

Title of Report	Landlord Services Complaints Annual Self Assessment
Purpose of Report	To provide Housing Committee with an update on the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and the Council's landlord service self-assessment against the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and annual performance report.
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to: a) Consider the evidence referred to in the self-assessment and ensure that it is complete and accessible to readers including staff and residents; b) Scrutinise the data and performance information included in the complaints performance and service improvement report to ensure it is accurate, reliable and repeatable; c) Challenge any commentary or context to ensure that it is a fair and reasonable assessment; d) Approve the report at Appendix B and agree that this is submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September 2026. e) Approve the written statement to the self-assessment and agree the recommendations at Appendix C which provide assurance that it is a true reflection of the landlord's complaint handling.
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Lead Director	Strategic Director of Housing & Communities
Appendices	Appendix A – Complaint Handling Code self-assessment Appendix B – Annual complaints performance and service improvement report Appendix C – Governing Body's response
Background Papers	None
Link to the Council Plan / Priorities	H2C.2 – Ensure our Council Homes and services meet legislative and regulatory compliance

1. Executive Summary / Introduction

- 1.1. The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (the Code) requires social landlords to undertake an annual self-assessment of their complaint handling arrangements and to report the findings to their governing body.
- 1.2. The purpose of the self-assessment is to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Code, identify good practice, and highlight opportunities for continuous improvement in complaint handling and service delivery.
- 1.3. This report provides an overview of complaints received during 2025/26, including complaint volumes, outcomes, compliance with response timescales, Housing Ombudsman determinations, and the lessons learned from complaints. It also outlines the

actions taken and improvements implemented as a result of customer feedback to enhance services for residents.

2. Main Points

The Self-Assessment

- 2.1. The purpose of the self-assessment is to demonstrate how the council's complaint handling arrangements comply with the requirements of the Code. The self-assessment also supports transparency by providing residents with information about how complaints are managed and how the service performs.
- 2.2. The self-assessment requires landlords to provide evidence of compliance with each provision of the Code, clearly setting out how the requirements are met in both policy and practice. It also enables landlords to demonstrate openness and accountability to residents, while supporting the Ombudsman's assessment of compliance.
- 2.3. The Housing Service has completed its self-assessment for 2025/26 and has concluded that the council's complaints policy, procedures and approach to complaint handling are aligned with the Code and are, overall, compliant with its requirements. This conclusion has been endorsed by Internal Audit following independent assurance undertaken within the year.
- 2.4. During the self-assessment process, it was noted there had been a significant increase in the volume of complaints received and responded to (both at stage 1 and 2) compared to the previous year. This reflected a trend across the sector. It was noted we had not increased resources to respond to this additional work. It was also identified that, in some cases, complaints that had been subject to an agreed extension were not responded to within the revised timescales. While a number of these complaints were particularly complex and/or required input from multiple service areas, the council recognises that there is an opportunity to strengthen performance in this area.
- 2.5. The Housing Team continues to review its processes and implement measures to improve the timely handling of complaints, including monitoring extensions more closely and supporting service areas to provide responses within agreed deadlines. The Housing Team is also supporting service areas to ensure commitments and lessons learnt arising from complaints are actioned in a timely manner. The council remains committed to responding to all complaints within the timescales set out in the Code and to delivering a fair, accessible, effective and resident-focused complaints service. We are in the process of implementing enhanced resident scrutiny of complaints as part of our new resident engagement framework.
- 2.6. The findings from the self-assessment will be used to drive continuous improvement, ensuring that learning from complaints is embedded across the Housing Service and that residents' feedback continues to inform service delivery and decision-making.

Governing Body's Response

- 2.7. The Code requires landlords to publish the governing body's response alongside the annual complaint performance and service improvement report. The purpose of this response is to provide assurance that the self-assessment is an accurate and fair reflection of the landlord's complaint handling performance and compliance with the Code.
- 2.8. The governing body's response should set out how it has scrutinised and challenged the self-assessment, including consideration of any areas of non-compliance, risks, or opportunities for improvement identified through the review process. The response may also highlight areas of good performance, key achievements, and any challenges

experienced during the reporting period. This approach supports openness, transparency, and accountability to residents and other stakeholders.

- 2.9. The Members Responsible for Complaints have considered casework examples, alongside quarterly key performance information, to support their scrutiny and challenge.

3. Consultation and Feedback

- 3.1. The self-assessment and annual complaint performance report have been reviewed and scrutinised by the Chair and Vice Chair of Housing Committee. Their response, including observations on performance, compliance, and areas for improvement, is provided in Appendix C.

4. Options

- 4.1. Members may either approve the submission to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September 2026, or decline to approve it. Approval is the recommended option as it enables the council to meet the annual submission requirements of the Code. Failure to approve and submit the self-assessment would introduce a risk of non-compliance with the Code and may result in intervention by the Housing Ombudsman, including the potential issue of a Complaint Handling Failure Notice; therefore, this option is not recommended.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. The purpose of the self-assessment is to ensure that complaints raised by residents are handled effectively and resolved as promptly as possible. It also enables the council to use complaint data, customer feedback, and lessons learned to identify trends, drive service improvements, and enhance the overall customer experience.
- 5.2. The Code requires landlords to publish an annual complaint performance and service improvement report, alongside a self-assessment of compliance with the Code. As part of this process, the Housing Committee is asked to review and scrutinise both documents and provide a written statement confirming whether it is satisfied that they present a true and accurate reflection of the council's complaint handling performance and compliance with the Code.
- 5.3. Through this scrutiny process, the Housing Committee provides independent assurance that complaints are being managed appropriately, that learning from complaints is being acted upon, and that the council remains committed to delivering a fair, transparent, and resident-focused complaints service.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

6.1.1. There are no direct financial implications from this report.

6.1.2. Cost: £nil

6.1.3. Funding: N/A

6.1.4. Financial Impact: None

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6.2. Resource Implications

6.2.1. This decision will result in a neutral impact on officer resource.

6.3. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

6.3.1. This decision will not result in any implications for LGR.

6.4. Risk Considerations

6.4.1. This report relates to routine activity and does not involve decisions, commitments, or changes that would result in a change to the council's strategic, financial, operational, legal or reputational risk exposure unless Members fail to approve the submission to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September 2026, or decline to approve it. As a result, no risk assessment or mitigations are required.

6.5. Climate and Nature Implications

6.5.1. A climate impact assessment is not required for this report because the decision matrix was completed and it determined the use of the Climate Impact Assessment Tool was not required.

6.6. Equality Implications

6.6.1. An EqIA is not required for this report because an initial screening has been conducted and identified no negative impacts on any protected group or individuals with protected characteristics. A robust complaints policy and practice has significant positive impacts on these groups.

6.7. Legal Implications

6.7.1. Under the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code ("the Code") Landlords are required to self-assess themselves annually on a "comply or explain" basis and publish the results on their website. Non-compliance with this requirement could result in the Ombudsman issuing complaint handling failure orders and possible reputational damage.

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