programme by restructuring our support services, establishing Family Help teams and multi-agency child protection teams to deliver an end-to-end model of support to children and families.	
14	Improving Children's Lives	Strengthen the school led improvement system by engaging all education settings in Bury to improve outcomes for children.	
15	Improving Children's Lives	Transform and improve how we support children with additional educational needs and disabilities in Bury by implementing the national SEND Reforms in partnership with NHS and education providers	
16	Improving Children's Lives	Build new schools Ashgrove (AP Academy), Willow Grove (Redvales SEMH secondary) and increase specialist sufficiency within existing schools to provide enough high-quality and financially sustainable places in local settings to meet demand.	
17	Improving Children's Lives	Establish a bespoke adolescent offer incorporating the return of Youth Justice services to Bury.	
18	Improving Children's Lives	Increase the number and quality of local family-based and residential homes for children in care.	
19	Tackling Inequalities	Accelerate team working maturity in each of our 5 neighbourhoods, connecting to the NHS reform programme of neighbourhood working in adults and designing multi-agency working in children's services.	

20	Tackling Inequalities	Implement Live Well in Whitefield including the Live Well Centre operating by July 2026 and supporting voluntary sector infrastructure and investment in community capacity building.	
21	Tackling Inequalities	Develop Live Well in Radcliffe connected to the hub opening, investment in the primary care centre and aligned to the family hub, and working with the Voluntary Community Faith Alliance (VCFA) to implement the Bury Fund to strengthen voluntary and community sector capacity.	
22	Tackling Inequalities	Increase working age employment rates by implementing Work Well, NEET reduction activity and the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer.	
23	Tackling Inequalities	Develop a new Bury Housing Strategy to include increased quality of social and private housing, delivery of more affordable housing and improvements in homelessness prevention and support.	
24	Tackling Inequalities	Implement the Bury health inequalities strategy including focus on tobacco control, physical activity, CVD prevention, and screening and immunisation uptake and report progress.	
25	Tackling Inequalities	Deliver Adult Social Care Business and transformation plan reflecting learning from the CQC review and with a further focus on strengths-based working, co-production and user engagement.	
26	Enablers	Deliver the 2026/27 Budget and develop a strategy for Medium Term Financial Sustainability.	
27	Enablers	Complete the Finance Improvement Plan through implementing the finance restructure and new procurement operating model, achieving the upgrade of Unit 4 (core finance system) and strengthened governance.	
28	Enablers	Develop a Workforce Strategy to drive high performance, talent management and improved HR policies and processes.	
29	Enablers	Implement the Digital Roadmap including upgrades to key business systems; Unit 4, Liquid Logic, Controcc, iTrent and Housing QL systems and develop a strategy for appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence to improve productivity.	

30	Enablers	Finalise the Estates Strategy for the improvement of operating our corporate and commercial estate.	
31	Enablers	Progress Equality, Diversity & Inclusion priorities through becoming a neuro inclusive employer; championing anti-racism and promoting community cohesion.	

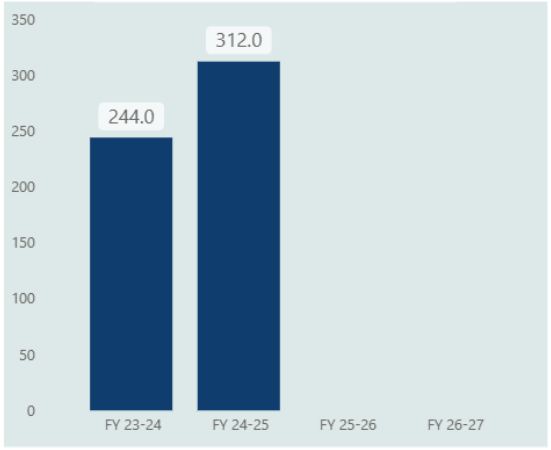
Appendix Three: Corporate Plan 2026-27 Q2 Performance Dashboards

Driving Inclusive Growth

Annual housing completions boroughwide

NA

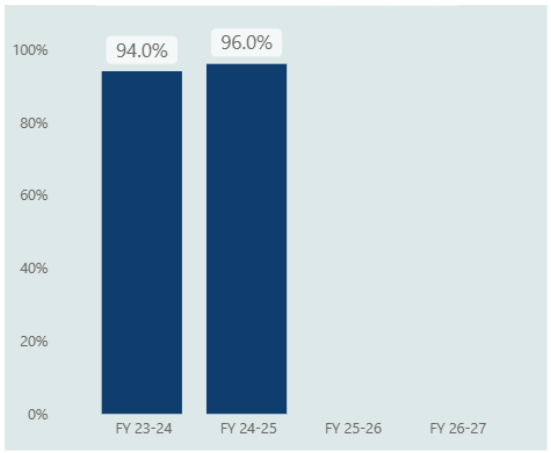
NA 312.0



% Housing completions on brownfield land boroughwide

High is good

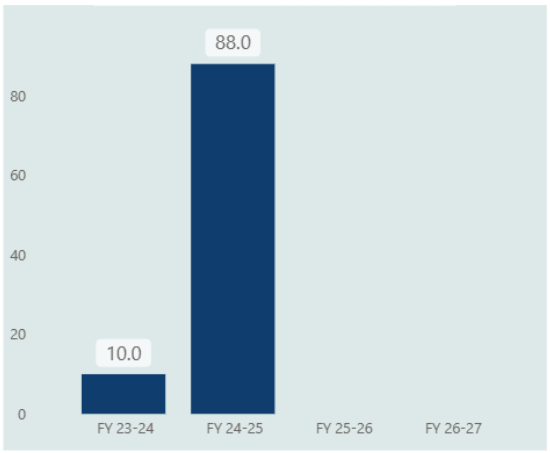
NA 96.0%



Number of housing units completed in the borough which are affordable

High is good

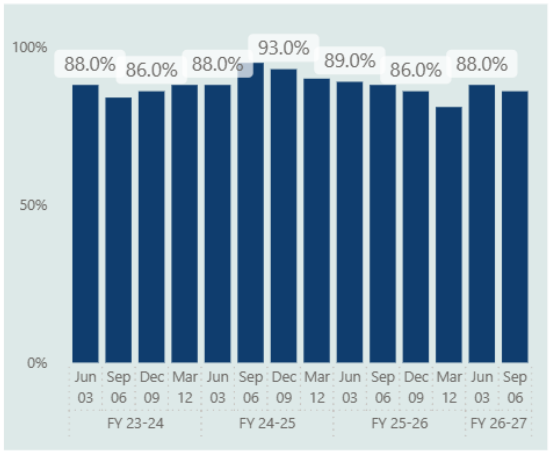
G 88.0



% of planning decisions granted

NA

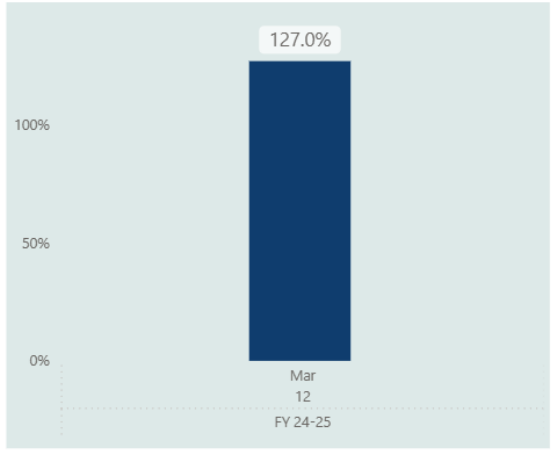
NA 86.0%



Housing delivery against Local Plan target (%)

High is good

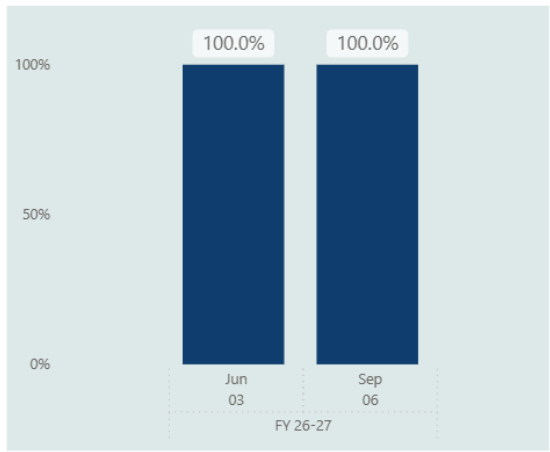
NA 127.0%



Percentage of all major development planning applications decided within 13 weeks or agreed time

NA

NA 100.0%

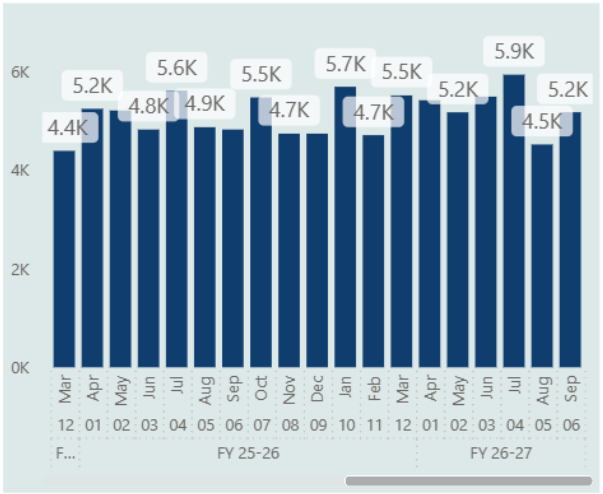


Waste Collection (tonnes)

NA

NA

5177.4

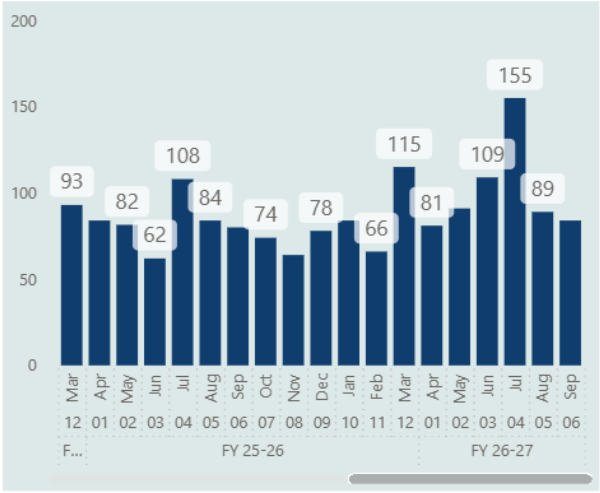


Number of missed bin collections per 100,000

Low is good

NA

84.0

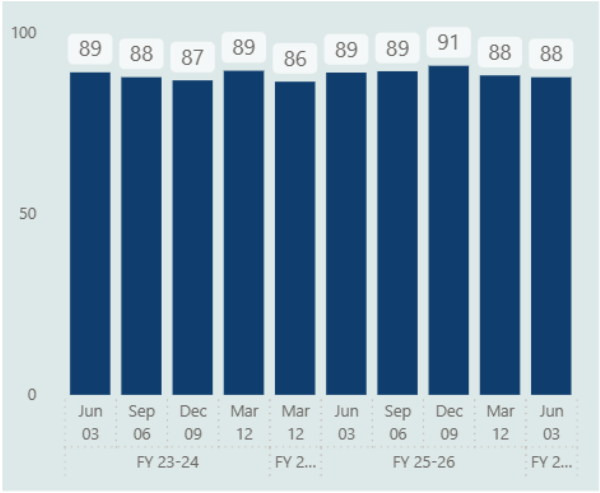


The amount (tonnes) of residual household waste per household

NA

NA

87.7

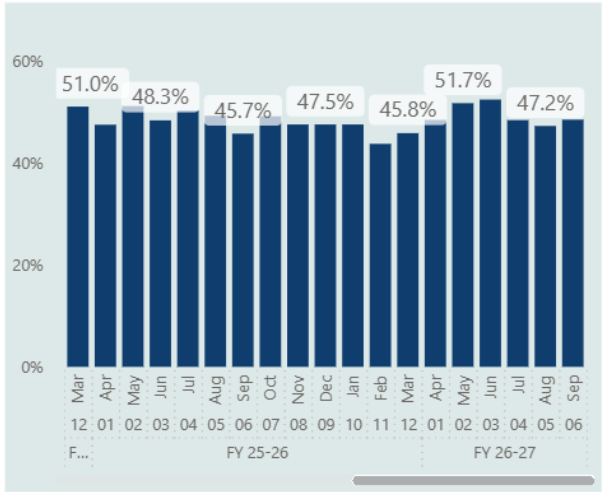


Proportion of household waste recycled

High is good

NA

48.4%

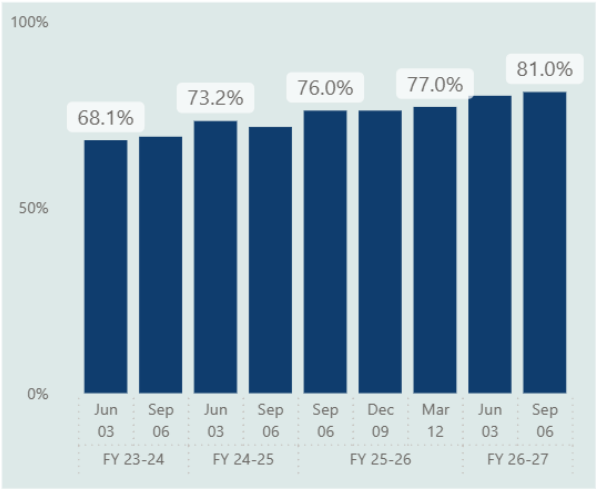


% of street lighting converted to LED

High is good

NA

81.0%

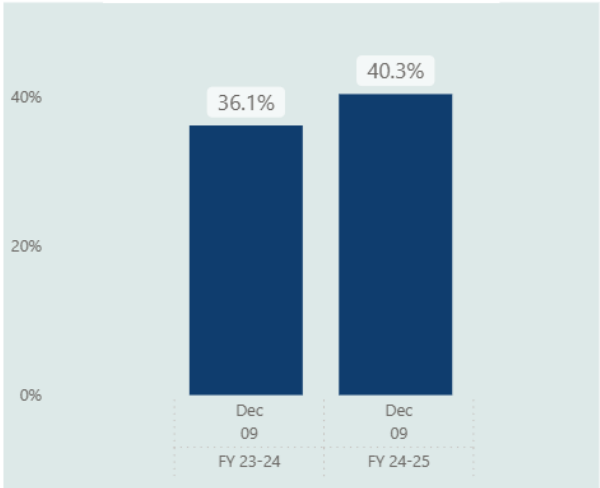


Energy efficiency of housing in the borough (% Band A-C)

High is good

NA

40.3%

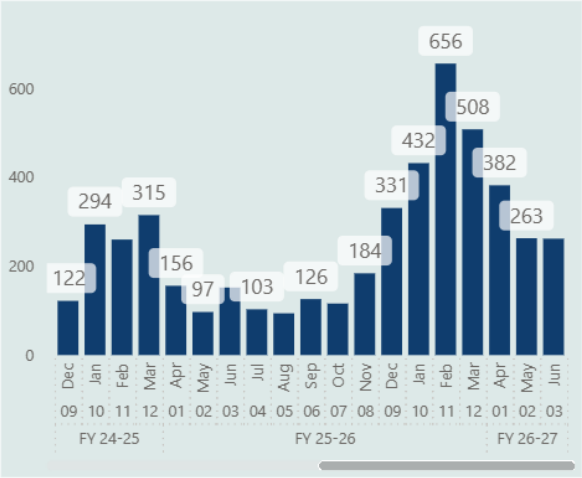


Number of potholes reported

NA

NA

262.0



Number of potholes repaired

NA

NA

645.0

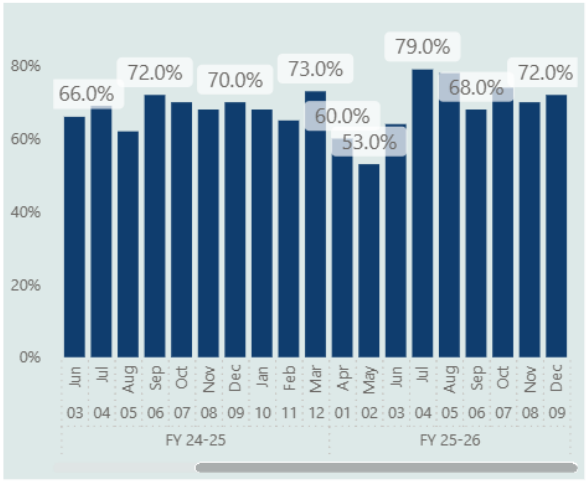


Highway repairs completed on time (%)

High is good

NA

72.0%

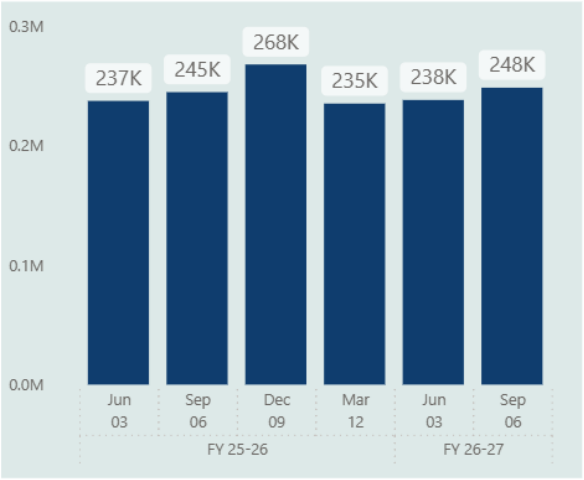


Market footfall - number of people attended Bury Market (fish and meat hall)

High is good

NA

248.3K

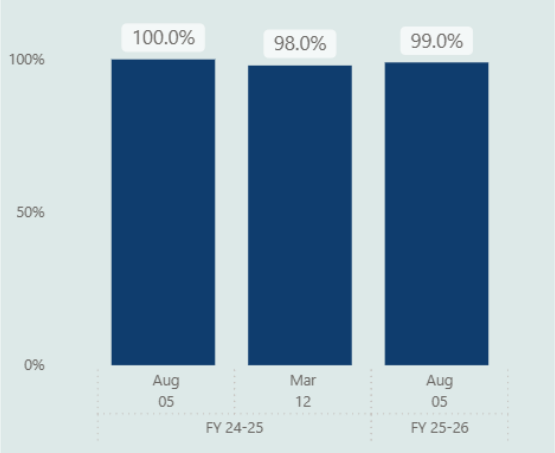


% of good and outstanding Ofsted outcomes for Early Years provision

High is good

NA

99.0%

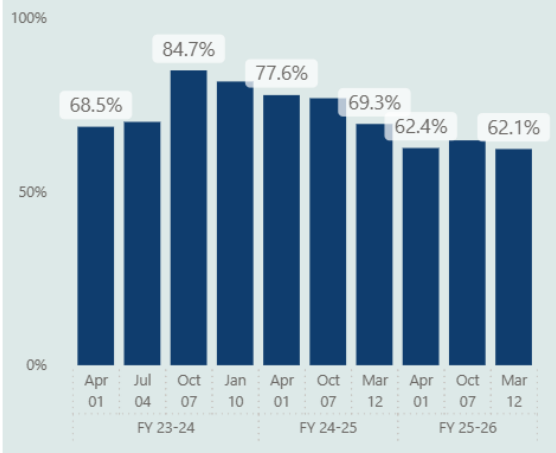


% of children accessing 2 year take up of free childcare

High is good

NA

62.1%

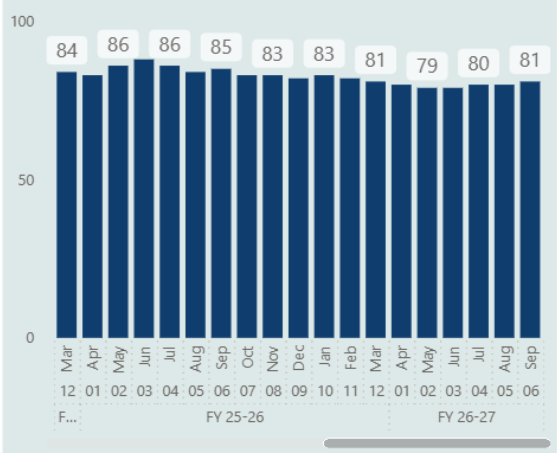


Rate of CLA per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (latest snapshot)

NA

NA

81.0

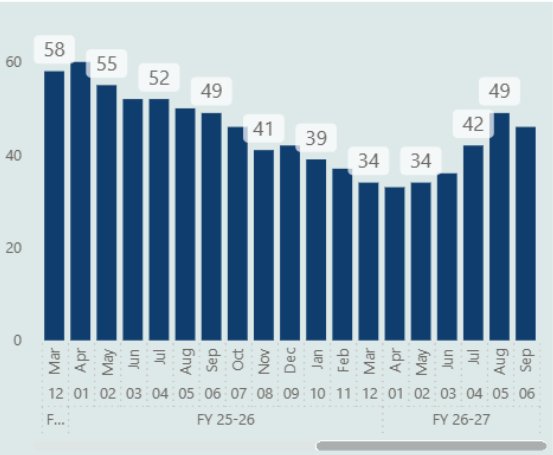


Rate of CPP per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (latest)

NA

NA

46.0

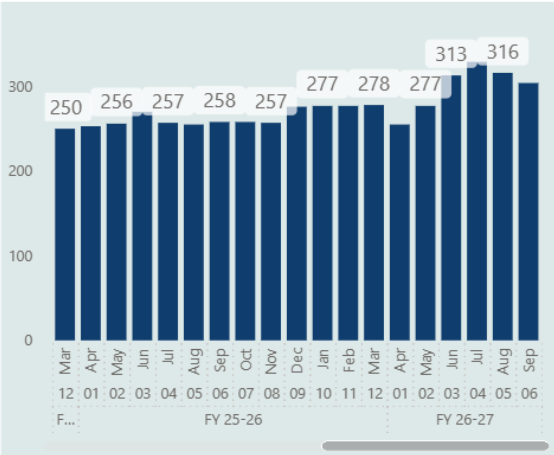


Rate of open CIN per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (latest)

NA

NA

304.0



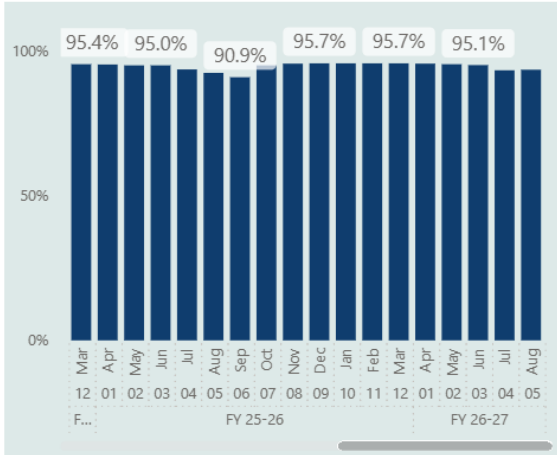
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 16-17 year olds (%)

High is good

NA

NA

93.5%

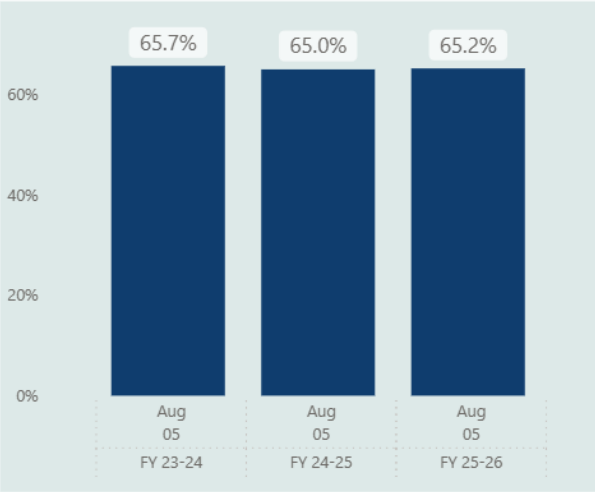


% of children defined as ready for school

High is good

NA

65.2%

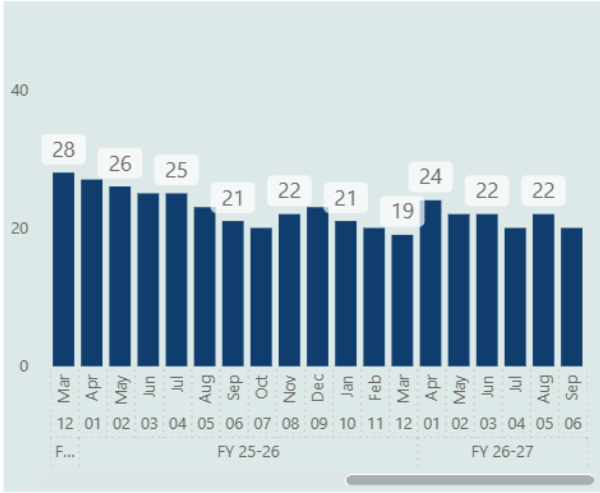


Re-referrals: children with a previous referral within 12 months of their latest referral (last 6 months)

Low is good

NA

20.0

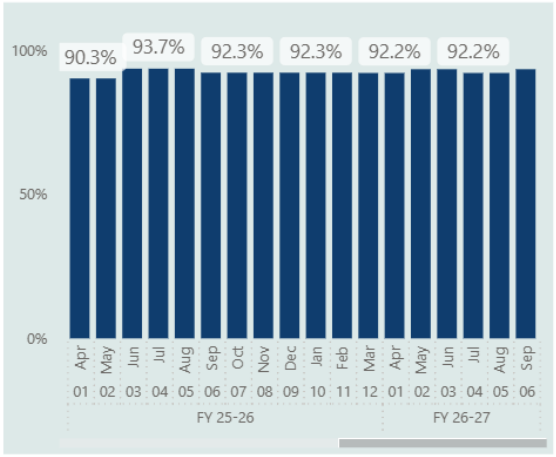


The percentage of adult social care providers rated good or outstanding by CQC

High is good

NA

93.5%

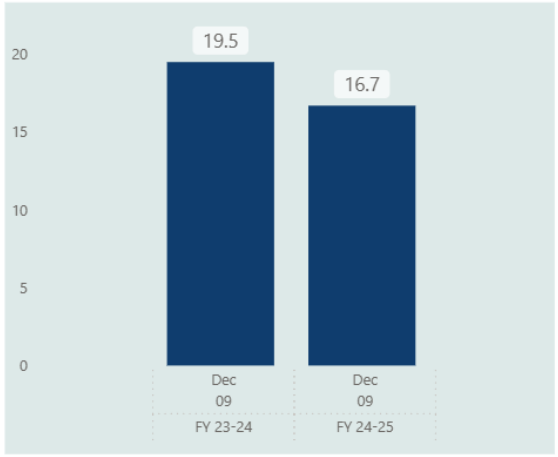


Smoking prevalence in adults in routine and manual occupations - 3 year period

Low is good

NA

16.7

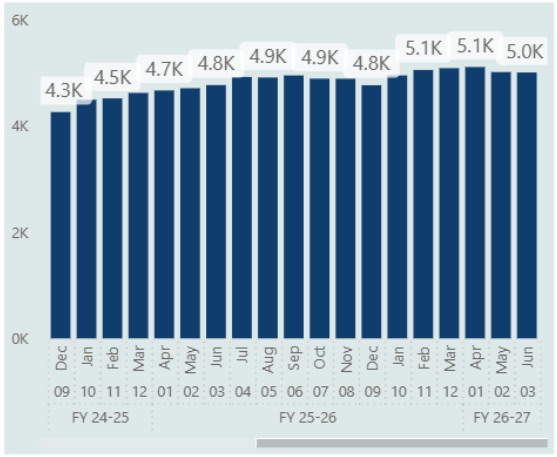


Number of leisure memberships

High is good

NA

5013.0

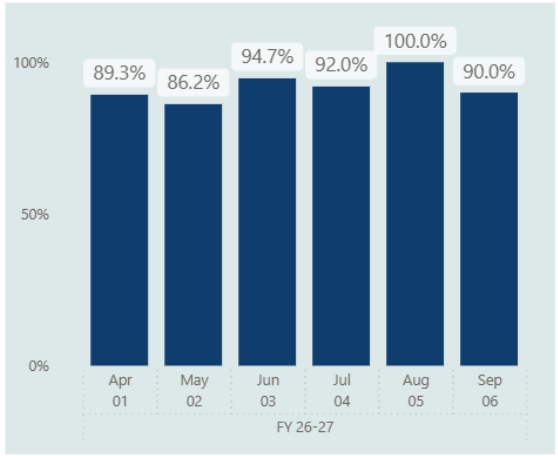


Proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified and the reported outcome was that the risk was reduced or removed

High is good

NA

90.0%



Number of visitors - Arts and Museums

High is good

NA

1712.0

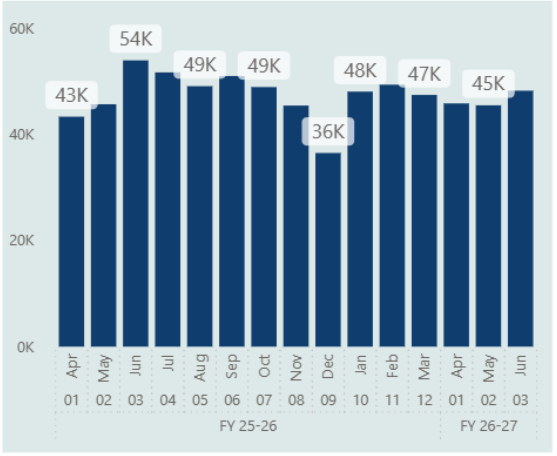


Number of visitors - leisure

High is good

NA

48.2K

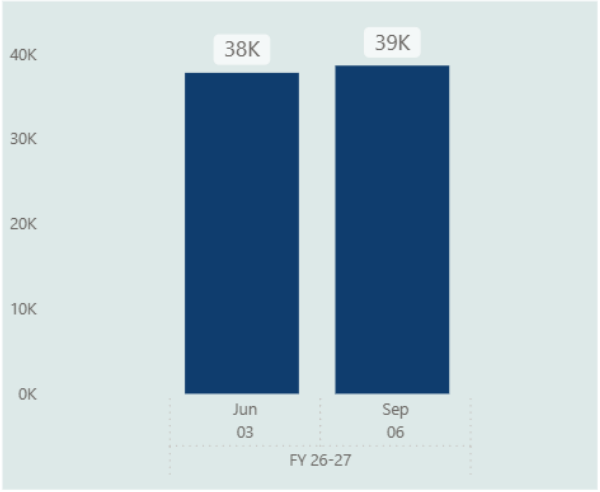


Number of visitors - Libraries + archives

High is good

NA

38.6K

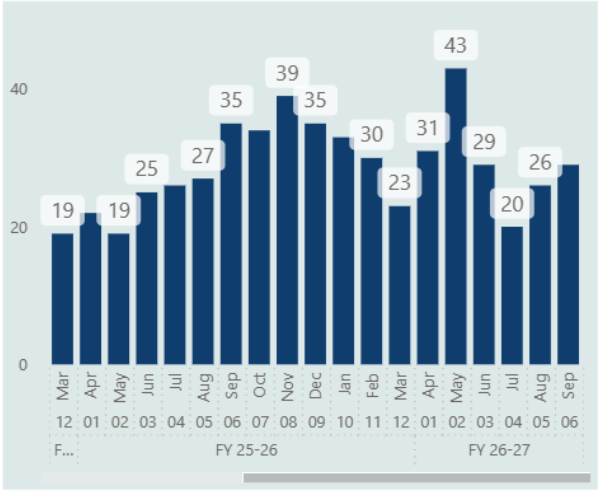


Median number of days waiting for an ASC needs assessment

Low is good

NA

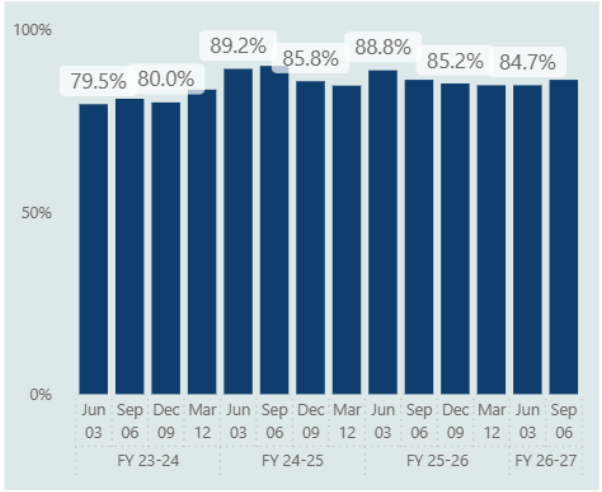
29.0



ASCOF 2A - The proportion of people who received short-term services during the year - where no further request was made for ongoing support

NA

86.2%

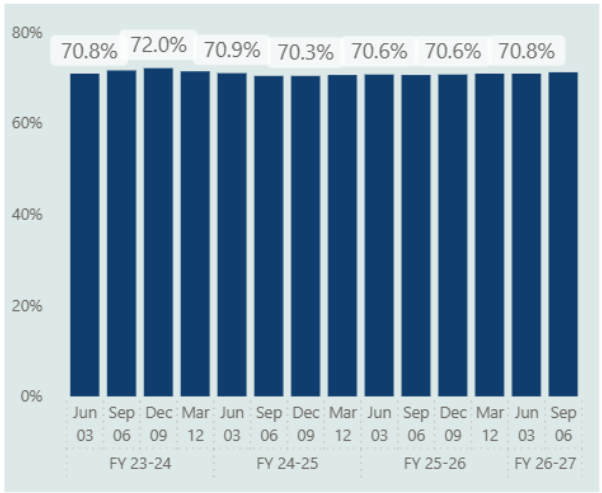


Proportion of people receiving long-term adult social care in the community

High is good

NA

71.1%

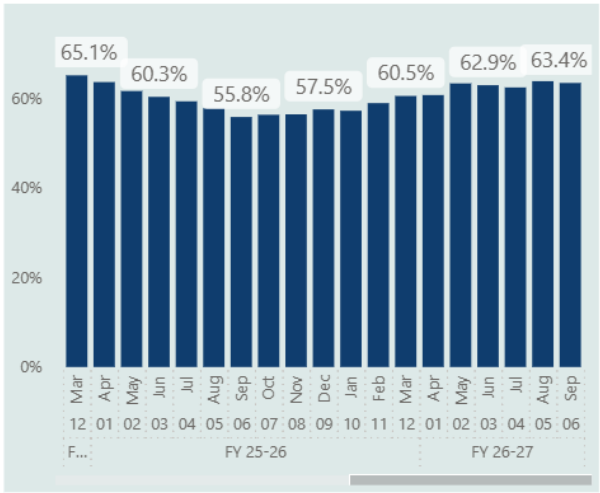


Proportion of completed Adult Social Care (ASC) annual reviews in a rolling 12 month period

High is good

NA

63.4%

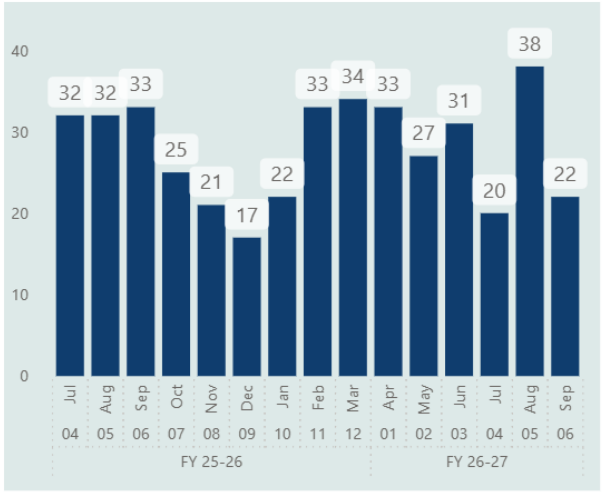


Number of people rough sleeping

Low is good

NA

22.0

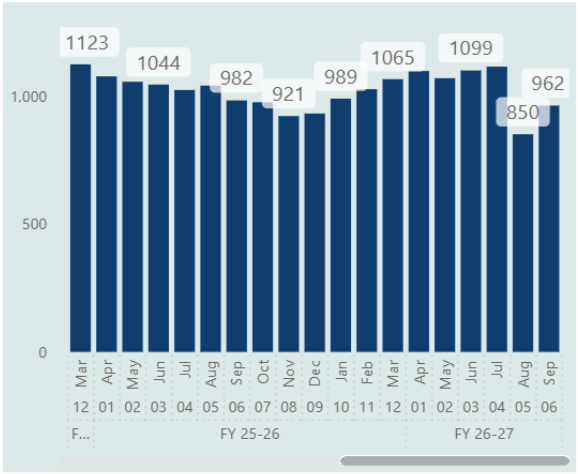


Number of statutory homeless cases open on the last day of the month

Low is good

R

962.0

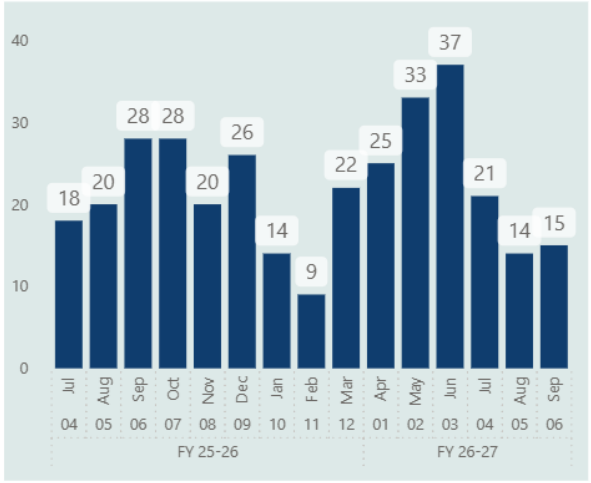


Number of people prevented from becoming homeless

High is good

NA

15.0

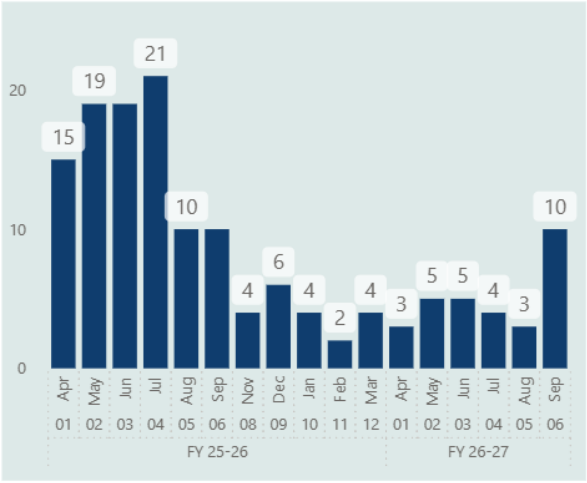


Number of families in b&b accomodation over 6 weeks

Low is good

NA

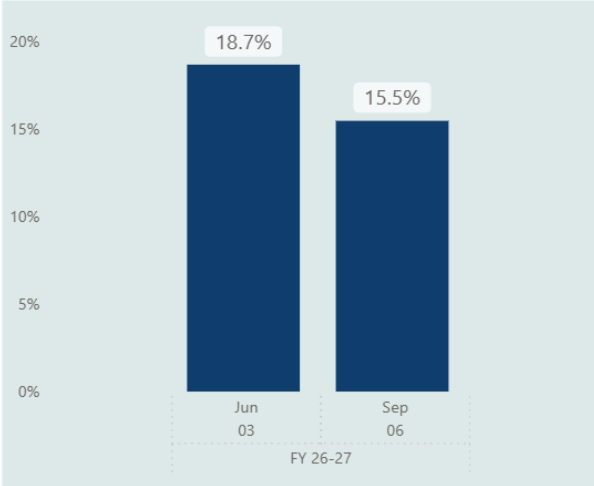
10.0



% of social housing that does not meet the decent homes standard

Low is good

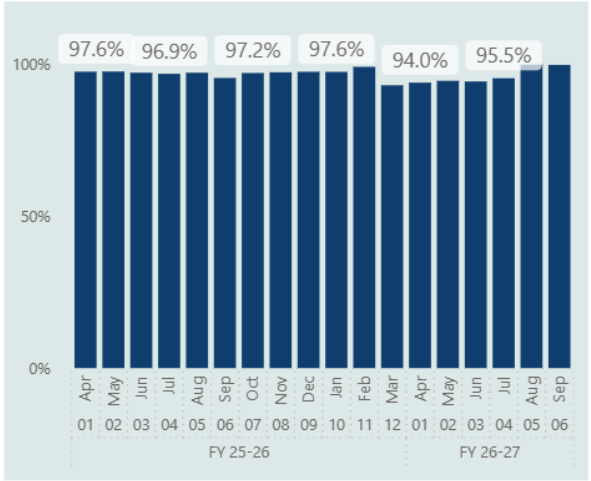
15.5%



Overall Housing Stock Compliance (%)

High is good

99.9%

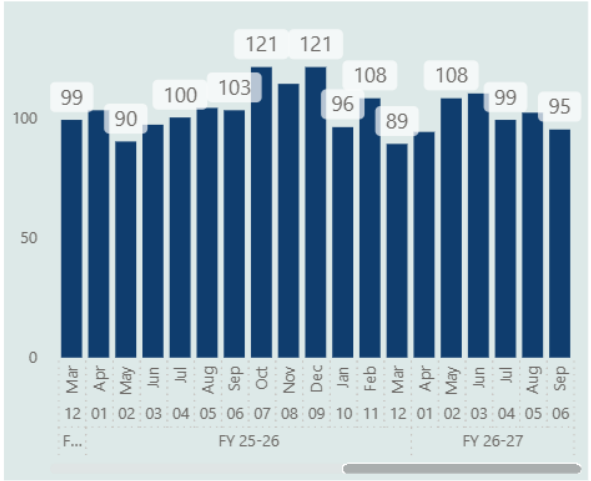


Number of rough sleepers currently being supported

High is good

NA

95.0



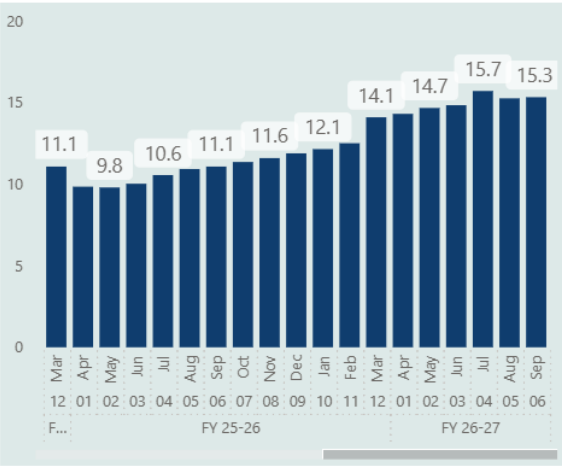
Enablers

Sickness absence: average number of days lost per FTE per year (Bury Council)

Low is good

G

15.3

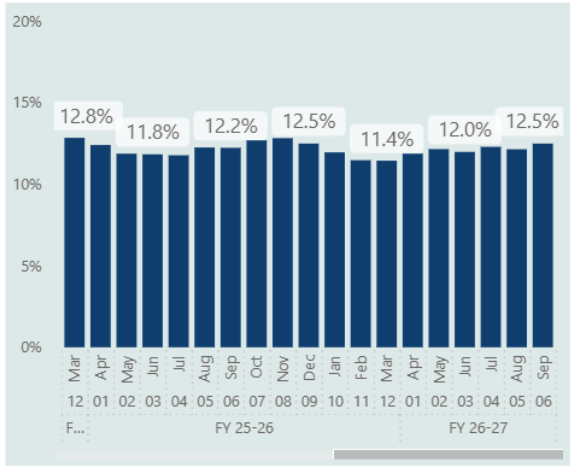


% Staff turnover (Bury Council)

Low is good

A

12.5%

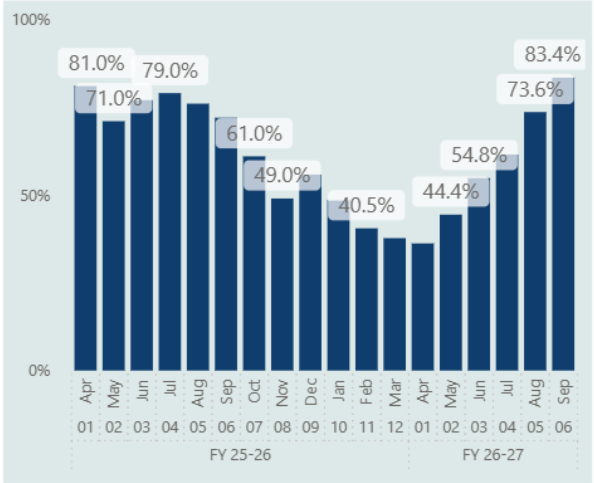


Contact centre – percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes

High is good

NA

83.4%

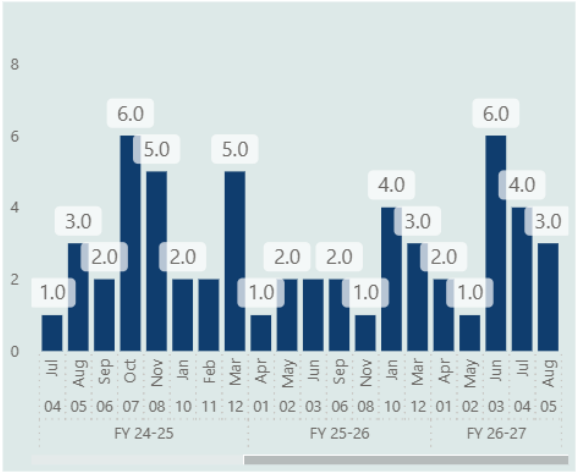


Number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued for fly tipping

NA

NA

3.0

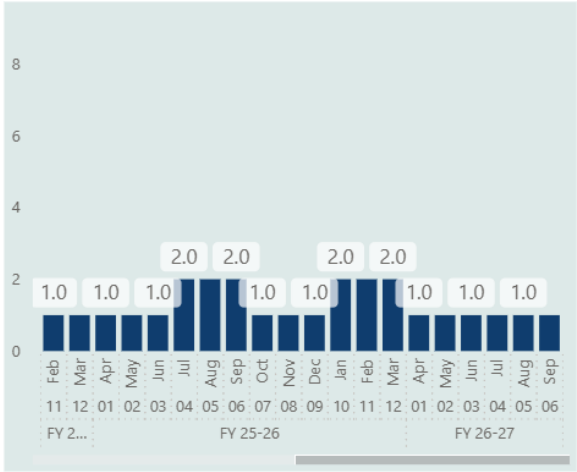


Number of ongoing prosecutions for fly tipping

NA

NA

1.0

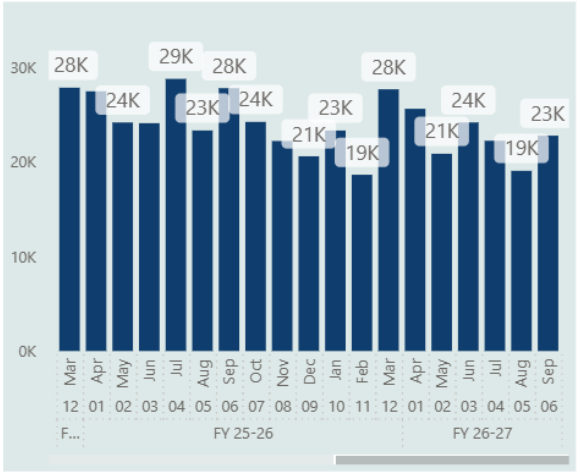


Contact centre – number of contacts received

Low is good

G

22.8K



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Agenda Item 8

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: **Overview and Scrutiny**

DATE: **24th November 2026**

SUBJECT: **Housing Services Update**

REPORT FROM: **Sian Grant, Director of Housing**

CONTACT OFFICER: **Sian Grant, Director of Housing**

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 This report provides members with an update on housing services and the improvements that are being made to the service to ensure we deliver excellent services to tenants and meet the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing's consumer standards.

1.2 The last report to overview and scrutiny was in June 2026, shortly before the Regulatory for Social Housing was due on site in July to carry out our first regulatory inspection.

1.3 The report provides overview and scrutiny committee an update on the outcome of the regulatory inspection on the housing service, progress on our action plan in key areas and how this is impacted by the inspection outcome and updates on key performance indicators as at the end of October 2026.

2.0 Regulatory inspection outcome

2.1 As the committee are aware the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced a stronger inspection regime for housing following lessons from Grenfell Tower and the death of Awaab Ishak. This included the introduction of a proactive inspection regime for local authorities. Landlords with more than 1,000 homes are subject to regular programmed inspections, typically within a four-year cycle.

2.2 In 2023 the Council made the decision to bring Six Town Housing, its Arm's Length management company, back in house following concerns about its management of the housing stock following a self-referral to the RSH about fire safety compliance. The transfer back in house was completed in February 2024, with a full permanent leadership team in place by November 2025.

2.3 When the council made the decision to bring STH came back in house when it became clear that performance on key compliance issues was not accurate and we could be no longer be assured of the validity of the data. There was also a lack of triangulation with feedback from what tenants were telling us and that there were a number of issues with data quality across a range of services areas. We also found that a number of service areas were not meeting requirements of the consumer standards or best practice. This included key service areas such as;

- Fire safety, electrical safety and gas safety
- Anti-social behaviour management
- Complaints handling
- Repairs and maintenance
- Caretaking and cleaning

2.4 Since February 2024 the service has been working hard to put in place the fundamentals to ensure we can build and deliver an excellent housing service. This has included improving data quality in key areas, improving performance reporting to show a true picture of performance, strengthening key teams and service areas and bringing in external support to provide assurance and guide improvement in key areas.

2.4 In May 2026, the Council received notification that it was being inspected by the RSH and following the submission of a significant amount of evidence to support the inspection and demonstrate the improvement made since bringing the stock back in house, the inspection took place from 20th – 22nd July 2026.

2.5 Following an inspection, landlords are given one of four ratings:

- C1 – overall the landlord is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord has demonstrated that it identifies when issues occur and puts plans in place to remedy and minimise reoccurrence.
- C2 – no failings but some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed.
- C3 – there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed.
- C4 – there are very serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord must make fundamental changes to that improved outcomes are delivered.

2.6 The Council was advised by the Regulator on 22nd October 2026 that it had received a C3 rating. This grading was published on 11th November 2026. It was the Regulator's judgement that there are serious failings in how we are delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed.

2.7 Specifically, the Regulator found serious failings in the Safety and Quality Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. They also found weaknesses requiring improvement in the delivery of some of the outcomes of the Neighbour and Community Standard. They found that we were meeting the expectations of the Tenancy Standard. The regulatory judgement can be found here.

2.8 The Regulator also provided more detailed feedback, which is not included as part of the regulatory judgement. As part of this feedback they stated we had made significant progress in improving the service since it had been brought back in house and that they could see that significant and fundamental changes had been put in place. They had been assured that we have a full understanding of where we are and that we have improvement plans in place to address the issues but that the time of the inspection these plans were at an early stage and were not yet embedded enough to show outcomes. They were also assured that we had the leadership and the capability to continue to improve the service.

2.9 They also identified that data quality is a cross-cutting theme in the judgement and that our data quality was not sufficiently robust to provide assurance. There was a specific ask that we look at improving how we audit our data and assure senior leaders and councillors of its accuracy. They also noted that we are in the process of upgrading our housing management system and this was a key part of improving our data quality and data governance.

2.10 Overall, they stated that the inspection is a point in time and they could see a positive trajectory of improvement which provides assurance that we will meet the requirements of the higher grades in time.

Communicating the outcome

2.11 The regulatory judgement was published on 11th November 2026 at 9.30am. A number of communication activities took place following the immediate publication of the judgement including briefing all housing staff and councillors. We also informed tenants via a letter send via CX our text messaging service – over 3500 tenants read the message. We also ensured that the judgement went live on our website. Last week we also sent a letter by post to all tenants along with some questions and answers.

2.12 A report will go to Housing Advisory Board on 18th November for discussion of the outcomes and on the next steps, followed by Cabinet on 2nd December.

Regulatory Judgement Improvement Plan

2.13 As we have been graded as a C3 we will have intensive engagement with the RSH going forward in the form of monthly meetings. At the meetings they will seek assurance that we are making sufficient and timely progress to improve. This will include monitoring our plans for improvement and ensuring there are improved outcomes for tenants.

2.14 As committee are aware , Bury Housing Services already has a substantial action plan in place to improve services. We will review this action plan to ensure it covers all the feedback and areas for improvement from the regulatory judgement and more detailed verbal feedback provided by the regulator. Over the next few weeks we will work to develop a draft regulatory improvement plan for discussion and approval by the regulator.

2.15 We will also share and discuss the regulatory judgement with involved tenants at a meeting on 23rd November. This will include the start of a wider discussion on how we improve engagement with tenants and how we can better enable tenants to be involved in decision making and scrutiny. We also plan to discuss the findings with service managers at our quarterly service managers meeting on 25th November. The views gather in these sessions will inform the improvement plan. The regulatory judgement and draft improvement plan will be presented to Cabinet on 2nd December.

2.16 It is anticipated that a first meeting with the regulator will take place in December 2026, where we will discuss their expectations of the improvement plan. Once the improvement plan has been agreed with the regulator we will present the final improvement plan to HAB, staff and tenants.

3.0 2026/27 performance

3.1 Our quarter 2 performance scorecard is attached at appendix one. This provides detail of our performance up to the end of the first quarter of this financial year.

Tenant satisfaction

3.3 The scorecard provides performance against the tenant satisfaction measures for the first half of the year. 326 satisfaction surveys have been completed year to date which is a return rate of 10%. At this point in time the survey results are only an indication of performance as the final satisfaction is based on all surreys across the year.

3.4 Whist satisfaction remains under the targets we have set for the year, with the exception of ‘satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained’, satisfaction has increased across all indicators compared to the position at the end of March 2026. This provides positive feedback that the work we are undertaking to improve services is being felt by our tenants. Satisfaction with repairs is exceeding target at 81.51%. Complaints satisfaction is more than 10% under target but has improved significantly since the end of march 2026 from 37.63% to 44.66%.

3.5 One of the serious weaknesses identified by the regular was that we are not meeting the technical and survey requirements of the tenant satisfaction measures. As part of our

improvement plan we will be looking to outsources the TSM survey to an external provider for 2027/28.

Asset management performance

3.6 The report provides information on the progress of our stock condition surveys. At the end of September 2026, 87.3% of all homes had a survey in the last 5 years and we had completed 223 surveys during the year so far. We have procured Pennington's to support us to increase the number of stock conditions we are completing and they have now started on site.

3.7 As noted in the last report to Overview and Scrutiny we have changed the way we report on Decency so that we identify at the start of the financial year all properties that will fall into non decency during the year. This enables us to carry out checks and surveys to check the elements that are potentially failing decency to provide is with an accurate picture of where work is needed. We currently have 15.47% of our housing stock which will potentially fall into non decency this year that we will need to survey. We have 831 address where the failing element is external so we are sending out notifications to tenants to say that we will be carrying out external property inspections in their area and taking some external photos to update our records. We are also trialling an amendment to the opt in booking system where we send the appointment and give the option to change it. This will also help contain the appointments into areas and maximise efficiencies. We are monitoring this closely.

Compliance performance

3.8 100% of Fire Risk Assessments are completed and up to date and we are working through the fire remediation actions. The table below provides overview and scrutiny with the number of actions by risk and the type of action that is outstanding. These figures are as at 13th November 2026. These actions relate to buildings where we have communal areas rather than individual homes including our independent living schemes and 281 communal areas or stairwells across our low rise flats. We expect to have addressed all high risk actions by the end of January 2027 and all other actions by the end of March 2027.

Risk level	Description of risk	Number	Type of actions
High risk	High risk due to the nature of the building rather than the actions being high risk or there being an immediate danger to life	24	Repairing and inspecting doors to individual flats Testing and repairing emergency lighting faults. Improving housekeeping in communal areas to reduce combustible materials. Updating fire safety records or evacuation procedures. Repairing non-critical defects to the fire alarm systems
Medium risk	These are improvements that should be completed to reduce fire safety risks but are not considered an immediate danger to life. The expectation is that these actions are addressed as soon as reasonably practicable.	843	Repairing and inspecting doors to individual flats Testing and repairing emergency lighting faults. Improving housekeeping in communal areas to reduce combustible materials. Updating fire safety records or evacuation procedures. Repairing non-critical defects to the fire

			alarm system
Low risk	These are minor fire safety improvements that have little impact on the overall fire safety on the building. They should be completed as part of routine maintenance and good practice but do not require urgent action.	1,552	Removing minor clutter that does not obstruct escape routes. Updating fire logbooks and maintenance records. Adjusting self-closing devices on fire doors where the door is still functioning adequately. Improving staff or resident fire safety awareness through refresher information.

3.9 Currently 96.56% of homes have an electrical safety check less than 5 years old. 431 properties remain non-compliant. Of these 184 properties have had an electrical safety check but have remedial work that needs to be completed, all of which is being progressed by our contractors. The remaining properties are currently outside the 5 year electrical safety check cycle. All of these are being prioritised by our contractor including additional resources to accelerate inspections.

3.10 Gas safety performance remains high at 99.85%. There are 11 properties what are overdue a gas safety check. Four of these properties are at court stage.

Repairs and maintenance

3.11 In the first half of 2026/27 we completed 62.29% of non-emergency repairs within timescales. Performance has been impacted the prioritisation of emergency repairs, damp and mould cases and other high risk works, alongside efforts to reduce historic repairs and overdue repairs. The remaining backlog includes a number of older and more complex repairs requiring specialist trades, follow-on works, multiple visits, or access arrangements. Actions are in place to reduce aged repairs, improve scheduling, increase capacity through recruitment and agency resources, and reduce Work in Progress levels to support improved performance.

3.12 We completed 95.18% of emergency repairs within target timescales. A small number of cases did not hit target due to access issues and increased repair complexity.

3.13 In the first half of the year repairs right first-time performance was 89.98%**.** A significant increase from 75.29% in 2025/26 reflecting improvements to the repairs service.

3.14 The average time to complete appointment repairs was 24 days for the first 6 months of the year compared to a target of 20 days. To improve performance, we are prioritising the clearance of older outstanding repairs, strengthening scheduling and appointment management, and increasing operational capacity through the recruitment of permanent and agency staff. A continued focus on reducing follow-on works, resolving access issues, and lowering the overall backlog is expected to improve completion times over the coming months.

Awaab's law

3.15 Performance against Awaab's law emergency repairs completed within target timescale is 75/1% for the first 6 months of the year and for significant repairs completed within timescale is 70.68%. Month on month performance shows performance is improving as processes become more embedded with 100% of emergency repairs and 74.55% of significant repairs completed within timescales in September 2026.

3.16 Demand for damp and mould investigations remains high, and some cases require specialist surveys or further technical assessment before they can be progressed. This has impacted our ability to consistently achieve the 10-day target.

3.17 A recovery plan is in place with enhanced management oversight of all open cases, weekly review of outstanding investigations, and targeted escalation of cases approaching target timescales. Additional surveyor and contractor capacity is being utilised to increase throughput. We are also strengthening case triage and scheduling arrangements to ensure higher-risk cases are assessed at the earliest opportunity. Improving compliance with Awaab's Law remains a key priority, with a continued focus on reducing outstanding investigations, increasing capacity, and driving sustained improvements in performance over the coming months.

Complaint handling

3.18 Complaint handling performance has improved with a corresponding increase in tenant satisfaction with complaint handling. Tenant satisfaction with complaint handling has improved from 37.6% in 2025/26 to 44.66% in the first half of 2026/27.

3.19 We have continued to see higher volumes of complaints compared to the previous year – primarily as a result of ensuring we have an open and transparent complaint handling culture. Year to date we have received 304 complaints. Ths includes 181 stage one complaints and 123 councillor enquiries.

3.20 During Q2, 152 Stage 1 complaints were received, with only 9 progressing to Stage 2, giving an escalation rate of 5.9%. This means that more than 94% of complaints were resolved without escalation, suggesting that concerns are generally being addressed at the earliest opportunity.

Anti Social Behaviour and Tenancy Management

3.21 Following the Housemark review of the ASB service and Housing Ombudsman findings, an improvement plan was developed to strengthen governance, case management, performance monitoring and customer experience.

3.22 The table below provides up to date performance data on ASB case handling up to the end of September.

	April 2026	**May 2026**	**June 2026**	**July 2026**	**Aug 2026**	**Sept**
Cases Opened	19	12	18	22	17	18
No. Risk Assessment not applicable (Anon/GMP complaints)	3	1	4	3	2	0
Risk Assessment Complete	13 (81%)	10 (91%)	11(79%)	19(95% 1 case)	100%	100%
Action Plan Created	14 (88%)	10 (91%	11 (79%)	19 (95% 1 case)	100%	100%
Contact Arrangement Agreed	8 (62%)	3 (30%)	6 (55%)	17 (90% 2 cases)	100%	100%
Cases Closed	16	16	33	11	12	14

3.23 The table demonstrates the improving performance on ASB case management including ensuring Housing officers are completing risk assessments, agreeing actions plans and agreeing contact arrangements with tenants.

3.24 The new ASB manager started in post in October 2026. This will ensure greater management oversight and quality assurance for the ASB service. It will strengthen case

auditing, further improve consistency in case management and support the delivery of higher service standards across the ASB service.

Relet times

3.25 During 2026/27 we have seen an increase in average relet times with the average relet time at 73 days at the end of September 2026 above the target of 30 days.

3.26 A number of properties have experienced significant delays which have an impact on the average relet time;

- 6 properties have experienced multiple refusals generating 445 void days
- One property was subject to a 70 day hold requested by an applicant awaiting hospital discharge.
- One property had a 13 day delay to arrange support form an interpreter.

3.27 In additional a number of properties experienced delays due to delays in ending tenancies, delays in returning keys and time need to complete major works such as boiler and kitchen replacements before reletting.

3.28 When combined these cases contributed 899 void days which when excluded would lower the average relet time to 42 days, just 3 days above target.

3.29 Actions to improve void turnaround include;

- Reviewing the property offer process and introducing clearer reoffer timescales.
- Producing a customer lettings guide to improve understanding of allocations and sign-up procedures.
- Reviewing Extra Care advertising and furnished property arrangements.
- Working with Housing Options to increase demand for harder-to-let accommodation.
- Improving key return arrangements, void reporting accuracy, and use of pre-termination inspections.
- Recruiting to vacant trade posts and strengthening administrative support within the voids service.

Income management

3.30 Rent arrears remain above target during 2026/27. An improvement plan is in place to address performance issues. A review of accounts has been undertaken and target communication sent to 1716 affected tenants to encourage engagement and early intervention. In addition, communications have been sent to all customers experiencing increasing rent arrears who are in receipt of UC, with the aim of promoting engagement and helping prevent further escalation of debt.

3.31 Training has been undertaken with team to improve call handling and ensure a consistent approach to customer interactions, the customer experience and improve collection outcomes. This will be followed by regular all audits to ensure continuous improvement and best practice.

Housing Service's 26/27 service plan progress

4.1 During 2025/26 we worked with tenants and staff to develop a vision and objectives for the service so that everyone understood the improvements we want to make to the service and we had clear outcome of what that would look like when we achieved it. This is set out on our plan on page which is attached at appendix two.

4.2 Our vision is 'Satisfied tenants, quality homes and united communities' and we have identified 8 objectives to deliver this vision with a number of high level actions for 2026/27. These are set out in the table below;

4.3 Further work will be undertaken to ensure the action plan aligns with the outcome of the inspection and that all key areas area covered. An initial assessment shows that all the issues raised by the regulator are covered by the action plan.

Objective	Key service actions for 2026/27	Date by	Progress
Improve customer service and increase customers influence in our service delivery	Improve our anti social behaviour service increasing tenant satisfaction	March 2027	New ASB manager started on the 19th October to provide further capacity. ASB performance has been improving with 100% compliance with risk assessments and communication plans for September.
	Improve the repairs service increasing efficiency effectiveness and tenant satisfaction	March 2027	Satisfaction with repairs on both transactional and perception is positive 81% YTD on TSM and 80% on transactional. The percentage of repairs completed in timescale is below expectations, in part due to sickness within the DLO. Subcontractors are being used but this increases cost.
	Improve our complaint handling culture	March 2027	The number of complaints is continuing to increase following improvements in process. We are now monitoring the number of upheld complaints to monitor service failures. We are aiming for a high number of complaints with only a minority upheld.
	Develop and implement a vulnerable customer policy	July 2026	Delayed but progressing. Cross service vulnerable tenant and reasonable adjustment training package to be delivered in the new year in line with the new QL upgrade.
	Develop a customer service strategy based on feedback from the Institute of Customer Service	December 2026	Feedback received from ICS and to be discussed with managers at the quarterly forum in November. Three areas of priority; code of conduct to be developed to set expected standards, workshops planned with the call centre and processes review.
	Develop and deliver a programme of tenancy visits	March 2027	Programme of tenancy visits being delivered by the neighbourhoods team. Target set each quarter per Officer. QL upgrade will support online completion of paperwork.
	Review our tenant engagement strategy	March 2027	TPAS have completed a review of our approach to tenants engagement. This will be shared with involved tenants at a meeting on 23rd November and with HAB for discussion at the meeting on 10th December to agree next steps.

	Develop and deliver a communications strategy	July 2026	Strategy has been developed. Resource currently being onboarded to help us deliver the change required.
Improve data governance	Upgrade our housing management system to ensure it is fit for purpose	March 2027	Housing management system upgrade on track with upgrade going live in early January.
	Establish a robust data management framework grounded in knowledge and information management (KIM) principles.	March 2027	Work not yet started. New Head of Performance Business Intelligence and Assurance role will lead a review of the data collected and stored.
	Improve the quality of the data we hold on our tenants and use this data in service delivery and decision making	March 2027	As above new role to take this forward. The first task is to reset the minimum data sets we would like to hold as a service.
	Improve data quality and reporting in the homelessness and housing options service	March 2027	New analyst started in the Homelessness Team. PI's are being reviewed with the New Head of Homelessness and Prevention. Returns are being completed.
Ensure we have a sustainable business plan	Continue to develop and deliver a viable 30 year business plan	Feb 2027	New Finance Strategic Lead for Housing - Grace Rogerson - starts with the authority 12 October 2026. Phase 2 of the Finance Restructure is ongoing so process still being followed to achieve fully resourced permanent team structure. Once the team has been established fully the process of developing business planning expertise can start to gather pace.
	Identify and deliver efficiency savings in both the housing revenue account and the housing general fund	March 2027	Savings have been identified for the HRA and General Fund. Housing will have a task and finish group linked to the Savings workstream. Savings identified in Repairs may not be achieved due to speed of procurement and ongoing use of subcontractors.
	Review service charges	March 2027	Ongoing review of existing service charges with Finance. Next stage is to consider increases, reductions and new charges at HLT.

	Increase rent collection and promote a positive payment culture	March 2027	The income management team have put in place a detailed improvement action plan to reduce arrears and increase rent collection. The action plan focuses on;
			• Data, software and systems
			• Rent collection framework
			  ○ support
			  ○ enforcement

			○ tenant engagement ○ positive payment culture ○ payment optimisation • Performance management
	Develop and deliver a procurement pipeline	March 2027	Repairs and Compliance have several procurement exercises to complete before the end of the year including gas and repairs general building contractor including voids.
Improve the quality of our homes	Develop an asset management strategy	Dec 2026	Delayed due to time and resource work to start October 2026. Asset management board set up to develop and deliver. First meeting 23rd November.
	Carry out a rolling programme of stock condition and retrofit surveys to ensure we fully understand the condition of our homes	March 2027	An external provider has been brought in to support in house team to ensure that the number of surveys required are delivered in year.
	Develop a three-year capital investment programme	March 2027	Analysis and data cleansing is ongoing with scoping planned in preparation for 2027/28.
	Improve our access to homes across repairs, assets and compliance	March 2027	Visited 2200 properties at a door knocking event on 10th November and accessed 411 properties. Now have consistent use of the legal no access process across the teams where access remains an issue.
	Deliver the plan to reduce the number of outstanding EICRs bringing all homes within the 5 year programme	March 2027	Plan on track and EICR compliance has increased to 96% at the end of September
	Deliver the plan to reduce the number of outstanding fire remedial actions	March 2027	Fire remedial actions continue to reduce. New Head of Compliance will ensure work continues to reduce the number including bringing in more contractor and staffing capacity if required to complete actions.
Improve staff satisfaction	Improve staff satisfaction for 'this is a place I feel valued' and 'managers discuss training needs'	March 2027	Held staff awards in July 2026 which were very well received. Consistent briefings and staff engagement on projects such as QL to further increase satisfaction with feeling valued.
	Build a consistent value led service	March 2027	First cohort of manager have been onboard on their level 4

	culture where staff at all levels are aligned around shared behaviours, accountability and a strong customer focus.		qualifications. Code of Conduct to be developed which supports the ICS recommendations.
Prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping	Develop new Homelessness Prevention Strategy and action plan	Oct 2026	Strategy developed and being presented at Cabinet on 2nd December 2026
	Review and refocus service to align with early prevention work and outcomes from the service	March 2027	New Head of Homelessness and Prevention and Housing Solution to review structure of the team to support prevention work.
	Work with private rented sector team to embed renters right act	March 2027	Increased capacity through the training of an apprentice to focus on breaches of the Renters' Rights framework, including illegal evictions. Internal referral pathways established to escalate cases for investigation. Landlord forum delivered in partnership with the NRLA, providing updates on the Renters' Rights Act implementation roadmap. Ongoing advice & support provided to local landlords and letting agents on legislative changes and best practice
	Commission our rough sleepers support services	March 2027	CAS-3 Procurement was approved at Cabinet. Commission cycle to begin. Due to delays with procurement and exemptions has been applied for the CAS3 to extend the contract with Stepping stones from 1st November 2026 to 31st December 2027. ABEN cabinet approved, waiting for availability with procurement. RSAP exemption completed in Aril 2026, wating for contract.
Provide safe and decent temporary accommodation	Deliver the bed and breakfast elimination plan	March 2027	Improved TA subsidy recovery by enabling claims on out-of-borough placements that were previously ineligible. Nightly rates have been renegotiated with B&B providers, and greater use of lease-and-repair and other sustainable accommodation options has reduced reliance on B&B and nightly paid accommodation
	Increase access to suitable and adequate temporary accommodation Deliver Local Authority Housing Fund	March 2027	LAHF3 - two purchases completed with a further five purchases agreed and going through conveyancing. LAHF 4 - several properties in the pipeline. Working with legal to

	rounds 3 and 4		explore the option of purchasing through auction as there are several good opportunities on the market.
	Increase support for sustainable move on from temporary accommodation	March 2027	Two dedicated Move-On Officers have been recruited to support sustainable move-on from Temporary Accommodation, providing targeted support with benefit maximisation, debt management, affordability, employment and access to private rented housing.
Review housing allocations and housing register	Reduce backlog of housing applications	March 2027	To reduce the backlog of housing applications, we employed an additional temporary member of staff whose primary role has been to focus on processing outstanding applications for two days each week. Through this targeted approach, alongside the dedication and commitment of the wider team, we have achieved a significant reduction in the backlog from 1,339 applications in 2025 to 218 at the present time
	Working in partnership review the allocations policy and make sure it is fit for purpose	March 2027	Allocations policy reviewed to include tied tenancies. Head of Homelessness and Prevention will assess scope of further review and use of Locator

List of Background Papers:-

RSH Consumer standards

Contact Details:-

Sian Grant, Director of Housing

Executive Director sign off Date:_____

Bury Council – Housing Services

Quarterly Scorecard

Q2 2026-27

Key

Arrows are based on last quarter's out turn:

- ↑ Performance trend improving
- – Performance trend static
- ↓ Performance trend deteriorating

Current performance colour based on annual target:

- Excellence (Target achieved or exceeded)
- Performance not on track but within 10% of green
- Performance not on track by more than 10%

Code	Tenant Satisfaction Measure Quarterly	2025/26 Value	Q1 2026/27 Value	Q2 2026/27 Value	Quarterly trend	YTD Value	2026/27 target
TP01	**Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service their landlord provides**	73.91%	73.24%	73.63%	↑	73.46%	77%
TP02	**Satisfaction with repairs**	76.69%	80.39%	82.35%	↑	81.51%	80%
TP03	**Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair**	74.45%	75.49%	78.68%	↑	77.31%	78%
TP04	**Satisfaction that the home is well maintained**	71.23%	74.47%	73.08%	↑	72.78%	79%
TP05	**Satisfaction that the home is safe**	75.04%	78.01%	75.69%	↓	76.71%	80%
TP06	**Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them**	59.29%	54.89%	66.29%	↑	61.36%	65%
TP07	**Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them**	68.81%	70.71%	69.89%	↓	70.25%	77%
TP08	**Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect**	75.72%	80.71%	77.65%	↓	79%	80%
TP09	**Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints**	37.63%	35.56%	51.72%	↑	44.66%	55%
TP10	**Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained**	68.95%	60.34%	67.21%	↑	63.87%	65.5%

Code	Tenant Satisfaction Measure Quarterly	2025/26 Value	Q1 2026/27 Value	Q2 2026/27 Value	Quarterly trend	YTD Value	2026/27 target
TP11	**Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods**	58.91%	60.9%	61.49%	↓	61.24%	62.5%
TP12	**Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour**	52.59%	52%	56.49%	↑	54.48%	60.4%

326 satisfaction surveys have been completed year to date. This equates to a 10% return rate and a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of +/-5 % points. It is therefore not advisable to take the current quarterly changes as anything other than an indication of performance.[1]

Complaints handling and communal cleaning are key areas within the service plans this year and this will be a measure if the work undertaken in the last 6 months has been felt by tenants.

The regulator has highlighted the TSM mechanism as a key weakness and therefore there will be a review and consideration of how to measure TSM going forward.

TSM Quarterly	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	Jul-26	Aug-26	Sep-26	Overall
Response rate (%)	9	8	9	10	10	10	10
Invites sent	540	563	540	587	573	614	3417
Responses completed	55	45	45	58	59	64	326

[1] If we did the survey 100 times we could be 95% sure that it would fall between +/-5%

code	Asset Management	2025/26 Value	Q1 2026/27 Value	Q2 2026/27 Value	Quarterly trend	2026/27 target
AM01b	Homes (dwelling units) that have had a stock condition survey in the last 5 years	82.95%	84.96%	87.3%	↑	Info only
AM06	Volume of Stock Condition Surveys completed in quarter (Cum YTD)	New PI	151	223	↑	Info only
AM01	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.72%	18.67%	15.47%	↑	0%
AM08	% of homes with an EPC rating of C or above.	59.68%	69.95%	70.99%	↑	80%

Code	Asset Management	Exception Notes
AM01	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	We are 8.88% short of our predicted target for this quarter which has been impacted by annual leave and access issues. We are trialling two options to try to maximise access (besides following the No Access Policy). We have 831 addresses where the failing element is external only so we are sending out notifications to those tenants to say that we will be carrying out external property inspections in their area and taking some external photos to update our records. As these have been split into areas this will maximise the number, we will be able to complete each day. We are also trialling an amendment to the opt in booking system where we send the appointment and give the option to change it. This will also help contain the appointments into areas and maximise efficiencies. We are monitoring this closely. We have also reinforced the process for the submission of the survey data so that it is provided by the surveyors as soon as possible after the survey. This is because we've experienced a bit of a lag between the survey being carried out and it being recorded in the right month and the data being put in the right place for analysis to be carried out. Again, this is under close scrutiny.

AM08	% of homes with an EPC rating of C or above.	There is a time lag for energy works completions and renewing EPC certs needed to evidence the properties move into EPC C band and above. An energy programme has just completed with new programmes due to start. The second half of 2026.27 should show increase in % stock within EPC band C. Additionally, as part of QL upgrade we are looking at the implementation of an Energy portal which will help significantly in calculating the energy efficiency of our housing stock and provide much better data confidence.

Code	PIA	2025/26 Value	Q1 2026/27 Value	Q2 2026/27 Value	Quarterly trend	YTD Value	2026/27 target	BM Owner
CH01a	Complaints relative to the size of the landlord - Stage 1 (Rolling 12 months)	3.68	42.51	58.72	↑	58.72	83	**CR**
CH01b	Complaints relative to the size of the landlord Stage 2	0.6	9.41	10.39	↑	10.39	Info only	**CR**
CH02a	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage 1	100%	100%	100%	–	100%	100%	**CR**
CH02b	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage2	100%	100%	100%	–	100%	100%	**CR**
CH07c	Percentage of Stage 1 Complaints Upheld	New	55.43%	43.82%	↑	49.72%	Info only	**CR**
CH07d	Percentage of Stage 2 Complaints Upheld	New	50.00%	42.31%	↑	46.43%	Info only	**CR**

Code	PIA	Exception Notes
CH01a	Complaints relative to the size of the landlord - Stage 1 (Rolling 12 months)	The continued increase in recorded complaints is encouraging and suggests Housing Services is becoming better at recognising and recording tenant dissatisfaction. Higher complaint numbers can also indicate greater tenant confidence in raising concerns and using the complaints process. Tenant satisfaction increased by 16% in Q2, which may reflect improvements to complaint handling, including the introduction of a personalised telephone call at the start of every complaint to clarify issues, gather relevant information and build trust from the outset. Year to date, Housing Services has recorded 304 complaints, comprising 181 Stage 1 complaints and 123 Councillor enquiries, with Councillor enquiries accounting for 40% of overall complaint demand. During Q2, 152 Stage 1 complaints were received, with only 9 progressing to Stage 2, giving an escalation rate of 5.9%. This means that more than 94% of complaints were resolved without escalation, suggesting that concerns are generally being addressed at the earliest opportunity. Whilst complaint volumes continue to increase, the combination of improving tenant satisfaction and low escalation rates suggests a positive direction of travel. Upheld rates have not been included in this analysis as outcome data for Councillor enquiries is currently held in a separate system, and reporting this would present an incomplete picture of overall complaint performance

Code	Voids	2025/26 Value	Jul 2026 Value	Aug 2026 Value	Sep 2026 Value	Monthly trend	YTD Value	2026/27 target
TM3	Average time taken to re-let local authority housing (days)	45	84	97	79	↑	73	39
FM7	Cumulative rent loss from vacant LA homes	1.35%	1.88%	1.87%	1.89%	↓	1.87%	1.07%

Code	Voids	Exception Notes
TM3	Average time taken to re-let local authority housing	In September, 24 properties were let across all stock types, with an average re-let time of 79 days. While this represented an improvement on August, performance remained above the target of 39 days. Several exceptional delays significantly impacted results. Within Neighbourhoods, six properties experienced multiple refusals, generating 445 void days. Additional delays included a 70-day hold requested by an applicant awaiting hospital discharge and a 13-day delay to arrange interpreter support, creating a further 83 void days. Together, these cases accounted for 528 void days. Within Property Services, seven properties incurred 371 void days due to delays in ending tenancies, returning keys, and completing major works such as boiler and kitchen replacements before reletting. Combined, these exceptional cases contributed 899 void days. Excluding them would reduce total void days from 1,896 to 997 and lower the average re-let time to 42 days, just three days above target. **Improvement actions include:** • Reviewing the property offer process and introducing clearer reoffer timescales. • Producing a customer lettings guide to improve understanding of allocations and sign-up procedures. • Reviewing Extra Care advertising and furnished property arrangements. • Working with Housing Options to increase demand for harder-to-let accommodation. • Improving key return arrangements, void reporting accuracy, and use of pre-termination inspections. • Recruiting to vacant trade posts and strengthening administrative support within the voids service.
FM7	Cumulative rent loss from vacant LA homes	

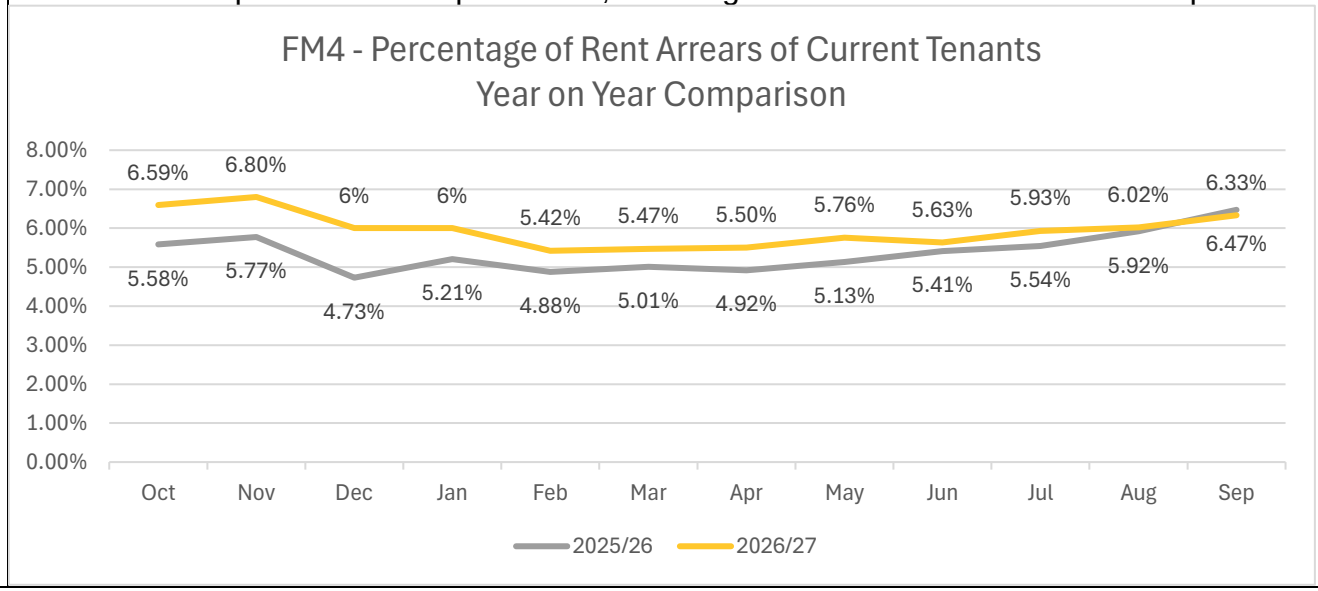
Code	Compliance	2025/26 Value	Jul 2026 Value	Aug 2026 Value	Sep 2026 Value	Monthly trend	2026/27 target
BS01	Gas Safety Checks	99.77%	99.88%	99.92%	99.85%	↓	100%
BS02	Fire Safety Checks	87.89%	100%	100%	100%	–	100%
BS03	Asbestos safety checks	100%	100%	100%	100%	–	100%
BS04	Water safety checks - Legionella	96.67%	100%	100%	100%	↓	100%
BS05	Lift safety checks	100%	100%	100%	100%	–	100%
CM06	Percentage of Tenanted Properties with Valid Electrical Safety Certificate	94.47%	90.58%	92.91%	96.56%	↑	100%

Code	Compliance	Exception Notes
BS01	Gas Safety Checks	11 Bury Council owned and managed properties had an overdue Landlord's Gas Safety Record (LGSR) (in excess of 12 months) up from the 6 reported last month. • 6 properties are less than 1 month past expiry • 1 property is between 1 and 3 months past expiry • 1 property is between 3 and 4 months past expiry • 2 properties are between 4 and 6 months past expiry From an Enforcement perspective, out of the above 11 expired properties, 4 have been issued with a Letter Before Action (LBA) and evidence has been provided, 3 are awaiting a court date and one has a court date set for the 30/10/2026.

CM06	Percentage of Tenanted Properties with Valid Electrical Safety Certificate	Electrical compliance data is undergoing ongoing cleansing and validation to improve accuracy, consistency, and regulatory alignment. The position reported reflects the most up to date validated data and presents a prudent, worst case view while final reports are confirmed. The electrical testing programme covers 7187 properties, of which 6756 are currently compliant. Within this compliant group, 184 properties have identified remedial works, all of which are actively being progressed by contractors. 33 properties remain compliant within the 10-year inspection cycle, while 214 properties are currently outside the cycle and therefore non-compliant. These have been issued to contractors with additional resources requested to accelerate inspections and restore compliance. Contractor engagement has improved following actions agreed at the previous Contract Management Meeting, with a formal progress update due within the next two weeks and early signs of performance improvement emerging. **Plans to return to compliance:** <u>Domestic EICR's:</u> Currently working through 184 backlog of non compliant assets - Some are errors on the certification and others are genuine remedial works. The remedial works are being highlighted through to our Contractor AB Electrical. Remedial works at current consist of Consumer Unit Changes, Main Bonding undersized, no continuity on ring circuits and some deterioration of cable insulation resistance. Rewires at present are on the lower side with only one highlighted in the past 3 months. <u>Communal EICR's:</u> Currently working on 11 backlog of non-compliant assets - Some are errors on the certification and others are genuine remedial works. The remedial works are being highlighted through to our Contractor AB Electrical. Remedial works at current consist of Consumer Unit Changes, no rcd, rcbo or rccb protection to circuits. Requires upgrade works to these general need blocks. This may need to feed into a program of works. 2 Assets were taken off the program due to not having a communal supply within the communal area. <u>Program of Works:</u> Current Program of works is going to plan (contract start date 02/04/26). Concentrating on Actual number of EICR's Required due to Out of 5 Year Cycle (33) and Without Documentation 214) - 214+33= 247 and remedial works identified (184) 247+184= 431. Outstanding Communal EICR's should be completed by the 08/10/26.

Code	Finance (Rents)	2025/26 Value	Jul 2026 Value	Aug 2026 Value	Sep 2026 Value	Monthly trend	2026/27 Value	2026/27 target
FM1	Total rent arrears (Bury Council Stock) Current and former tenants	£2,892,656	£3,307,227	£3,352,205	£3,470,303	↓	£3,470,303	Info
FM4	Percentage of rent arrears of current tenants	5.47%	5.93%	6.02%	6.33%	↓	6.33%	4.5%

Code	Finance (Rents)	Exception Notes
FM4	Percentage of rent arrears of current tenants	Improvement actions are progressing alongside the implementation of the Rent Improvement Plan. We have commenced a review of under staged accounts and have targeted communications to all affected customers to encourage engagement and support early intervention. 1716 cases in total for this ASCLR stage. In addition, communications have been sent to all customers experiencing increasing rent arrears who are in receipt of UC, with the aim of promoting engagement and helping prevent further escalation of debt. 245 letters sent. Voicescape challenges around automated calls being investigated to ensure criteria is correct and aligned to business needs. Work being undertaken on workflows and campaigns. Call calibration training has begun across the team to support a consistent approach to customer interactions and enhance the overall customer experience and collection outcomes. This will be followed by regular call audits conducted by the Business Partner monthly with constructive feedback and targeted training to ensure continuous improvement and best practice. Coaching Frameworks, TED and GROW, have been built and implemented to support consistency and help officers reach their potential. Opportunity for Improvement Tracker implemented capturing errors, upheld complaint issues, which will be utilised in conjunction with Coaching Documents. The 7 Stages of a Call training now built and being rolled out early November.

		The introduction of Robotic Process Automation to manage Direct Debit uplifts and UC verifications is expected to reduce the resource required for these processes, enabling the team to focus on more complex and value-added activities. 

Code	Neighbourhood Management	2025/26 Value	Q1 2026/27 Value	Q2 2026/27 Value	Quarterly trend	2026/27 Value	2026/27 target	BM Owner
NM01a	Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (12 month rolling)	14.14	16.21	20.21	↓	20.21	20	**KP**
NM01b	Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord that involve hate incidents	0.14	0.14	0.14	–	0.14	0	**KP**
NM06	The number of occupied tenancies that have received a recorded tenancy visit this quarter	New	355	374	↑	729	Info only	**KP**

Code	Repairs & Maintenance	2025/26 Value	Jul 2026 Value	Aug 2026 Value	Sep 2026 Value	Monthly trend	YTD Value	2026/27 target
RM01	Work in Progress figures	1,838	1,562	1,431	1,434	↓	1,434	1,500
RP02a	Percentage of non emergency repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale	68.98%	60.25%	58.01%	61.29%	↑	58.57%	90%
RM03	Repairs completed right first time	75.29%	87.91%	89.25%	89.98%	↑	89.25%	85%
RMA04a	Average Completion Time - Appointable	New	26	24	24	-	24	20
RMW01d	% Work in Progress overdue to Work Orders raised	New	39.12%	35.57%	51.74%	↓	33.04%	5%
RP02b	Percentage of emergency repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale	97.18%	96.49%	97.84%	95.18%	↓	97.41%	100%
RMU04a	Average Completion Time - Urgent	New	5	5	6	↓	6	5

Code	PIA	Exception Notes
RP02a	Percentage of non-emergency repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale	Performance for appointable repairs was 61%, below target. Performance continues to be impacted by the prioritisation of emergency repairs, damp and mould cases, and other high-risk works, alongside efforts to reduce historic backlogs and overdue repairs. The remaining backlog includes a number of older and more complex repairs requiring specialist trades, follow-on works, multiple visits, or access arrangements. Actions are in place to reduce aged repairs, improve scheduling, increase capacity through recruitment and agency resources, and reduce Work in Progress levels to support improved performance.
RMA04a	Average Completion Time - Appointable	The average time to complete appointable repairs was 24 days, compared to the target of 20 days. To improve performance, we are prioritising the clearance of older outstanding repairs, strengthening scheduling and appointment management, and increasing operational capacity through the recruitment of permanent and agency staff. A continued focus on reducing follow-on works, resolving access

		issues, and lowering the overall backlog is expected to improve completion times over the coming months.
RMW01d	% Work in Progress overdue to Work Orders raised	Performance for overdue Work in Progress was 52%, significantly above target. This is largely driven by a backlog of older repairs while we continue to prioritise emergency repairs, damp and mould cases, and other high-risk works. Many overdue repairs are more complex and require contractor involvement, follow-on works, multiple appointments, or access arrangements before they can be completed. To improve performance, we have introduced regular backlog review meetings, strengthened management oversight of overdue repairs, and prioritised the oldest outstanding jobs for completion. Additional capacity is being provided through recruitment and agency resources, with a targeted focus on reducing aged repairs, lowering Work in Progress levels, and bringing overdue repairs back within target. Reducing overdue repairs remains a key priority and is central to the recovery plan, as this will improve repair completion times, increase customer satisfaction, and support better performance across the wider repairs service.
RMU04a	Average Completion Time - Urgent	The average completion time for urgent repairs was 6 days, above the target timescale. Performance has been impacted by ongoing service pressures, including the prioritisation of emergency repairs, damp and mould cases, and other high-risk works, alongside efforts to reduce the backlog of older repairs. Additional resources are being utilised to increase capacity, with a continued focus on improving scheduling, reducing overdue repairs, and bringing urgent repair completion times back within target.

Code	Awaab's	2025/26 Value	July 2026	August 2026	September 2026	Monthly trend	YTD Value	2026/27 target
ALRME04	Awaab's Law % of Emergency repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale	New	88.37%	67.74%	100%	↑	75.1%	100%
ALRMS04	Awaab's Law % of Significant repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale	New	73.33%	71.08%	74.55%	↑	70.68%	98%

Code	Awaab's	Exception Notes
ALRMS04	Awaab's Law % of Significant repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale	Performance for significant Awaab's Law cases investigated within 10 days was 75%, below target, but represents a 4% improvement on the previous month. Demand for damp and mould investigations remains high, and some cases require specialist surveys or further technical assessment before they can be progressed. This has impacted our ability to consistently achieve the 10-day target. A recovery plan is in place with enhanced management oversight of all open cases, weekly review of outstanding investigations, and targeted escalation of cases approaching target timescales. Additional surveyor and contractor capacity is being utilised to increase throughput. We are also strengthening case triage and scheduling arrangements to ensure higher-risk cases are assessed at the earliest opportunity. Improving compliance with Awaab's Law remains a key priority, with a continued focus on reducing outstanding investigations, increasing capacity, and driving sustained improvements in performance over the coming months.

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Agenda Item 9

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING:	**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
DATE:	**24TH November 2026**
SUBJECT:	**HRA Savings**
REPORT FROM:	**Sian Grant, Director of Housing** **Darrell Campbell, Finance Business Partner (Interim)**
CONTACT OFFICER:	**Sian Grant, Director of Housing** **Darrell Campbell, Finance Business Partner (Interim)**

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. As part of improving housing services following the insourcing of the management of housing stock from the ALMO, last year saw the production of the first full 30-year HRA Business Plan , which was part of the suite of background papers to the Council's 2026/27 budget report.

1.2. The production of a 30-year HRA Business Plan required a lot of work to update and develop more informative strategies to underpin assumptions within the plan. This included the refresh of Asset Management data held within the Lifespan system, as well as significant additional resources being added to the plan following a major restructure of the service. It was acknowledged at the time the budget was set that although significant progress was made in the development of the plan to inform the budget last year, that there was still much more work to be done to get the plan where it needs to be, and aligned with the right allocation of resources.

1.3. Following the initial refresh of data for the 30-year plan it quickly became apparent that due to a lack of historic investment in the stock, allied with the day-to-day needs of the service, that the resources available were not sufficient to meet those needs over the long-term. As per the 2026-27 agreed budget and 30-year HRA Business Plan, currently the HRA Business Plan would go into overall deficit in Year 21, with a deficit which would grow to an estimated £54.7m by the end of the 30-year period. Hence, the need for the introduction starting in 2026-27 of efficiency savings targets to try and start closing the gap between spend and available resources over the long-term. The earlier that we can start to drive efficiency savings through the plan, the greater the impact they will have in the long-term.

1.4. An initial target of £0.500m of savings per annum was identified to be achieved in each of the first 4 years of the plan, resulting in a total £2.000m reduction in the base budget at the end of that time. Again, it was acknowledged that this would not fully achieve the savings required to bring the 30-year Business Plan into balance, but it was a start in getting the service used to taking on greater accountability and responsibility for driving improvements through the service.

1.5. This report seeks to give an update on where the service is against the targets set for 2026-27, along with potential additional savings identified, and the need to allow flexibility

in the approach to achieving annual savings in order to achieve the ultimate goal which is to produce a balanced 30-year HRA Business Plan, whilst providing the right resources to deliver the best possible housing services, matching both the aspirations of Cabinet and our tenants.

2. HRA Savings Progress 2026-27

2.1. As outlined above for 2026-27 an initial efficiency savings target of £0.500m was set. It was decided after some initial discussions that given the amount of controllable spend that that existed within the various elements of the budget that the savings would be allocated as follows:

- Repairs Budget - £0.350m
- Management Budget - £0.150m
- Total Efficiency Savings Target 2026-27 - £0.500m.

2.2. For the first year no element of the savings target was allocated to the Capital Plan, mainly because Capital savings tend to be one-off in nature, unless a revenue budget saving in terms of reduced revenue contributions to capital can be achieved. This does not mean that this is discounted for future years, particularly where a revenue contribution exists. This is explained below.

3. Repairs Budget

3.1. At the point the budget was set for 2026-27 savings still had to be identified in order to meet the targets set out above. Areas that were identified for potential efficiency savings in the repairs budget included:

- Increasing operative productivity and reducing reliance on subcontractors and therefore reducing costs. A target to increase operative productivity by 0.4 jobs a day was put in place. This equates to 2640 additional jobs a year and a potential saving in subcontractor spend of c£500k.
- Reprocuring the repairs subcontractors and enabling increased cost control and subcontractor management. This is estimated to provide a saving of £100k per annum based on a 10- 15% reduction in subcontractor spend.
- Moving long term agency staff to permanent operative posts. There were 23 agency operatives in 2025/26. The estimated saving from moving them to permanent staff was c£200k.

3.2. A number of factors have made the delivery of these savings more challenging than originally anticipated. These include increasing demand for repairs services, growing complexity of repair requests, difficulties recruiting suitably qualified operatives, and the operational impact of addressing the historic repairs backlog.

3.3. The productivity of directly employed repairs operatives has improved significantly, increasing from 2.6 jobs per operative per day in 2025/26 to 3.31 jobs per operative per day in 2026/27 year-to-date, representing an increase of 0.71 jobs per day. However, there have experienced ongoing difficulties in recruiting both permanent and agency operatives to achieve full operational capacity.

3.4. In addition, a number of long-term sickness cases have reduced workforce availability during the year. While these cases are being actively managed, the combined impact of vacancies and sickness absence has reduced our ability to fully realise the benefits of improved productivity. As a result, we have continued to rely on subcontractors to maintain service delivery and meet customer demand. The additional subcontractor expenditure has offset much of the financial benefit generated through improved operative productivity.

3.5. We have successfully transferred all long-term agency operatives who wished to remain with Bury Council onto permanent contracts. Those who did not wish to accept permanent

employment have left the service. This has generated an in-year saving of £269k in staffing costs and reduced the Council's ongoing reliance on agency labour.

3.6. We are currently undertaking a full re-procurement of repairs contractor arrangements. Stage 1 of the procurement process has been completed and Stage 2 is now underway. It is anticipated that the new contractual arrangements will be implemented from the start of the 2027/28 financial year, enabling improved cost control, contract management and value for money.

3.7. Whilst we have made progress in delivering operational efficiencies, we have also experienced increasing demand and cost pressures. In particular, there has been a significant rise in the number and complexity of housing disrepair claims. These claims create financial pressures through legal costs, settlement payments and compensation awards. To mitigate this risk, a dedicated team has been established to proactively manage disrepair cases, address underlying issues at an earlier stage and robustly defend claims where appropriate.

3.8. Work is also ongoing with the Council's Legal Services team to strengthen the Council's overall approach to disrepair management and reduce the number of cases progressing to litigation.

3.9. Taking account of the factors outlined above, the Repairs Service is forecasting an overspend of approximately £0.760 million in 2026/27. To support the delivery of a balanced budget and identify further efficiencies for 2027/28 onwards, the following areas will be subject to review:

- Review of the out-of-hours repairs service, including tightening eligibility criteria and reducing contractor call-out costs.
- Review of the voids service, including the void standard and identifying the optimum balance between repair investment, void turnaround times and rental income loss.
- Review of stores and materials management arrangements.
- Review of vehicle utilisation and fleet management costs.
- Further opportunities to reduce subcontractor dependency through increased workforce capacity and productivity improvements.

3.10. Despite the current budget pressures, the service has delivered measurable improvements in productivity, reduced reliance on agency labour and continues to implement structural changes designed to improve efficiency and value for money. The full financial benefits of these initiatives are expected to be realised over the medium term as recruitment stabilises, procurement savings are delivered and demand pressures are brought under greater control.

4. Management Savings

4.1. In terms of the management savings target of £0.150m for 2026-27 a decision was taken not to seek savings in these areas due to the need to ensure we have strong management in place and the staffing capability and capacity to continue to improve the housing service. We did generate some in-year savings were due to delays in recruiting following a restructure of the neighbourhood service.

4.2. Areas that we will be exploring for savings in the management budget include:

- Reviewing our service charges and ensuring we are charging for all service chargeable services as we are currently undercharging for some services and not charging at all for others. Any changes made in this area will be subject to full tenant consultation and will be phased in to recognise cost of living pressures.
- Review how we can reduce tipping and waste disposal costs.
- Delivering savings as a result of the QL upgrade including removal of software that is no longer required, staff efficiencies from greater automation and efficiencies.

5. Other Savings

5.1. Two issues have arisen that have helped address the savings targets for 2026-7. Firstly, following a detailed Zero-Based Budgeting exercise during 2025-26, and the re-alignment of the repairs budget following a major staffing re-structure, it was possible to earmark £0.280m of those budgets, to create a contingency pot against unforeseen repair events. Ideally, it would be prudent to retain such a contingency pot moving forward. However, that will not prove possible this year, as the £0.280m will be needed to be offset against the £0.350m efficiency savings target agreed for the repairs budget for 2026-27, which would leave a potential £0.070m shortfall in the target to be achieved.

5.2. Following a major exercise in 2025-26 to review and revise Central Support Recharges, and further work during 2026-27 to review all HRA internal recharges which had not been fully revised since the ALMO returned to the Council in 2024, a potential significant saving in the management costs budget has been identified. Allowing for budget re-alignments to correct some of the Central Recharge budgets this will produce a saving sufficient to cover the overspend in the repairs budget in-year, as well as covering the under-achievement in the management and repairs savings targets for 2026-27.

5.3. The benefit from this is that there is a potential permanent saving to next year's budget from this amounting to circa £0.750m. Although this is positive, it will need to be considered as part of a full refresh of the HRA 30-year Business Plan, and future potential additional resource pressures from increasing costs and legislative changes e.g. Awaab's Law and additional capacity need to address some of the issues identified by the Regulator. Hence, at this stage it is being recommended that the £0.500m of additional savings originally set for 2027-28 remains in place. However, it is also recommended that the Capital Plan is brought into the equation, and that the savings targets for 2027-28 are split as follows:

- Revenue repairs - £0.175m
- Management Budgets - £0.075m
- HRA Capital Plan - £0.250m (reduced revenue contribution)

5.4. Moving forward beyond 2027-28 it is recommended that the allocation of savings targets is kept under review. Certainly, the original £2.000m savings target should remain, but there may be a need to extend the deadline to achieve these. This will depend on the wider picture across the whole 30-year HRA Business Plan, and what pressures have to be met as well what steps will need to be taken to eventually bring the plan into balance, which ultimately must be achieved.

6. Summary

6.1. Management of the HRA has now improved and the work outlined above now sets a balanced annual budget with a balanced 30-year Business Plan moving forward. This has been achieved through establishing a new culture within Housing Services to address the need for efficiencies and to look for improved, more productive ways of working, against the standards required for regulatory compliance.

6.2. Due to a fortuitous set of circumstances following a review of recharges this has eased some of the initial year's issues, however, the service still needs to remain focussed on driving out savings in future years to help keep the annual budgets balanced, and close the gap between available resources and the cost base over the long-term.

List of Background Papers:-
None

Contact Details:-

Sian Grant, Director of Housing

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