DATE:

REPORT TO: AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE AUDIT COMMITTEE

1. ITEM NUMBER

2. SUBJECT

REPORT TO THE AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE AUDIT COMMITTEE: PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE CITY OMBUDSMAN (OCO): FIRST QUARTER OF THE 2024/25 FINANCIAL YEAR (PERIOD 1 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)

ONDERWERP

VERSLAG AAN DIE OUDIT- EN PRESTASIE-OUDITKOMITEE: PRESTASIEVERSLAG VAN DIE KANTOOR VAN DIE STADSOMBUDSMAN (OCO): EERSTE KWARTAAL VAN DIE 2024/25-BOEKJAAR (TYDPERK 1 JULIE TOT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)

ISIHLOKO

INGXELO EJOLISWE KWIKOMITI ENGEZOPHICOTHO NENDLELA ENGOKUSEBENZA KWEZOPHICOTHO; INGXELO ENGENDLELA YOKUSEBENZA KWEOFISI KANOZIKHALAZO ZOLUNTU YESIXEKO (OCO): YEKOTA YOKUQALA KUMNYAKAMALI WAMA2024/25 (KWISITHUBA SANGOWO 1 KWEYEKHALA UKUYA KOWAMA30 KWEYOMSINTSI 2024)

R1287

3. DELEGATED AUTHORITY

In terms of delegation

This report is FOR NOTING

☑ **Committee name :** Audit and Performance Audit Committee

4. DISCUSSION

The Office of the City Ombudsman (OCO) serves as a point of recourse for members of the public who are aggrieved by actions of the City of Cape Town's Administration. The OCO investigates these complaints, working to reach resolutions in an amicable and constructive manner. As part of its mandate, the OCO is required to submit quarterly reports to the Audit and Performance Audit Committee.

This report covers the period from 1 July to 30 September 2024, presenting a statistical analysis of complaints received and managed by the OCO. It also provides an

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overview of advocacy and awareness sessions conducted during this period. In addition to its complaint management and investigation responsibilities, the OCO undertakes advocacy and awareness efforts to promote understanding and accessibility.

The report further includes an analysis of the complaints received, highlighting emerging trends, recurring issues, and concerns related to the City's administrative practices, processes, by-laws, and policies. This analysis aims to inform the continuous improvement of City operations and enhance the effectiveness of the OCO's engagement with the community.

In the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year, the OCO recorded a total of 619 new complaints. Of these, the Registration and Assessment Unit (RAU) successfully resolved 455 cases. A detailed breakdown of the assessment outcomes for these complaints can be found on **page 8** of **Annexure A.**

The majority of complaints processed by the OCO were directed against the Energy Directorate. Detailed information on the number of complaints received per directorate is comprehensively listed in Annexure A, page 9.

The Early Resolution Unit (ERU) plays a critical role in ensuring the prompt and effective resolution of complaints submitted by members of the public. The unit strives to resolve matters promptly, aiming to complete early resolution cases within a 60-day timeframe. Upon finalisation of each case, the ERU issues a comprehensive final letter to the concerned parties. In the quarter under review, the unit successfully resolved a total of 37 cases. A detailed analysis of the outcomes for these cases is provided on page 10 of Annexure A.

The Complex Investigation Unit (CIU) handles intricate cases, conducting thorough investigations that involve a variety of methodologies such as site inspections, data analysis on internal systems, a detailed review of relevant standard operating procedures, and mediation meetings. Once the investigation is complete, the CIU submits a preliminary report with recommendations to the City's line department for further consideration. Following the finalisation of a case, the unit issues a formal report to the complainant. During the reporting quarter, the CIU successfully resolved

70 cases, with comprehensive details on the outcomes provided on page 13 of Annexure A.

In addition to analysing complaint and case outcome trends, the Office will assess whether these patterns present any risks. If deemed necessary, the relevant directorates, along with the Ethics and Forensic Services Department, will be promptly notified. A more detailed examination of these trends is provided in Annexure "A" of this report.

Financial Impact Analysis

The financial impact, where a rand-value is applicable is determined after the line department considered and accepted the recommendation and the OCO can therefore not determine what the value at risk would be prior to concluding the case.

For the period 1 July to 30 September 2024, the rand value of OCO recommendations that was accepted by line departments in favour of complainants (58 cases) were R2 306 502.88. During this period, the rand value in respect of matters wherein the OCO could not provide an alternative solution or concurred with line departments' decisions (53 cases) was R2 410 325.93.

Furthermore, not all recommendations have a financial impact, and can include conciliation or mediation facilitated by the office if the office believes that this will remove the source of the complaint, such as a line department apologising to the complainant. Additionally, based on the outcome of the case investigation more than one recommendations can be made in a single case which recommendation can be within different Directorates.

Advocacy and awareness functions

In the quarter under review, the OCO set a target of thirty-six (36) awareness sessions for the 2024/25 financial year for the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), with the expectation of conducting nine (9) sessions each quarter. The OCO exceeded its target by successfully holding a total of eleven (11) awareness sessions during the period, surpassing the established goal for the quarter. This accomplishment reflects the OCO's commitment to enhancing community engagement and its ability to meet and exceed operational expectations.

Financial Implications	☑ None	☐ Opex	☐ Capex ☐ Capex: New Projects ☐ Capex: Existing projects requiring additional funding ☐ Capex: Existing projects with no Additional funding requirements
Legal Implications	☐ Yes	☑ No	
Staff Implications	☐ Yes	☑ No	
Risk Implications	☐ Yes	☑ No	
POPIA Compliance	☑ Yes	It is confirmed that this report has been checked and considered for POPIA compliance.	

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Not delegated: For noting by the Audit and Performance Audit Committee:

It is recommended that the Audit and Performance Audit Committee note the contents of the report.

AANBEVELINGS

Nie gedelegeer nie: Vir kennisname deur die oudit- en prestasie-ouditkomitee:

Daar word aanbeveel dat die oudit- en prestasie-ouditkomitee van die inhoud van die verslag kennis neem.

IZINDULULO

Azigunyaziswanga: Zezokuba ziqwalaselwe yiKomiti yezoPhicotho noPhicotho kwiNdlela yokuSebenza:

Kundululwe ukuba ikomiti yezoPhicotho nophicotho kwiNdlela yokuSebenza mayiqwalasele okuqulathwe yile ngxelo.

Annexure A: Report to the Audit and Performance Audit Committee: Performance report of the Office of the City Ombudsman (OCO): First Quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (period 1 July to 30 September 2024).

FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT

NAME	Helene Fouché	CONTACT NUMBER	021400 9210
E-MAIL ADDRESS	Helene.Fouché@capetown.gov.za		
DIRECTORATE	Office of the City Manager	FILE REF NO	13/2/1/2

CITY OMBUDSMAN

NAME

COMMENT:

DATE

SIGNATURE Vusumzi Magwebu Digitally signed by Vusumzi Magwebu Date: 2024.11.13 08:09:40 +02'00'

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

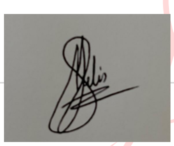
☐ REPORT COMPLIANT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF COUNCIL'S DELEGATIONS, POLICIES, BY-LAWS AND ALL LEGISLATION RELATING TO THE MATTER UNDER CONSIDERATION.

☐ NON-COMPLIANT

NAME

DATE

SIGNATURE



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COMMENT:

For information.

Office of the City OMBUDSMAN

Striving to reach a workable solution

ANNEXURE "A"

QUARTERLY REPORT

1 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

1. THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE CITY OMBUDSMAN

People who have complaints against City of Cape Town officials (the administration) may approach the Office of the City Ombudsman (OCO / the Office) to intervene. The OCO serves as a catalyst between the City Administration and a complainant to, as far as possible, facilitate an amicable conclusion of the matters under dispute. The Office usually acts as a last internal resort process, and is a voluntary option for conflict resolution. The OCO does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the City of Cape Town (The City), but does have recommendatory powers.

The facilitation of all negotiations between the relevant parties is aimed at settling their disputes or differences, are considered privileged (whether oral or written), and are therefore protected from disclosure. Accordingly, the content of any statement relating to the dispute / difference between the parties, any admission and / or any offer to achieve a compromise which is made with bona fide or genuine intent, will be protected from being disclosed or presented in any court.

In dealing with a complaint, the OCO usually combines facilitative and non-adversarial processes in terms of which the Ombudsman acts or assists as a neutral third party, in order to move towards the resolution of the complaint. It is important to note that the Office attempts to resolve public complaints by recommending workable solutions to both the City and the Complainant.

2. ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The OCO has developed a Hybrid approach to conflict resolution, which combines the elements of both the organisational and statutory models for ombud services. The Classical (statutory) Model of the Ombudsman's Office is regulated by legislation (created in the Constitution or legislation) and conducts formal investigations, whereas the Organisational Ombudsman's primary duties are to work with individuals /groups in an organisation, in order to explore and assist in determining options to help resolve conflict, problematic issues or concerns.

The Office's investigation methodology follows either the classical investigation process or alternative conflict-resolution process. These methodologies entail undertaking independent investigations into complaints against the City's administration.

The preliminary investigation will indicate whether recommendations towards corrective action can be made, whether alternative dispute resolutions are available, or whether the Office agrees with the City's officials. When the Office recommends that corrective action be taken, the line department has fourteen (14) days to respond (as per the City Ombudsman Policy). If there is no alternative dispute resolution available to the complainant, the Office will issue a report to confirm the outcome of the investigation.

3. ADVOCACY, RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Another role of the OCO is performing advocacy, relationship management, and communication functions to create awareness of the ombud service by:

i. Arranging advocacy and communication initiatives relating to the Ombud services (awareness and education);

ii. Engaging with local, national, and international associations for organisational and statutory ombudsman institutions; and

iii. Liaising and forging linkages, and managing long-term relationships with local, national, and international institutions / stakeholders.

4. DISCUSSION OF OCO'S FUNCTIONAL AREAS QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE

The OCO fulfils a supportive role to ensure fair administration of the functional areas, which have been entrusted, to the City in terms of Schedules 4 and 5 of the Constitution. It promotes the effective administration of the matters, which the City is empowered to administer and to assist it to discharge its functions and powers, and provide its municipal services more efficiently. In this context, the function of the City Ombudsman's Office is to assist the City to meet its Constitutional obligations of providing accountable, democratic and transparent governance, while delivering on its mandate in relation to its Constitutional functions. The role of the Office is consistent with various objects of local government as set out in section 152(1) of the Constitution, which the City is required to strive to attain in terms of section 152(2). The OCO is designed to ensure openness, accountability and propriety in the City Administration.

The OCO is underpinned by the Council's Strategic Focus Areas and Objectives and as an independent internal assurance provider, within the Office of the City Manager, it contributes to Objective 16: "A Capable and Collaborative City Government".

In light of good governance practice, the Ombudsman submits quarterly reports, as well as an annual report, to the Audit and Performance Audit Committee (APAC) regarding its activities. The report includes, amongst others, information such as the number and type of complaints received during the financial year, the directorates affected by these complaints, how the complaints were dealt with, comparative numbers, and other relevant information. This report being considered covers the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year, which is for the period 1 July to 30 September 2024.

4.1 REGISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT UNIT (RAU)

The Unit is responsible for the intake, registration, and assessment of complaints to determine their alignment with the mandate of the Office of the City Ombudsman (OCO). Upon receipt, all complaints are recorded through various communication channels. Each complainant is issued a unique reference number specific to their complaint. Additionally, the Unit ensures that complainants are promptly notified of the outcome of the assessment, providing clarity on whether their complaint falls within the scope of the OCO's jurisdiction. This process ensures a structured and transparent approach to handling complaints effectively.

During the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year, the RAU recorded 619 new complaints, reflecting a notable increase compared to the 530 complaints logged in the same period of the 2023/24 financial year. This represents a significant rise of 89 complaints, highlighting an upward trend in the volume of issues reported within this quarter.

4.1.1 Mode of Contact

The following mode of contact to the OCO is available for the residents of the City of Cape Town:

i. a designated e-mail account, (ombudsdirect@capetown.gov.za)

ii. Short Message Service (44781)

iii. Via post

iv. Walk in centre (3rd Floor, Civic Centre, Cape Town)

v. Via eOmbud application (eOmbud)

vi. Via telephone (021 400 5487)

vii. Satellite offices on Tuesdays (9:00 – 14:00):

Satellite office	Address
Omniforum Building	Kuils River
Durbanville Walk-in Centre	Durbanville
Stocks & Stocks Municipality Building	Khayelitsha
Liberty Promenade Mall	Mitchells Plain
Atlantis Special Economic Zone	Atlantis
Desmond and Leah Tutu House	Cape Town

4.1.2 General analysis of complaints received

The breakdown of the complaints (619) received were as follows:

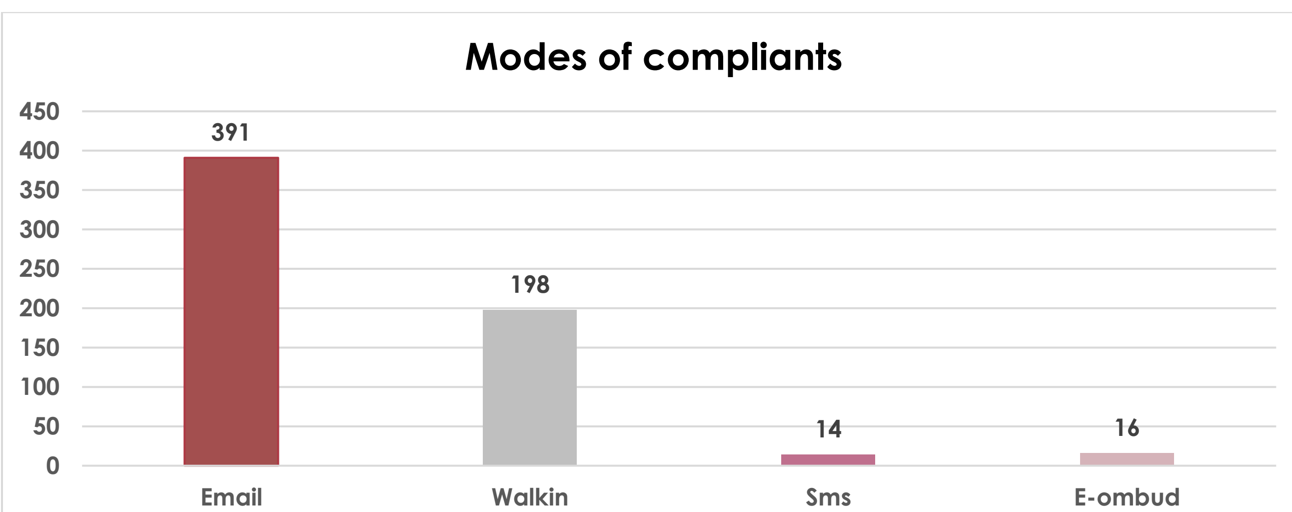
i. Emails : 391 (63.16%);

ii. Walk-in : 198 (31.98%);

iii. Sms : 14 (2.26%);

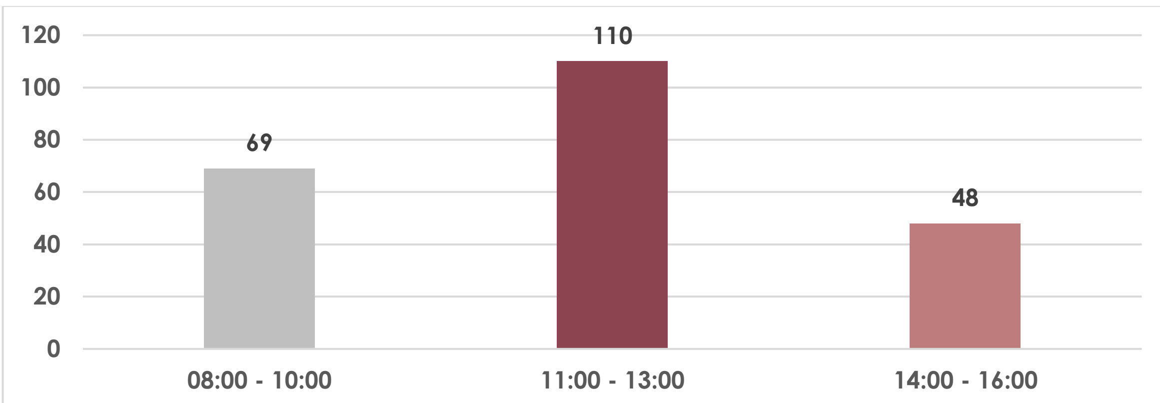
iv. eOmbud application : 16 (2.58%)

Graph 1: Modes of Complaint Submissions: 1 July – 30 September 2024



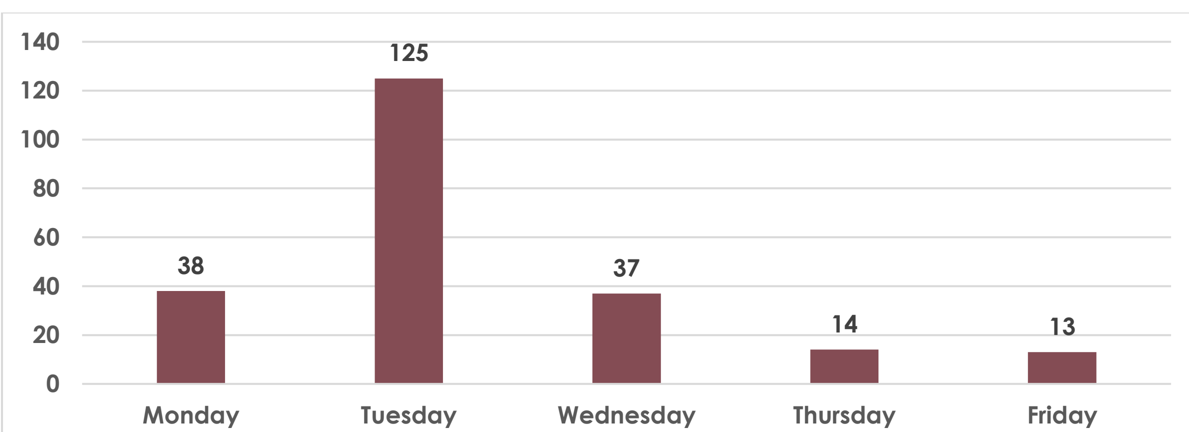
As depicted in Graph 2, the data indicates a clear peak in the number of complainants visiting the Civic Centre walk-in centre between 11:00 and 13:00. This timeframe appears to be when individuals most frequently seek assistance, suggesting that it could be a prime period for service demand. The pattern may reflect factors such as midday breaks or optimal availability, making this time slot a significant focus for resource allocation and service planning.

Graph 2: Walk-in complaints: Popular times for the period 1 July – 30 September 2024



As illustrated in Graph 3, Tuesdays emerge as the most popular day for complainants to visit the Civic Centre walk-in centre. This trend highlights a peak in foot traffic on this particular day, suggesting that Tuesdays may be the preferred day for individuals seeking assistance or resolution of their concerns. Understanding this pattern could be valuable for optimizing staffing, resources, and overall service delivery to ensure efficient handling of increased demand on Tuesdays.

Graph 3: Popular days for the period 1 July – 30 September 2024



4.1.3 Complaint Assessment Outcome

Of the 619 complaints received, 455 have been assessed as follows:

i. A total of one hundred forty-one (141) complaints were identified as being outside the scope of the City's administration or fell under categories specifically excluded from the Ombudsman's mandate, as outlined in the Ombudsman Policy and By-Law. In response, the Ombudsman's Office (OCO) directed these individuals to the appropriate regulatory bodies or provided relevant contact information to address their concerns. These complaints are categorized as "out-of-jurisdiction" matters.

ii. A total of one hundred eighty-two (182) complaints were successfully redirected and/or escalated to the appropriate line departments for further resolution and handling.

iii. A total of one hundred thirty-two (132) complaints have been classified as either non-complex or complex in nature. These complaints have been appropriately allocated for formal investigation to the relevant units: the Early Resolution Unit (ERU) for non-complex cases and the Complex Investigation Unit (CIU) for more intricate matters. This classification ensures that each case is handled by the unit best equipped to address its specific requirements.

iv. A total of one hundred sixty-four (164) matters are <u>pending assessment</u>. These complaints require careful evaluation to ensure appropriate analysis, resolution, and action. The assessment process will involve reviewing the details of each matter in a thorough and timely manner, ensuring all relevant factors are considered. It is imperative that each matter is handled with the utmost attention to detail and in accordance with established protocols to guarantee accuracy and consistency in the outcomes.

Table 1: Breakdown of complaints

Outside of Jurisdiction	Complaints redirected and escalated to line departments	Complaints submitted for Investigation	Pending Assessment	Total
141	182	132	164	619

4.1.4 Outstanding assessments of Quarter 4 of 2023-24 financial year

In line with the previous quarterly report, which noted a backlog of 140 complaints requiring assessment, the OCO has made significant progress in addressing these outstanding issues.

During the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 financial year, a total of 139 complaints were successfully reviewed and closed. Only one complaint remains under active assessment, and efforts are underway to ensure its prompt resolution. This demonstrates the OCO's commitment to efficiently managing and resolving all outstanding complaints.

4.1.5 Complaints linked to Directorates

As illustrated in graph 4, three directorates constitute nearly half (47.96%) of the complaints lodged with the Office of Complaints Oversight (OCO) against the administration. Leading this group, the Energy Directorate recorded the highest volume, with 137 complaints, representing 22.13% of the total. Of these, 71 cases are under active investigation, 35 were redirected as they did not meet the criteria for last-resort intervention, and 31 remain pending assessment. The predominant issues raised in these complaints involve allegations of tampering, account disputes, and technical inquiries.

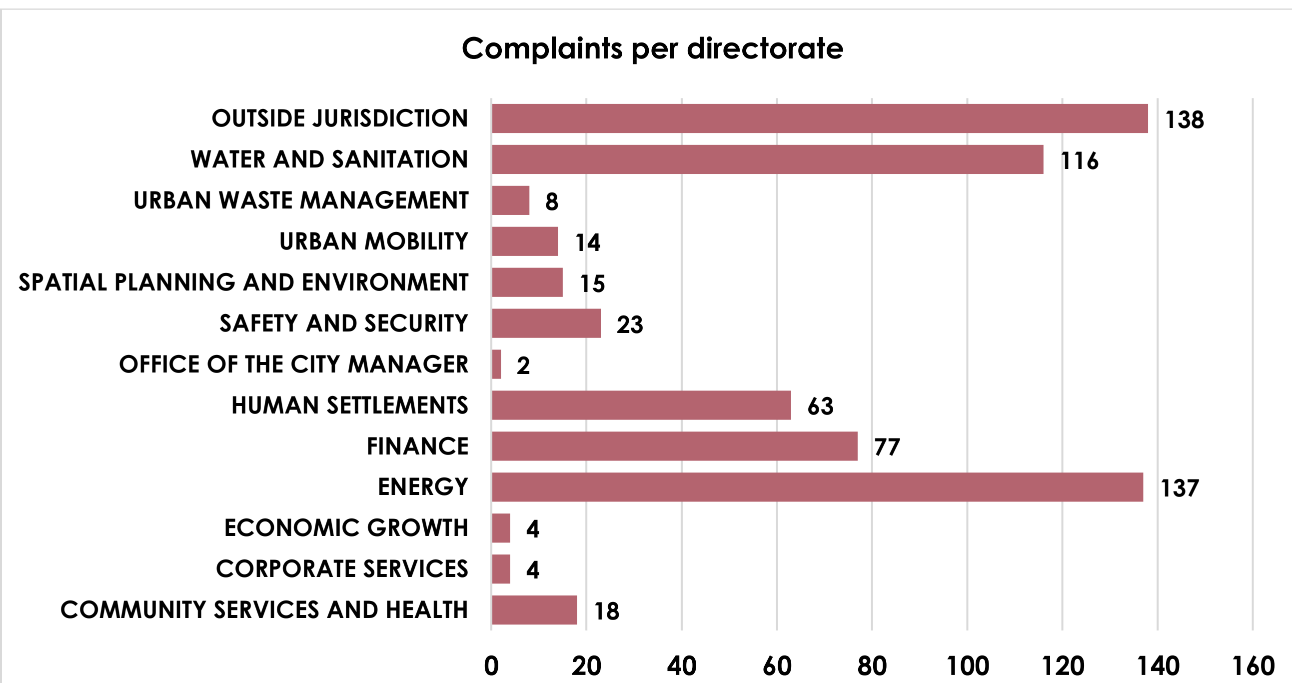
A total of 116 complaints (18.73%) were lodged against the Water and Sanitation Directorate. Of these, 17 cases have been allocated for investigation. Additionally, 48 cases were redirected as they were deemed not to be a last-resort matter, while 51 cases are pending further assessment. An analysis of these complaints reveals that they are primarily related to account disputes and technical queries.

The Finance Directorate received a total of 77 complaints, representing 12.43% of all lodged complaints. Of these, 13 cases have been allocated for investigation, while 30 were redirected as they did not qualify as cases of last resort. An additional 33 cases remain under assessment. The primary issues raised in the complaints pertain to account disputes, valuation objections, and technical inquiries.

Complaints lodged against the remaining nine (9) Directorates, relates to disputed tenancy, building plans, tree trimming, encroachment, housing matters, and technical queries.

It should be noted that a complaint may be lodged against one directorate, but after an evaluation or inquiry is finished, it may be discovered that, while the complaint was lodged against one directorate, the problem originated in another directorate. For example, a complainant may file a complaint with the Finance Directorate about a high municipal account, although the problem could have been caused by a water or power metering issue.

Graph 4: Complaints lodged against Directorates: Q1 of 2024/2025 financial year

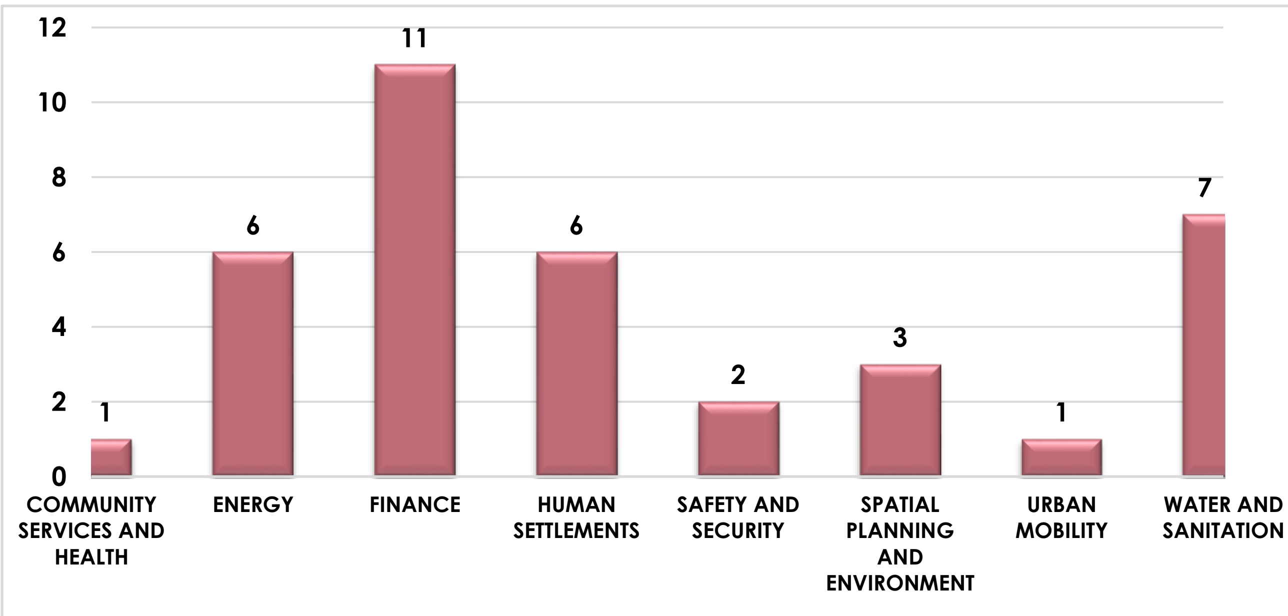


4.2 EARLY RESOLUTION UNIT (ERU)

Cases finalised

During the quarter, the unit significantly surpassed the target of finalizing 20% of cases received, achieving an impressive resolution rate of 55%. The following graph provides a detailed breakdown, presenting the distribution of 37 cases handled across various directorates.

Graph 5: Breakdown of cases closed by Early Resolution Unit



4.2.1 Analysis and outcomes of complaints finalised

Based on the analysis of the cases resolved, the Early Resolution Unit (ERU) noted the following:

4.2.1.1 Water and Sanitation Directorate

The majority of cases related to complaints of high water bills, estimated water readings, disconnection of water supply, incorrect water billings. Also many "No Water" complaints were lodged regarding no water supply due to various reasons. Due to the heavy rainfall this winter, blocked drains and sewer overflow has affected many areas within the City of Cape Town – especially the Mitchells Plain area.

Underground leaks and applications for second water leak rebates. The Tariff Policy states that each property owner shall be limited to one rebate claim and thus applications for second water rebates are rejected.

4.2.1.2 Energy Directorate

The majority of cases related to tampering of the electricity supply - In many cases, the actual tampering is not disputed, instead it is the affordability of the contravention charge and the adjustment charge for consumption used but not paid for that is in dispute as many complainants cannot afford the 50% deduction.

We also received a number of complaints from property owners stating that they no longer receive free electricity units. This is due to the property value exceeding R500 000.00 with effect from 1 July 2023.

4.2.1.3 Human Settlements

Most of the complaints received were tenancy disputes – generally amongst members of the original families. A contributing factor to the influx could be the new Allocation Policy: Housing Opportunities (2022) which brought significant changes (for example, the consent from all family members to transfer tenancy) and superseded all previous policies.

Saleable Units are also transferred at a quicker turnaround time and family members alleges that they are not informed of the sale. In many instances, the former tenant (now owner) threatens to evict the other family members who are then left without a place to stay. Many of the complaints also included delays in the transfer process and Housing Waiting List issues.

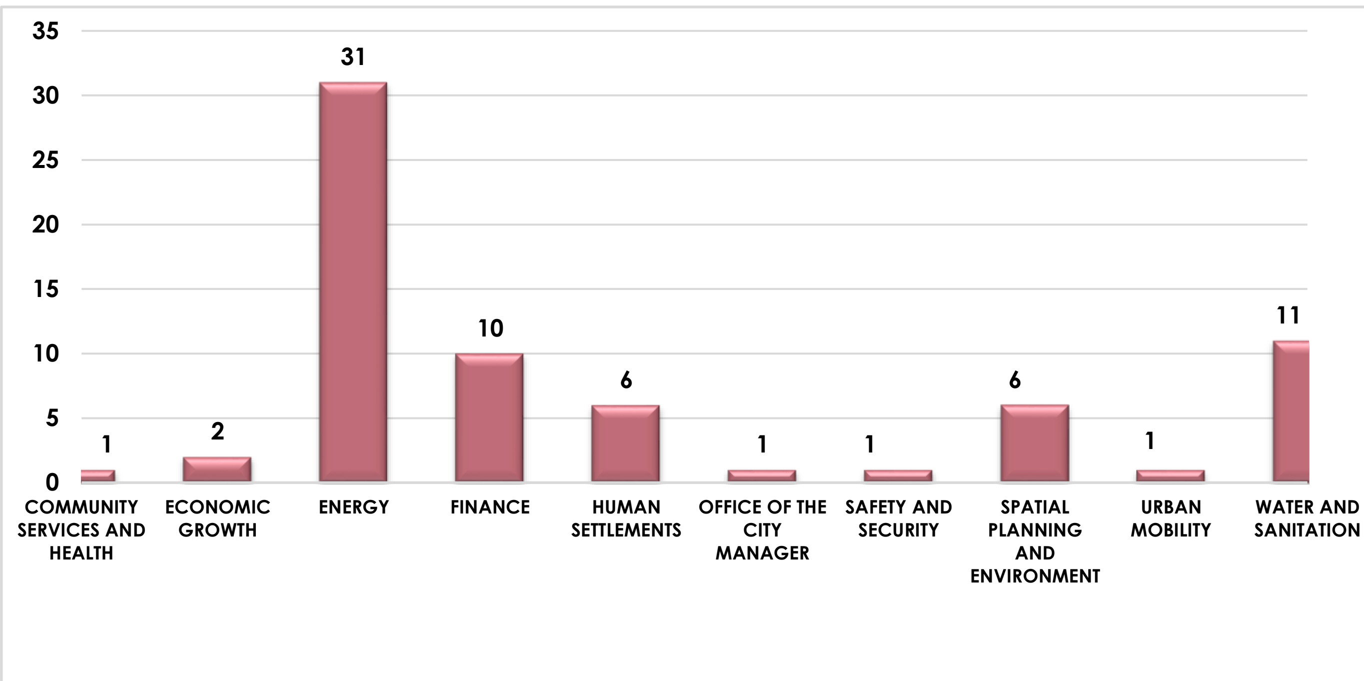
4.3. COMPLEX INVESTIGATIONS UNIT (CIU)

Cases Finalised

The SDBIP target for this quarter was set at resolving 50 cases. The unit has successfully exceeded this target, finalising a total of 70 cases.

As illustrated in Graph 6, the majority of closure reports were issued within the Energy Directorate, demonstrating a notable focus and efficiency in this area.

Graph 6: Breakdown of cases closed by Complex Investigations Unit



4.3.1 Analysis of Case Outcomes

As an office of last resort, case investigations will be able to determine the impact of a policy change, amendment in standard operating procedure, directives etc. after the implementation thereof. It will furthermore be able to determine if the level of service provided to the complainant was acceptable based on inter alia the batho pele principles.

The investigation methodology comprises inter alia of; historical data analysis on SAP (including contacts listed, service orders and notifications created), perusing relevant documentation, agreements, interpreting standard operational procedures. The information is compared against the policies and procedures approved at that stage and our office would recommend corrective action based on the outcome of the investigation.

As the outcome of the cases formed part of the backlog cases, no emerging trends could be determined. The Complex Investigation Unit (CIU) notes the following summary of the closed cases:

4.3.1.1 Energy Directorate

Tampering and defective meter replacements continue to be reported to our office. These cases have been addressed in accordance with the recommendations issued to the Executive Director, and the necessary adjustments have been implemented. Our office prioritised these cases and finalised them to align with the tariff policy of 2022-2023 which was amended from the new financial year and policy clause 4.14 and 4.16 had been corrected from 1 July 2023 as approved by Council.

4.3.1.2 Finance Directorate

Disputes reported to our office relate to debt collection actions initiated after the service department disputes were resolved, yet property owners remain dissatisfied with the outcomes. Many property owners state that the implemented debt collection actions are unsustainable, that they face difficulties in negotiating suitable payment arrangements, and that the requested deposits are excessively high, preventing them from entering into agreements. Our office will investigate their complaints submitted provide clarification based on our preliminary investigation and will negotiate with the complainants to establish suitable deposit and payment arrangements.

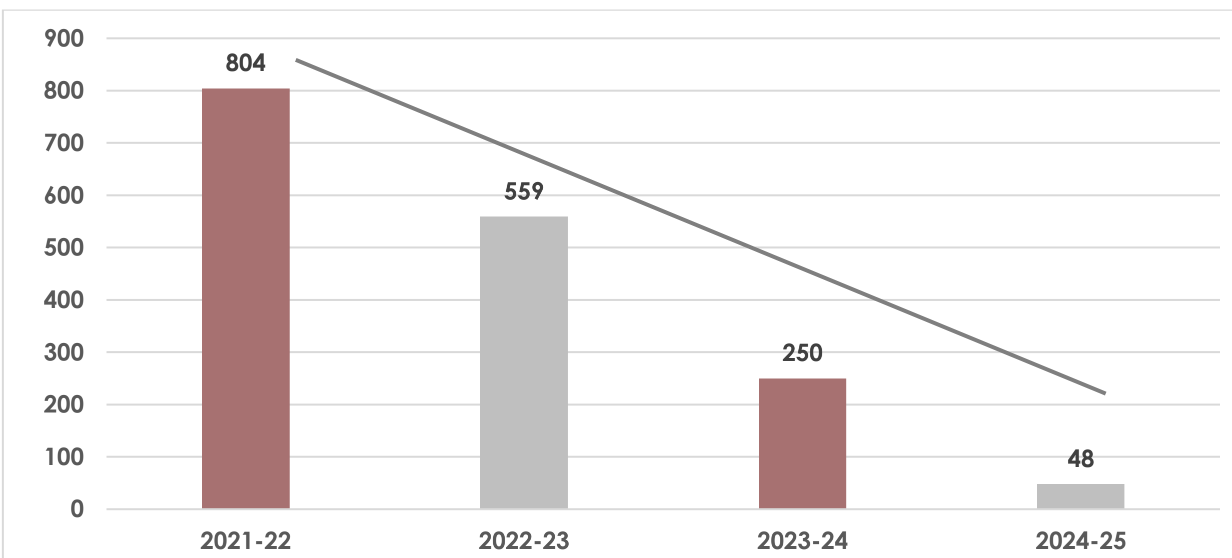
4.3.1.3 Water and Sanitation Directorate

Disputes related to high water bills and adjustments for water rebates linked to underground leaks are ongoing. Our office provides alternative dispute resolution where concessions are granted for tariff charges. The escalation of these disputes to our office pertains to debt collection actions taken via the Purchase Vending System (PVS). The property owner's dispute both the adjustment and the debt collection action implemented after multiple warnings were issued, advising them to approach the City of Cape Town to enter into a suitable payment arrangement.

4.4 Average number of days to finalise cases received per Financial Year

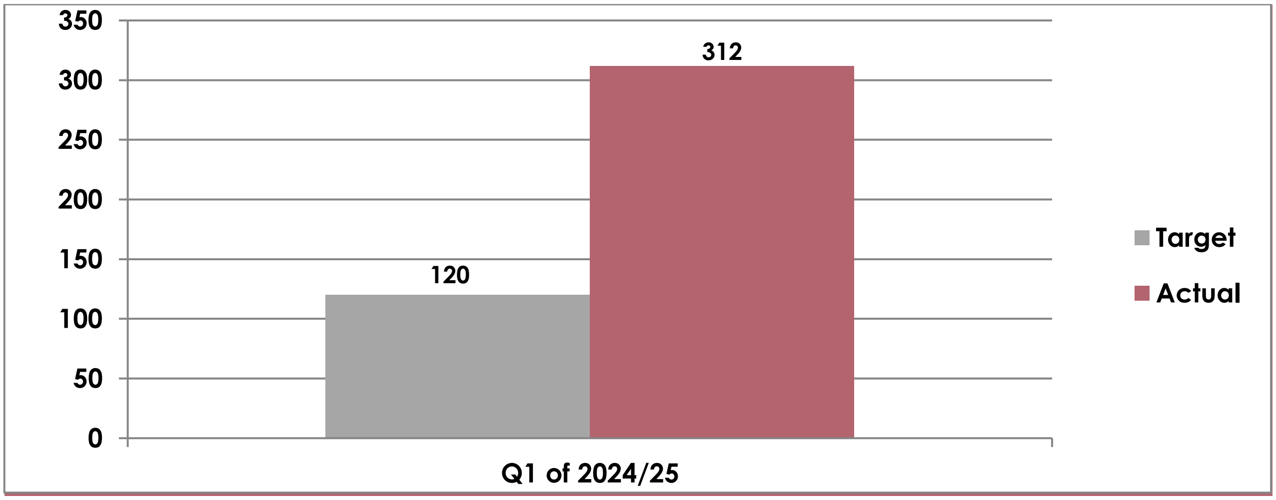
According to the data presented in Graph 8, the average time taken to issue closure reports for cases has shown a steady improvement over the past few financial years. In FY2021/2022, the average duration was 804 days. This reduced significantly to 559 days in FY2022/2023, followed by a further reduction to 250 days in FY2023/2024. Most notably, in FY2024/2025, the average time to issue closure reports decreased to just 48 days, highlighting a substantial improvement in processing efficiency over this period.

Graph 7: Average number of days to close cases received per Financial Year.



The average time taken by the OCO to issue closure reports has historically been influenced by various factors, as illustrated in Graph 8. The data highlights a case received in financial year 2021/22 (May 2022), which reached closure in the current reporting quarter. The graph underscores the impact of different operational and case-specific dynamics on report issuance timelines, providing insight into the overall efficiency and responsiveness of the OCO in addressing and concluding cases.

Graph 8: Average number of days / cases received since 2022



4.5 Investigations taking longer than 120 days

4.5.1 Nature of investigations

Complex and historically unresolved matters that are escalated to our office for intervention, as referred and recommended by the relevant line department officials to the complainants to approach the City Ombudsman for assistance to find a solution. Due to the technical and potentially costly impact these cases have on both the relevant line departments and the complainants (property owners), our office should be mindful of the broader effects it can have on the community and the departments involved. Our office has seen an increase in matters reported for intervention due to delays in establishing suitable alternatives for both the City of Cape Town and the property owners. The financial burdens on property owners, coupled with the escalation of unsolved queries or delayed responses, can result in prolonged resolution times for our cases.

4.5.2 Reasons for these taking longer than 120 days

Tampering and defective meter adjustment cases have become a priority in our office due to the influx of disputes submitted. These disputes, related to piggyback debt collection, impose a financial burden on complainants and their households. This negatively influences the resolution time of our more complex cases. Complainants frequently follow up on these issues, and the debt collection actions via the prepaid system have led property owners to approach City administration for suitable arrangements. However, these negotiations are time-consuming and require specific documentation, especially in the absence of alternative dispute resolution provided by our office. Complainants often express dissatisfaction with our determinations. These cases are then escalated for senior management attention and intervention, further delaying resolution. Management typically requests our investigation officers to explore potential alternative dispute resolutions, considering departure and tariff concessions as possible options.

4.5.3 Measures that are being taken to address cases taking longer than 120 days

Our office has recently conducted meetings with Executive Directors to provide updates on our engagements within their directorates and to establish a nodal point for viewing cases under investigation. In light of the success of the CRM mailbox within the Water and Sanitation department, we are considering proposing a similar concept to expedite the resolution of matters that typically take longer to address based on the above reasons provided.

4.6 Case Investigation List

As of September 30, 2024, there are a total of 594 open cases currently under investigation. Based on the detailed analysis of the pending case list, the breakdown of these cases is as follows:

- Case Assessment – 8

  At this stage, the Investigating Officer received the complaint and is conducting their own assessment.

  - Investigation – 390

    Preliminary investigation started.

  - Awaiting feedback – 71

    This can be from the department or the complainant.

  - Report vetting/ Reporting – 54

    Report is with SPO, Manager or Ombudsman for vetting and/or signature.

  - Drafting Report – 71

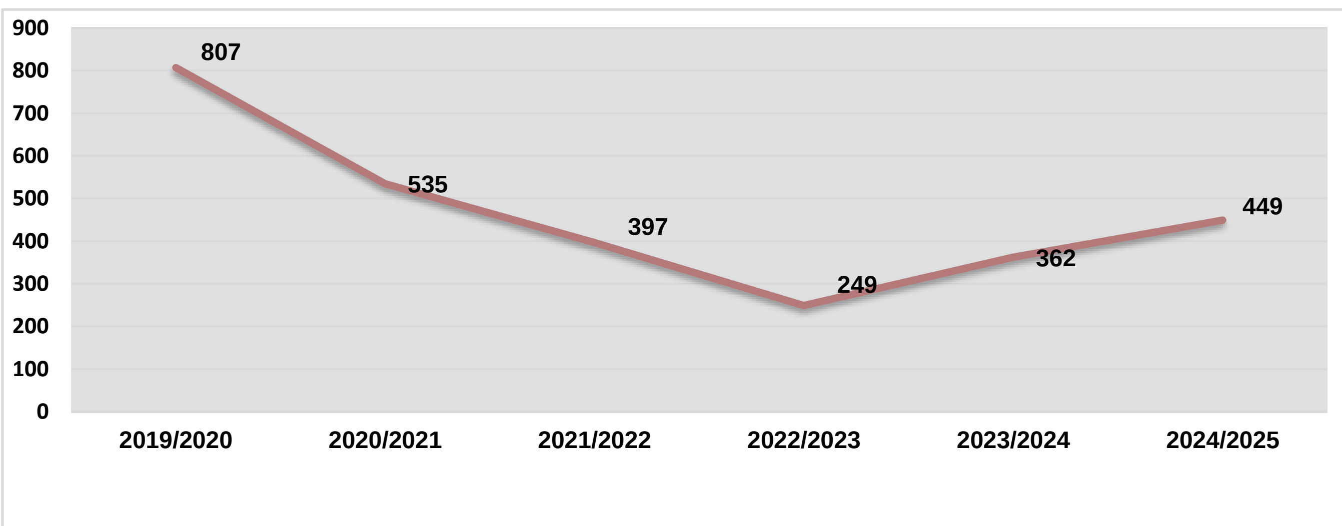
    The Investigating Officer is in the process of drafting a prelim/final report.

4.7 Update on cases older than 120 days

Since 2020, the OCO has concentrated on addressing legacy cases. The hard lockdown experienced across the country restricted investigating officers from attending to walk-in consultations, and the city was limited in implementing new projects and procedures that might have led to additional complaints. This shift allowed investigating officers to dedicate more time and resources to resolving longstanding cases, helping to clear existing caseloads effectively.

As depicted in graph 9, since 2019/2020, there has been a notable reduction in the backlog cases, from 807 to 449 by the end of 30 September 2024. This decline, however, has been accompanied by a rise in the number of backlog cases related to electricity tampering matters. As outlined in clause 4.5.2, this increase is attributed to the growing number of electricity tampering incidents, which have placed additional pressure on the system, contributing to the overall backlog.

Graph 9: Update on cases older than 120 days



***The cases of the two Investigating Officers within ERU, is not included in graph 9, as these cases are non-complex, and therefore not included in the SDBIP Q1 indicator namely, Case backlog resolved: cases older than 120 days), but these cases are monitored on the pending list.**

As outlined in table 2, the following provides a detailed breakdown of the relevant financial years for cases that remain open, along with their current reporting phase. This breakdown highlights the status of each case, indicating the specific financial year in which the case was initiated and the phase it is currently in. This enables a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing processes and the timeline for resolution or further actions required.

Table 2: Breakdown of open cases per financial years

Case Status	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/25
Case Assessment				8	
Investigation	1	2	57	250	80
Awaiting feedback		5	15	36	15
Drafting report		9	20	39	3
Report vetting/Reporting			5	42	7

The significant increase in cases for the current financial year is expected to have a notable impact on the average number of days required for case resolution. This is primarily due to the under-capacitated office, which continues to struggle with limited resources and staffing. As case volumes rise, the strain on the office's capacity to handle workloads efficiently becomes more pronounced, leading to delays in processing and longer turnaround times. Addressing these challenges will require strategic adjustments to resource allocation and operational efficiency to ensure that the office can manage the increasing demands effectively.

4.8 Financial Impact Analysis

The financial impact, where a rand-value is applicable is determined after the line department considered and accepted the recommendation and the OCO can therefore not determine what the value at risk would be prior to concluding the case.

As depicted in table 3, for the period 1 July to 30 September 2024, the rand value of OCO recommendations that was accepted by line departments in favour of complainants (58 cases) were R2 306 502.88. During this period, the rand value in respect of matters wherein the OCO could not provide an alternative solution or concurred with line departments' decisions (53 cases) was R2 410 325.93.

Furthermore, not all recommendations have a financial impact, and can include conciliation or mediation facilitated by the office if the office believes that this will remove the source of the complaint, such as a line department apologising to the complainant. Additionally, based on the outcome of the case investigation more than one recommendations can be made in a single case which recommendation can be within different Directorates.

Table 3: Financial impact of decisions taken: Quarter 1 of the 2024/25 financial year

Period: 1 July to 30 September 2024	Cases	Amount
Recommendations accepted by line departments (recommendations in favour of complainants)	58	R2 306 502.88
Findings (recommendations in favour of the City / no ADR available)	53	R2 410 325.93

5. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

The annual target set for the OCO within the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) is to achieve a score of 3 or higher on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 5 represents "extremely satisfied" and 1 denotes "extremely dissatisfied." This metric reflects the level of satisfaction complainants have with the services provided by the Ombudsman's Office in relation to the handling of cases. While this target is evaluated on an annual basis, it is actively monitored and assessed on a quarterly basis to ensure ongoing performance and alignment with organizational objectives.

Surveys are typically conducted either through telephone interviews or by sending a survey form to complainants via email. These surveys are focused on gathering feedback related to the resolution of complex investigations. However, despite the efforts to engage respondents, the response rate remains relatively low, with fewer than 25% of recipients completing the survey. This highlights a common challenge in obtaining comprehensive feedback, potentially limiting the ability to fully assess satisfaction and the effectiveness of the investigative process.

During the period under review, the OCO achieved an impressive score of 3.33, surpassing the set target. It is important to note, however, that many complainants are facing significant financial difficulties, which, in turn, have contributed to unrealistic expectations regarding the alternative dispute resolution services the OCO can provide. These heightened expectations have impacted the overall outcome of the surveys, presenting a challenge in fully meeting complainants' demands despite the OCO's continued success in achieving high performance.

6. ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

The OCO plays a critical role in advocacy, relationship management, and communication, ensuring that both residents and City staff are informed about the office's existence and the services it provides. For the 2024/25 financial year, the OCO set a target of thirty-six (36) awareness sessions, with a goal of delivering nine (9) sessions per quarter. In the quarter under review, the OCO successfully held a total of eleven (11) awareness sessions, surpassing its target for the period. This achievement demonstrates the OCO's commitment to engaging the community and City staff, fostering greater awareness and accessibility of its services. (Refer to Table 4 below).

Table 4: Awareness sessions

	Event	Organisation	Date	Venue	Target Audience
1.	Draft 2024 City Ombudsman By Law and City Ombudsman Policy Presentation to 21 Subcouncils	OCO and Coct Subcouncils	Online options 24 June to 31 July 2024 and Subcouncil Venues during 15-19 July 2024	Online, print and Subcouncil Venues	
2.	Complaints Management Capacity Building Benchmarking Workshop facilitated by OCO delegate, S Daniels, between the Office of the City Ombudsman (OCO) and Office of the Independent Conciliator of the North-West and South-West regions, Cameroon, Africa	Office of the City Ombudsman (OCO) and Office of the Independent Conciliator of the North-West and South-West regions, Cameroon, Africa	19 to 24 August 2024	Hotel Prince des Galles, in Douala, Cameroon, Africa,	
3.	National Financial Ombud Scheme South Africa (NFO) Presents 100 Days of Excellence	National Financial Ombud Scheme South Africa (NFO)	Webinar 14h00 to 15h30 on Wednesday, 28 August 2024	Webinar	

	Event	Organisation	Date	Venue	Target Audience
4.	Ombudsman Information Session at Revenue Walk-in Centre	OCO & Revenue, Debtors and Cash, Central Collaboration	Monday, 30 September 2024	Stocks and Stocks Building, Khayelitsha	
5.	City Ombudsman at Khayelitsha Walk-in Centre	OCO & City's Communication Department	Posted on 27 September 2024 Click here and; Cityweb - City Of Cape Town Intranet	Online – e-nform (City staff, Councillors) and social media platforms (X, Facebook, WhatsApp channel)	
6.	City Ombudsman bringing services to communities (SASSA/OCO Collaboration)	OCO & City's Communication Department	Posted on 3 September 2024 Click here	Online – e-nform (City staff, Councillors) and social media platforms(X, Facebook, WhatsApp channel)	
7.	'Old Granary' houses new Ombud branch	OCO & City's Communication Department	August/September 2024 issue Contact_119_web.pdf (capetown.gov.za)	Online and print Edition	
8.	OCO & SASSA Collaboration Information Session and Hangberg Older Persons Social Club Members Talk	OCO & SASSA Collaboration	Wednesday, 4 September 2024	Hangberg (Hout Bay) Sport and Recreation Community Hall	
9.	OCO & SASSA Collaboration Information Session	OCO & SASSA Collaboration	Tuesday, 10 September 2024	Fish Hoek Civic Centre	
10.	OCO & SASSA Collaboration Information Session	OCO & SASSA Collaboration	Thursday, 12 September 2024	Retreat Civic Centre	
11.	OCO & SASSA Collaboration Information Session	OCO & SASSA Collaboration	Thursday, 26 September 2024	Retreat Civic Centre	

7. PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

7.1 Data Initiative

The Data Initiative project, in collaboration with the Data Science branch within the Policy and Strategy Department, conducted feedback sessions throughout the quarter. During these sessions, access to the internal tracking system was granted, enabling officials to evaluate the data sources. The timeframes for delivering the requested information will be discussed in the upcoming quarter. Additionally, updates on the progress of these projects will be shared in future reports.

The following requirements were provided to Data Science:

Data Initiative	Expected Data Deliverable / Output
1. Dashboard: Complaints/Cases Drill down Age Analysis of cases older than 60 days and 100 days; 2. Average number of days to finalise cases; 3. Heat Map to indicate: ▪ Directorate ▪ Department ▪ Complaint Type ▪ Subcouncil ▪ Ward 4. Tracking of life cycle of investigation. 5. Root cause analysis	Interactive dashboards to track and monitor lifecycle of investigations; To ensure effective and timeous finalisation of cases; To provide proactive approach to line to manage complaints received.

7.3 Executive Director Dashboard Platform

The Office of the City Ombudsman, as a level three independent assurance provider, has successfully launched the Executive Director Dashboard. This initiative includes individual meetings with the Executive Management Team (EMT) to introduce the dashboard and provide guidance on its navigation. During these meetings, key agreements were made regarding the frequency of subsequent meetings for each Directorate.

Furthermore, the Executive Directors now have access to a high-level summary of the outcomes of investigations conducted within their respective Directorates, as well as the closure reports for the current quarter. This enhanced access allows for better oversight and informed decision-making, aligning with OCO's commitment to transparency and accountability.

8. OCO: STRATEGIC DIRECTORATE BUSINESS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (SDBIP) ACTIVITIES FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2024/25

The OCO submits its achievements in terms of its SDBIP activities to APAC on a quarterly basis. Attached, as Annexure 1, is the OCO SDBIP activities for Quarter 1 of the 2024/25 financial year.

ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Office of the City Ombudsman SDBIP activities for Quarter 1 of the 2024/25 financial year.

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DIRECTORATE	Office of the City Manager	FILE REF NO	13/2/1/2

CITY OMBUDSMAN

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