



Governing Body Response to the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Annual Report 2025/2026 and Self-Assessment 2026/27

Councillor Jane Riley – Portfolio Holder for Culture & Customers – Member Responsible for Complaints

I am pleased to present my response to the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and Self-Assessment. The report demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to providing an accessible, fair and effective complaints service, with a strong focus on resolving issues at the earliest opportunity and using customer feedback to improve services.

During the reporting period, the Council received 557 formal complaints, with 86% resolved at Stage 1. This reflects a positive commitment to addressing concerns promptly and effectively, helping to achieve satisfactory outcomes for customers without the need for escalation. In addition, 523 cases were resolved as service requests, allowing issues to be addressed quickly outside of the formal complaints process. More than two-thirds of complaints were resolved at the first point of contact, demonstrating the value of early intervention and a customer-focused approach to service delivery.

Housing Repairs and Housing Services generated the highest volume of complaints, accounting for 145 complaints and 96 complaints respectively. The most common causes of complaints related to service delays, service standards, housing-specific issues and decisions made by the Council. It is encouraging to see that complaint trends, root causes and recurring themes continue to be closely monitored and analysed. This scrutiny is essential in enabling services to identify areas for improvement, address underlying issues and enhance the overall customer experience.

I am particularly encouraged by the continued strengthening of the Council's complaints handling arrangements during the year. Enhanced quality assurance processes, improved management oversight and regular performance monitoring have helped to drive greater consistency in complaint investigations and responses. These measures provide assurance that complaints are being managed fairly, transparently and in accordance with regulatory expectations.

The Council has also continued to review and refine its policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Following our annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman, we received feedback recommending a small

number of amendments to improve the clarity of our complaints policy. I am pleased that these changes have been fully implemented and that subsequent engagement with the Ombudsman has confirmed their satisfaction with the actions taken. This demonstrates the Council's proactive approach to continuous improvement and its commitment to maintaining high standards of complaint handling.

Importantly, the Council recognises that complaints are not simply expressions of dissatisfaction but a valuable source of insight and learning. The organisation continues to use feedback from complaints to identify trends, address root causes, improve communication and strengthen service delivery. Embedding this culture of learning and accountability is key to ensuring that customer feedback leads to meaningful and lasting improvements for residents.

Executive Portfolio Holders have welcomed the Council's increasingly positive approach to complaints, recognising them as an important source of customer insight and service improvement. Whilst complaint volumes have increased, Executive Portfolio Holders noted that this may reflect improved accessibility and growing confidence in the complaints process. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of understanding complaint themes, learning from customer feedback and using this intelligence to drive improvements in service delivery, communication and the overall customer experience. Executive Portfolio Holders also recognised the positive progress made within Housing services, where ongoing analysis, tenant engagement and organisational learning continue to support service improvement.

Overall, this report provides assurance that the Council has effective complaint handling arrangements in place, is meeting the requirements of the Complaint Handling Code and is committed to learning from customer feedback. I welcome the positive progress made during the year and support the continued focus on early resolution, service improvement and delivering the highest possible standards of customer service for our residents.