

Thanet District Council

Tenant and Leaseholder Services Performance report Q4 2021/22

March 2022/V2/Sally O'Sullivan

A large, stylized graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, curved bands in various shades of blue, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Monitoring period: Quarter 4 2021/22

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1. Summary

This report provides an overview of the performance of the Tenant and Leaseholder Services (TLS) during quarter 4.

2. Housing Performance Report: Asset Management

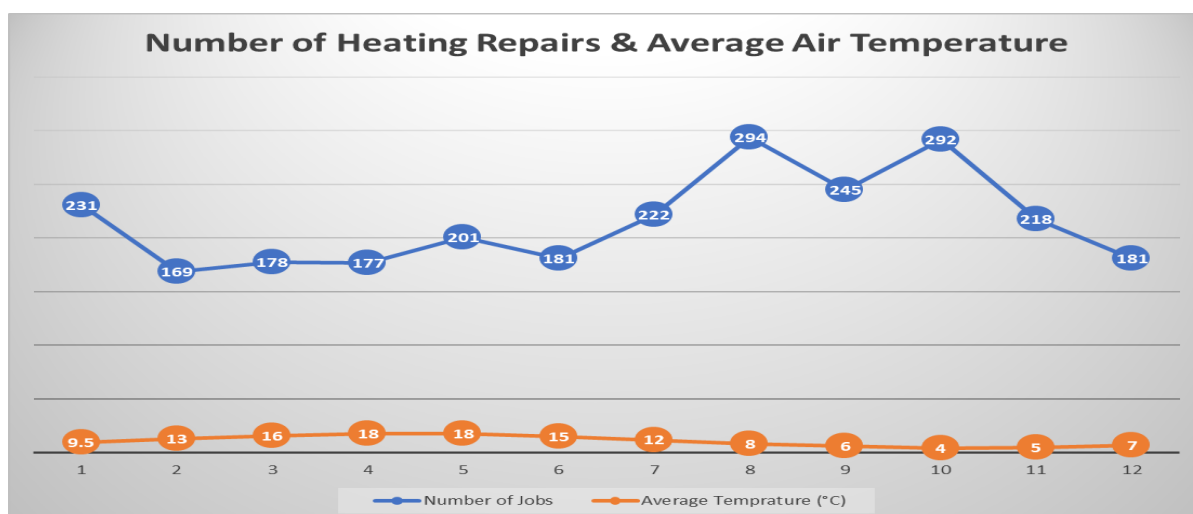
2.1 Gas servicing and heating repairs (Gas Call)

Performance Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
% of number of appointments made by phone or letter that were kept	98%	98.66%	100%	99.9%
The % volume of repairs completed within the timescale	98%	98.41%	94%	100%
Total % planned boiler installations completed in accordance with programme	100%	100%	100%	100%
Customer satisfaction - repairs	-	-	89.47%	72.2%

The volume of repairs completed within the timescale recovered after Q3. This would be due to the increased volume of jobs raised during Q3 reducing to a more manageable level in Q4.

This is a trend we would expect to see due to the change in weather temperature over the four seasons and people's behaviour when living in their home. To support this, the chart below shows the relationship between jobs raised and temperature.

Job numbers remain constant until the temperature drops in October and heating systems are switched on, prompting increased callouts through to January. As the temperature has warmed from March onwards the number of callouts has reduced.



The customer satisfaction stats dropped by 17.3% in Q4. This was due to a delay in obtaining boiler parts in February.

Below shows the customer satisfaction drop in February to 53.5% and recovery in March to 84.6%.

Break down of relevant Q4 stats:

Performance indicator	Jan	Feb	March
Customer satisfaction - repairs	79.5%	53.5%	84.6%%

Overall, our gas heating contractor has coped well this winter managing demand and maintaining service standards with only two service complaints being registered.

2.2 Day-to-day responsive repairs (Mears)

Performance Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Customer Satisfaction (%)	80.67%	?	?	90.6%
% Emergency jobs completed on time	99.47%	100%	100%	100%
% Urgent Jobs Completed on Time	92.2%	94.98%	100%	100%
% All jobs completed on time	95.6%	93.59%	95.25%	96.41%
Average days to complete non-urgent works	29.42 days	32.34 days	22.17 days	20.65 Days
% Appointments made and kept	94.64%	97.13%	96.75%	97.01%
% Work completed in one visit	82.65%	87.08%	84.81%	87.32%

The Q4 stats indicate that performance has improved in all areas. This is a continuing trend due to Mears restructure providing Thanet with a dedicated team, resulting in increased service reliability and stronger working relationships with our Repairs Team.

A new customer satisfaction survey was introduced in January 2022, developed in partnership with the Thanet Tenant and Leaseholder Group (TTLG). It details 9 key service questions, allowing us to interrogate specific areas of our service and supports conversations with Mears to identify areas to improve upon. The key question of 'overall satisfaction with the recent repair' has returned a 90.6% positive rating for Q4.

In partnership with the TTLG and Mears we have developed the Mears Customer Pledge which sets out their commitment to good customer service.

The Chair of the TTLG attended the quarterly strategic meeting with Mears on 26 January to scrutinise their performance and influence service improvements. The Chair found the meeting productive with a real sense of working together to identify and resolve issues.

The scores over the 3 months of Q4, show an increasing trend and support that overall the Mears service is improving:

Performance Indicator	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	Q4 22
Customer Satisfaction %	86.8%	91.9%	93.1%	90.6%

This quarter's KPIs remain indicative of the backlog of works we have with Mears; and thus demonstrates a recovery from this. We have a backlog of repairs due to the knock on effects of Covid 19, storm damage and material shortage, particularly fire doors.

Q4 typically has seen peak demand on our repairs service. Additionally there has been an increase in fire risk actions and the subsequent demand from storm Eunice in February. It is expected that Q1 will see productivity exceed demand once again to mirror the previous year.

Table of jobs raised against jobs completed year 2021/22

Quarter	Orders raised	Orders Complete	Difference
Q1	2751	3227	476
Q2	2539	3109	570
Q3	2852	2680	-172
Q4	3252	3107	-145

Examples where improvements have been made aligned with the Repairs Service Improvement Plan:

- Customer service training with Mears operatives, call handlers and schedulers in line with the Customer Service Pledge developed with the TTLG
- Mears have devised a monitoring tool to ensure all follow-on work is tracked to completion and residents are updated at each stage
- Tightened the management of disrepair claims and reduced caseload
- Introduced a repairs tracker for Maintenance Inspectors to enable ownership to completion
- The repairs reporting system (Northgate) has been cleansed to ensure it accurately reflects the number of open and live orders.

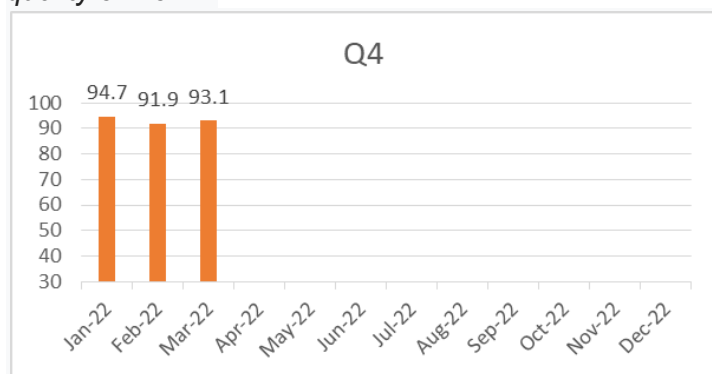
We are seeking approval to grant extension to the current Responsive Repairs & Maintenance Contract with Mears Ltd for 24 months from 1st April 2023 until 31st March 2025, inclusive of KPI suite amendment. The TTLG will be consulted on the contract extension & proposed new suite of KPI's.

2.3 Day to day repairs - Post Inspections

Performance Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
% of post inspections	10.30%	9.33%	18.30%	25.65%

Post inspections are carried out via a report generated through the system. The quality of works inspected is completed to a consistency standard. We are steadily increasing the amount of inspections to ensure quality. This is evidenced by over 93% of residents reporting being satisfied with the overall quality of their recent repair in Q4.

Customer satisfaction survey question: how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the overall quality of work ?



2.4 Capital Programme

Performance Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Percentage of capital programme spent (NB revised budget from 01 Oct)	6.59%	39.11%	58.75%	78.37%

The team spent 78.78% of the capital programme budget by the end of Quarter 4, in comparison to 37.42% at the same time the previous year.

They have successfully driven forward many projects, here are some of the highlights:

- 82 Kitchen Replacements
- 50 Bathroom Replacements
- 7 Passenger Lift Refurbs
- 4 High Rise Fire Alarms
- 209 Properties External Decs
- 56 Major Adaptations
- Tower block surveys complete, building specification of works including feed in from consultants on fire safety and energy efficiency

Projects where we are experiencing issues/delays:

Royal Crescent

Procurement of the contract has delayed the progress of this project. We aim to have the tender in the procurement portal in Q1. The project is very complex, with input required from multiple stakeholders.

Churchfields

When attempting to progress this project we have found that plans developed by East Kent Housing are not fit for purpose. We need to re-engage various stakeholders to ensure any improvements carried out are appropriate and serviceable.

Invicta House fire alarms into individual properties

The bulk of the project at Invicta House completed in March but as there are properties where we have not been able to gain access to install the alarms, we are unable to sign off the programme.

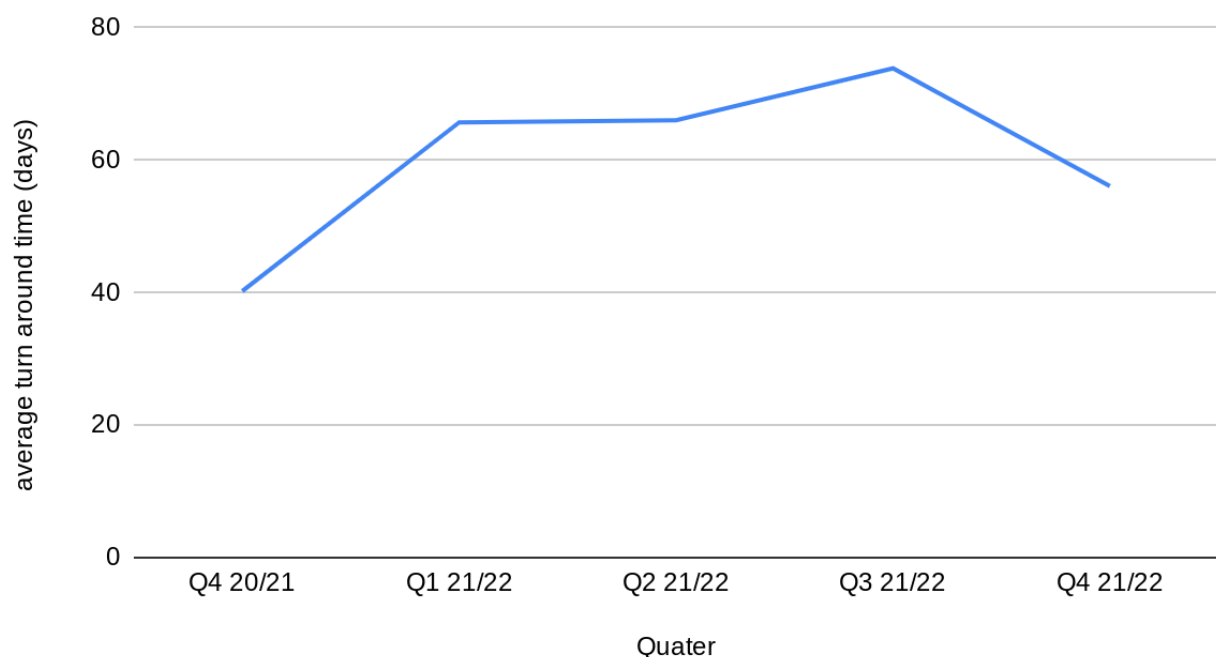
Our [Spring Tenant and Leaseholder Newsletter](#) featured an article on our Planned Maintenance Team; what they do; decent home standard information and advice; challenges faced when starting and finishing installation and how residents can help. The article also featured completed improvements and feedback received from residents.

3. Housing Performance Report: Housing Operations

3.1 Voids and re-lets

Performance Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Average days to re-let all properties excluding major works	9.88	16.98	12.45	15.59 days
Average days to re-let all properties including major works	65.72	66.03	73.88	56.11 days

Average major void turn around time



Void performance has improved to its best figure for this financial year, although we still have some way to go to meet our target of 22.5 days. The newly formed voids team have process workshops booked in Q1 to find efficiencies and improve communication in their current process.

Q4 has seen the last of the longstanding voids being completed which has skewed overall performance in 21/22. This sets a stable platform for Q1 where we focus on further reducing turnaround times and tightening Mears contract management. We need to ensure sufficient resources are available to meet demand, and have set Mears firm target expectations for 22/23 performance.

We have experienced some delays in lettings during this quarter as well, for example holding properties for residents that have needed to be decanted or transferred only for the resident to refuse the property.

Performance Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Average cost of void work per property	£8,148	£6,241	£10,308	£8,935

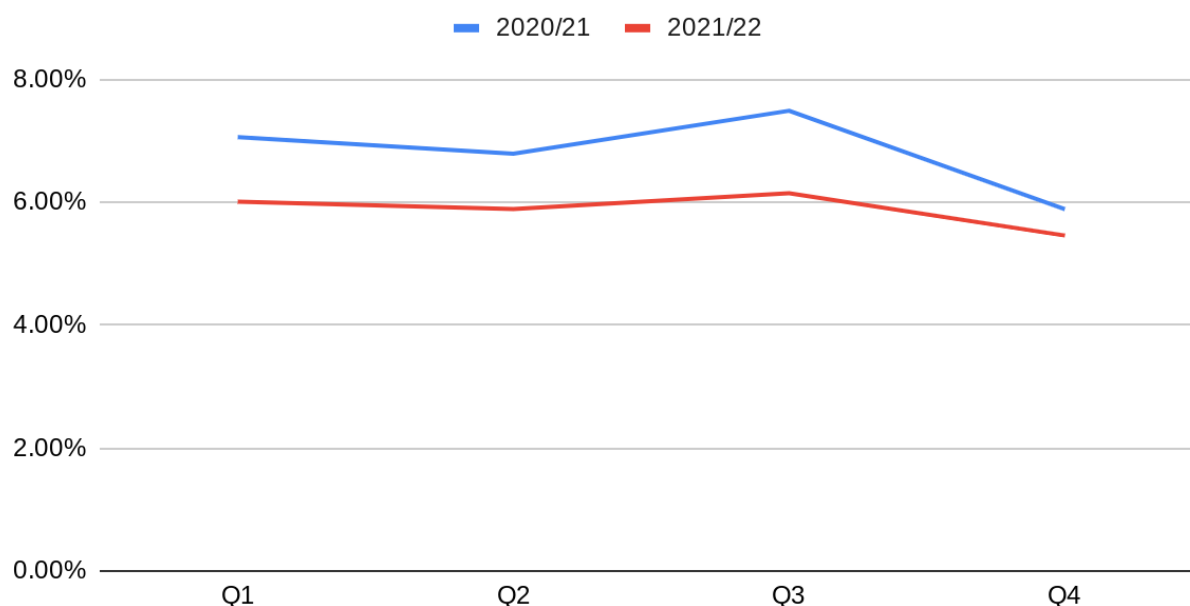
The average cost of void work has decreased this quarter and correlates with the larger and more expensive void refurbishments closed in Q3.

3.3 Income Management

Performance Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Current tenant arrears as a % of the projected annual rental income	6.01%	5.89%	6.15%	5.46%
Garage arrears as a % of the projected annual rental income	0.09%	0.18%	0.23%	0.10%
% of rent arrears due to Universal Credit	10.53%	10.06%	10.42%	9.09%
Former tenant arrears	£443,543	£409,047	£357,777	£248,304

In the final quarter of 2021/22 we saw the arrears follow the same trend as 2020/21 and reduce to the lowest value of the financial year. With this confirmed, we will be able to predict and measure the progress through 2022/23 with more accuracy.

Comparison of current tenant arrears during 2020/21 and 2021/22



The final arrears figures for 2021/22 are the lowest since transition and reflect the positive changes made in the team throughout the year such as:

- Training officers to find the root cause of the arrears and support tenants to sustain their tenancy, rather than use enforcement as the primary tool.
- Increasing the number of tenants paying by direct debit. This is a more stable way of paying rather than the card payment option that was the primary method before transition.
- Working with finance to secure a consistent posting of Universal Credit payments
- Treating all new tenancies as a high priority and making sure new tenants have everything they need from week one to sustain their rent account.
- Being able to refer tenants that have complex financial struggles to the Financial Wellbeing Team for in depth support. This increases household income, thus making rent payments more comfortable.
- There have been no evictions or new court cases this financial year

We are disappointed that we did not achieve our target of reducing arrears by 1% by the end of 2021/22. There are 2 reasons for this:

- Increasingly difficult operating environment, which include a reduction in our residents income and increase in cost of living.
- Calculation of the end of year figure in a different way

Calculation of the end of year figure:

The end of the last financial year (Q4 2020/21) was the Easter weekend and Friday was the bank holiday. This meant we missed all of Friday's payments. Even though the payments were made in week 1 2021/22, We reconciled them into week 52 and reported the final arrears percentage at 5.89%.

At the end of this financial year (Q4 2021/22) another missing payment event occurred where direct debits due on Friday 1st of April were pushed to the 4th due to a programming error. As this date fell in week 52, the debt figure was higher than it would have been if the error did not occur.

This year we did not manually adjust the figure. This is because, going forward we want consistency and transparency in our reporting through our housing system.

Throughout 2021/22 we have worked with finance and systems to make sure there are more robust payment processes in place to minimise the risk of an error at the end of the financial year in future.

Comparison of our figures:

Financial year	Manipulated figure	Figure from housing system
2020/21	5.89%	6.30%
2021/22	4.99%	5.46%
% difference	0.90%	0.84%

We are reporting a figure of 5.46% which is the unadjusted arrears figure. This is a 0.43% reduction against the 5.89% manually calculated figure we used for Q4 2020/21.

Financial wellbeing

The Financial Wellbeing Team have dealt with 247 new referrals this year. They have been able to work with tenants to increase their financial stability through budgeting, renegotiating outstanding non-priority debts worth £43K, sourcing grants to carpet properties and obtaining white goods for families that qualify for the funding. They have also been able to support tenants with food and fuel vouchers to give immediate help in a sudden financial crisis.

One of the major factors towards maintaining a downward trend in rent arrears was the Financial Wellbeing Teams work on all new tenants which started in June 2021. Every new tenant was contacted by the team to welcome them to their new home, confirm how the rent and council tax would be paid by the tenant and find out if any extra support was needed. This is where most of the carpets and white goods needed were identified. This set up a great communication avenue from the off, meaning the Rent Officers have started to hear from tenants before they miss a rent payment due to a financial issue so we can offer an alternative to non payment rather than see arrears increase.

Overall the team increased the benefit take up of the tenants they saw by £373,152.78

Benefit	Total award 2021/22
DHP	£33,000
Back dated of Housing benefit or Universal Credit	£23,000
Household support fund	£109,560 (Heating Charges on to rent

	account, £25,000, Carpets £35,000 Food vouchers, fuel vouchers and white goods £54,560)
Other Financial Benefits	£207,592.78 - ipads, white goods, sofas, beds childrens beds, clothing, moving home costs furniture, warm home discount, ongoing new claims for benefits (weekly award projected across 52 weeks)
Total	£373,152.78

This includes £33k of DHP and £23K of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit backdate and any ongoing monthly income increase through benefit maximisation or outgoings reduced or saved from paying back debt. This means that on average each household was better off by £1000 after help from the team.

Former Tenant Arrears (FTA)

Former Tenant debt was reduced by 44% during 2021/22. This equates to a reduction of £200,137, ending at £248,304.67 for Q4.

There was a large amount of write off's within this improvement. As these arrears had not been actioned for years, many of them had reached the 6 year threshold and became unrecoverable. Others had large balances but the former tenant could not be traced. We should not see this high figure of write off's in the future now that the historic cases are cleared.

The new process to tackle this debt has been working well. The next step is to work on preventing cases becoming a large FTA before the tenancy ends.

We have developed and consulted the TTLG on two Policies which came into effect on 1 April 2022:

1. Rechargeable Works Policy - which enables us to be transparent and to fairly and responsibly recharge and collect debt for works that we carry out which is the responsibility of a tenant, as per the tenancy agreement.

Income Recovery, including Evictions and Enforcement Policy - To empower tenants and leaseholders to manage their own accounts and the collection of arrears, working to clear debt in an affordable way. Plus the collection of former tenant arrears.

4. Housing Performance Report: Customer Service

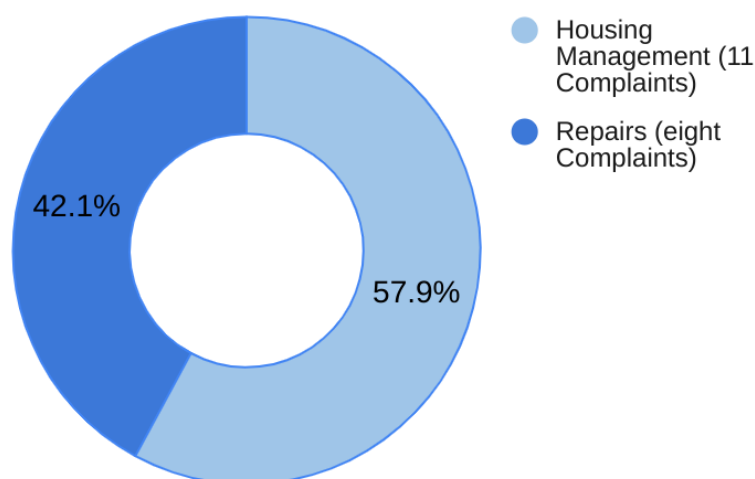
4.1 Complaints

Performance Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
The total number of all complaints received	42	49	29	26
Percentage of all complaints closed on time	88.16%	83%	86%	86%
No stage 1 complaints	30	38	22	19

No stage 2 complaints	12	11	7	7
No complaints upheld	21	17	14	14

The number of complaints we have received over Q3 & Q4 remains steady and is a vast reduction from the amount of complaints received in the first 2 quarters of the year. This could be indicative of situations being resolved and the general improvement in the service over the last 12 months.

Complaints by team.



We received 19 Stage one complaints in Q4, **11** for Housing Management and **8** for Repairs.

In Q3, 57.7% or 15 of all complaints were repairs complaints, reducing to 42.1% in Q4. The highest theme of repairs complaints was an issue when a repair required follow up works at **42.85%**, remains the same in Q4 as 50% of complaints in this theme.

This shows a positive trend for repairs related complaints and correlates to the works that are being undertaken by the Responsive Repairs Team and Mears; but shows there is still more work to be done.

Stage 2 complaints

Out of 19, two complaints went to Stage two, with one being partially upheld. Three other complaints went to stage two from a previous quarter.

Response times

One complaint went over the 10 day target, all other complaints were responded to within the target of 10 days.

- Housing management team took on average 8.6 days to respond.
- Repairs team took 9.5 days (One complaint took 45 days, if this was a standard 10 day response then the average would come down to five days)
- Overall the average response time was nine days.

The TTLG Performance and Monitoring Sub-group met in February. The group considered and agreed a format to enable them to effectively scrutinise complaints received and learning outcomes.

Glossary

Quarter	The financial year broken down into 4 segments.
Financial Year	Year running from 1 st April to 31 st March.
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
YTD	Year to date
RAG	Red amber green (colour coding system)
TDC	Thanet District Council
TLS	Tenant and Leaseholder Services
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant (A device for collecting feedback)
Stock	The properties that are owned by the Council
Leasehold	Privately owned flats in a building the Council owns and maintains.
LGSR	Landlord's Gas Safety Record
FTA	Former Tenant Arrears
Key to Key	The time between one tenant handing in keys to the next tenant receiving them for the same property.

Void	An empty property
HHRS	Housing Health and Safety Rating System
Capital Programme	Planned maintenance programmes ie kitchens, bathrooms, roofs
Income Management	Rent arrears and collection
EWS	External Wall System
Asset Management	The maintenance and upkeep of buildings
Redacted	Process of editing a document to conceal or remove confidential information before disclosure or publication.
Categories	A group of things that share similar qualities.
Themes	The main subject of a group.

Lessons Learnt	Positives and negatives taken from information and used to inform/improve.
Complaint upheld	The complaint was valid.
Complaint not upheld	The complaint was not valid.