

CABINET

25 SEPTEMBER 2026

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND PLANNING

A.2 ANNUAL HOUSING COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT INCLUDING SELF-ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN'S COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present to Cabinet the Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for scrutiny and challenge, which includes a self-assessment carried out against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code for 2025/26 prior to publication and submission.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents Cabinet with the Council's Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2025/26, including the required self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's statutory Complaint Handling Code. Cabinet is asked to scrutinise and challenge the report and self-assessment, provide its formal response, and approve publication and submission to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September 2026.

The Code provides the statutory framework for effective, fair and accessible complaint handling by social landlords. It requires landlords to learn from complaints, demonstrate service improvement, and provide assurance through annual reporting, self-assessment, governing body oversight and publication.

The Council has updated its housing complaints arrangements in response to changes to the Code, including the adoption of a stand-alone Housing Complaints Policy and, in 2025, a harmonised Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy to reflect the more closely aligned complaint handling codes of the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning acts as the Member Responsible for Complaints and provides ongoing scrutiny through regular reviews of complaint performance, trends and learning.

Housing complaints increased in 2025/26 compared with 2024/25, continuing the upward trend seen in the previous year. The service received 84 Stage 1 complaints, of which 18 escalated to Stage 2. Housing repairs accounted for 55% of both Stage 1 (comprising 46) and Stage 2 (comprising 10) complaints, while tenancy matters accounted for 33% of Stage 1 (comprising 28) complaints and 39% of Stage 2 (comprising 7) complaints. Tenant satisfaction with complaint handling, as measured through the annual tenant perception survey, fell to 36.3%, compared with 49% in the previous year.

The Annual Report identifies service improvements arising from complaint learning and confirms that the self-assessment and performance information have been reviewed by the Member Responsible for Complaints. Complaint information has also been considered through the Council's Housing Improvement Board and Tenant Panel, supporting regular challenge, assurance and a continued focus on improving outcomes for residents.

The report also highlights amendments to the Council's Tenant Satisfaction Measures return for 2025/26. Following Cabinet approval and submission to the Regulator of Social Housing in June 2026, subsequent queries resulted in amendments to TSM RP02 and corrections to CH01 and CH02. The amended figures have been accepted by the Regulator.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Cabinet:

- (a) in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and in compliance with Cabinet's scrutiny and oversight requirements, receives and formally notes the Council's Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, which includes the Annual Self-assessment against the Code, as set out in Appendices A and B;**
- (b) formally provides its response to the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report, for publication;**
- (c) authorises Officers to publish both the report and the Cabinet's response on the Council's website within the section relating to complaints and to submit the self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September 2026; and,**
- (d) notes the amended figures for the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures return, as set out in the body of this report.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

To approve the self-assessment carried out and to provide a response before its submission to the Housing Ombudsman.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council's complaints handling self-assessment sets out how it complies with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and the evidence to support this position. The only alternative option would be to not complete this assessment.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with its statutory Complaint Handling Code. This means that the Housing Ombudsman is required to ensure that all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling. To assist with this, all landlords are required to submit their self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September 2026.

If this was to not be completed or submitted, the Council would risk non-compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.

Where the Housing Ombudsman identifies any concerns with a landlord's compliance with the Code, they will engage with them to bring them back into compliance promptly. If there is evidence of ongoing failures in compliance, the Ombudsman will consider using their wider powers including Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFO). The Ombudsman Self-Assessment Guidance states a landlord's failure to provide their submission may be issued with a Type 3 CHFO (non-compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code).

In June, the Housing Ombudsman wrote to the Council to highlight some areas of the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy that could be revised in order to more closely align with the requirements of the Complaints Handling Code. Amendments to the policy have been drafted and shared with the Ombudsman for confirmation that they meet its requirements.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The operation of an effective complaints policy and procedure contributes to the Corporate Plan 2024-28 themes of Pride in our Area and Services to Residents and of Financial Sustainability and Openness.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Consultation and engagement has been undertaken with members of the Council's Tenant Panel. A sub-group focussing on complaints and TSMs has been presented with and discussed a draft of the annual report and self-assessment. Their feedback has been considered when preparing the final draft of those documents. Their feedback is summarised below:

- Annual reports and future documents should be produced in an easy-read format.
- Reports should be made more engaging through the use of images, potentially including Tenant Panel members.
- Tenants supported publishing full complaints information to help residents understand Council performance.
- The report should clearly explain that there were 84 individual complaints, not 102, because Stage 2 complaints are escalations of existing Stage 1 complaints.
- More detailed analysis of complaint trends should be included, such as:
 - seasonal patterns;
 - recurring issues at particular times of year;
 - themes such as repairs, heating and other common issues.
 - Service-area detail should be expanded, particularly in relation to repairs
- The report should clearly show:
 - what the Council has learned from complaints;
 - what improvements have been made as a result.
 - Additional complaint-handling training may be beneficial.
 - The report should reassure tenants that the Council will support them throughout the complaints process.
 - A dedicated complaints team could help improve consistency and the overall customer experience.

The main Tenant Panel was also presented with the complaint statistics at their meeting on 8 September 2026 and had an opportunity to discuss them with the Council's member responsible for complaints.

The sub-group has, during the course of the year, reviewed samples of complaints and discussed whether appropriate conclusions were reached. They have also provided their thoughts and insights into some of the Council's processes, such as when requesting repairs and the satisfaction they have experienced with that process.

We will continue to regularly engage with members of our Tenant Panel to review performance statistics relating to complaints and their views on how our services can be improved.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	Yes	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	X Significant effect on two or more wards ☐ Involves £100,000 expenditure/income ☐ Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	23 April 2026

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 placed a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code ("the Code"). This means that the Housing Ombudsman is required to ensure that all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling, regardless of their size and operating model.

The legal duty placed on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the Code, is regardless of whether it receives individual complaints from residents about a landlord.

Landlords must assess against the Code and assure policies and practices comply with the Code at least annually and submit this to the Housing Ombudsman. The self-assessment must form part of the Council's Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report. Landlords may wish to include wider scrutiny arrangements such as using a tenant panel to review its self-assessment or complaints policy to satisfy itself that its complaints function is operating with the Code.

The Housing Ombudsman Service has provided self-assessment guidance. The self-assessment must be provided to the Housing Ombudsman using the dedicated electronic form, which asks landlords to provide electronic links to key information and documentation required to support their submission, these include:

- The self-assessment as published on the website
- The annual complaints performance and service improvement report
- The governing bodies response to the report
- The complaints policy

For the purposes of complying with the self-assessment process Cabinet is the governing body and is required to provide a response to the report.

Failure to comply with the Code may result in Type 3 Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFOs) being issued. A Type 3a may be issued where a landlord fails to provide their annual submission form to demonstrate compliance in scrutiny and oversight of the complaints handling process. A Type 3b CHFO may be issued where the Ombudsman has found that there is non-compliance with the Complaint Handling Code with respect to policy or in handling complaints in practice.

The Code Compliance Framework (“the Framework”) sets out how the Ombudsman will assess whether a landlord has effectively scrutinised itself, whether its complaints policy complies with the Code, and whether it complies with the Code of Practice.

The Framework states that the Ombudsman will assess compliance with the Code in three areas, and the requirements in all three areas must be met:

- Compliance in Scrutiny and Oversight
- Compliance in Policy
- Compliance in Practice

Under the area of Compliance in Scrutiny and Oversight, the landlord must have:

- a) Produced an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, for submission to the governing body, which must include:
 - the annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements;
 - a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept;
 - any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman;
 - the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
 - its actions following any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and
 - its actions following any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.
- b) That the annual complaints performance and service improvement report has been reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

These are Code provisions 8.1 and 8.2.

Under the area of Compliance in Policy, the landlord's complaints policy must meet the expectations of the Code contained in all other provisions.

Under the area of Compliance in Practice, the landlord's complaints handling must meet the expectations of the Code in practice. This assessment is based on an assessment of the landlord's own reported performance, data and insights from the Ombudsman's casework and information from external data sources.

X	The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:
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Comments from the Deputy Monitoring Officer:

“This report sets out the Council's completed self-assessment process and Cabinet should be satisfied that the completion of the self-assessment is more than solely a

compliance exercise. It is an opportunity for assurance around the complaint handling arrangements and their effectiveness. The self-assessment should itself support the Best Value principle of continuous improvement.

Both the Member Responsible for Complaints and Cabinet (as the governing body for the Council's social housing landlord role) must rigorously scrutinise and challenge the self-assessment to ensure it presents a fair and accurate picture of the service. Resident feedback is vital in understanding the lived experience and ensure that the Council is listening to its residential tenants and leaseholders.

Cabinet must respond to the submission of the self-assessment and this should cover how the self-assessment was reviewed, scrutinised and challenged, what risks or weaknesses have been identified, and what actions are to be taken to address them. It should highlight lessons learned from complaints, how complaint data has informed decision-making, and how improvements will be embedded and monitored. Complaints are a source of insight to improve outcomes for tenants etc and strengthen the Council's performance.

From the above review of the self-assessment, any areas where it is considered there is a non-compliance with the Ombudsman's Code of Complaint Handling, these should be highlighted."

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant financial implications associated with this self-assessment and performance report as it confirms existing arrangements which are currently funded via existing budgets in the Housing Revenue Account

However, it is anticipated that the implementation of the revised Complaints Handling Code and the actions required to meet these will have a financial impact in the longer term.

X	The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:
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Although there are no direct financial implications arising from the report, it is however recognised that complaint outcomes, Ombudsman findings, tenant satisfaction data or identified service improvements, resource implications etc. may have an impact on the HRA Business Plan. Such issues therefore need to be considered on an on-going basis as part of the Council's wider service planning and budget-setting processes. This is particularly relevant in areas such as repairs and maintenance, complaint handling capacity, officer training, data review and analysis along with the wider impacts continuing to emerge from the new era of Social Housing Regulation.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	The Council has an adopted Financial Strategy.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks,	The Council has a mature constitutional structure and framework of policy for decision-making.
.C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and	The Council has an adopted Financial Strategy.

performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	
MILESTONES AND DELIVERY	
If Cabinet agrees to the self-assessment, noting any comments or feedback it wishes to make in connection with this, it will then be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September 2026 and published on the Council's website. The Council will continue to engage with members of the Tenant Panel in respect of the improvements outlined in the annual report and the Council's general performance in respect of complaint handling.	
ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION	
The Housing Ombudsman believes that all members should comply with all provisions in the Code as this represents best practice in complaint handling. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act also placed a duty on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with their code. Where a landlord does not meet the requirements of the Code in any areas and does not move into compliance within a reasonable timescale, the Ombudsman will issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order and publish this. There are three types of Complaint Handling Failure Orders: Type 1: A CHFO may be issued in relation to failings in an individual case where the Ombudsman has taken reasonable steps to seek engagement from a landlord, but the resident remains unable to progress a complaint through the landlord's process. Type 2: A CHFO may also be issued on an individual case where the landlord has failed to provide information, either at the outset of the investigation or to confirm compliance with our orders, to the Ombudsman as requested. Type 3: A CHFO may be issued where a landlord fails to comply with its membership obligations under paragraph 9 of the Scheme. In addition to this, the Housing Ombudsman has powers to carry out wider investigation where there is evidence of a 'systemic failing' and where this is found to be the case, it will be referred to the Regulator of Social Housing. This could trigger the Regulator using its enforcement powers which include requiring a registered provider to submit a performance improvement plan or to take particular actions set out in an enforcement notice. The Regulator will also be able to authorise an appropriate person to enter a social housing premises to take emergency remedial action and issue penalties or require the housing provider to pay compensation.	
EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS	
In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, within these policies the Council has due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.	
SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS	
Creates healthier, safer and more resilient communities: To build stronger and deeper partnership working arrangements whilst continuing to engage and empower tenants.	

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

The operation of the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy and associated self-assessment does not present a direct impact on the Council's target for net zero greenhouse gas emissions from its business operations by 2050. The Council will be mindful of energy efficiency measures, wherever relevant, in the implementation of its policies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LGR AND DEVOLUTION

On 7th September 2026, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced in Parliament that a review of the Local Government Reorganisation programme was commencing and that the decision made in March 2026 for Greater Essex (and other areas) had been withdrawn in the light of new legal advice. Following this announcement, local authorities received correspondence from the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government requesting that until this review has concluded, Councils cease work on implementing the decisions that have previously been announced. The timetable for completion of the review is unknown currently.

This proposal is not impacted by MHCLG's request, as it is to ensure that the Council meets its duty under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 which in turn places a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with its statutory Complaint Handling Code. This means that the Housing Ombudsman is required to ensure that all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling. To assist with this, all landlords are required to submit their self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September 2026. If this was to not be completed or submitted, the Council would risk non-compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder	The Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, including the required self-assessment does not directly relate to crime and disorder considerations.
Health Inequalities	The Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy, upon which the self-assessment is based, and supporting Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Vulnerability Policy ensures equal access to the Council's housing services.
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance).	The Council will follow subsidy control legislation and regulations, where applicable, in relation to the content and implementation of these policies.
Area or Ward affected.	All

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The Council has retained its housing stock and currently manages over 3,000 homes as well as more than 400 leasehold properties and 389 garages.

In July 2020, the Housing Ombudsman published a new Complaint Handling Code providing a framework for high-quality complaint handling and greater consistency across landlord's procedures. Its aim was to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by their residents quickly and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements.

This was followed in November 2020 by the Social Housing White Paper which committed to improve the national regulatory system for social housing to make landlords more accountable and to improve the formal national ombudsman complaint system.

This White Paper also included a 'Charter for Social Housing Tenants' and this contains seven commitments that social housing tenants should expect from their landlord, one of which was to have their complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.

The subsequent Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced new social housing consumer standards that contain specific expectations registered providers of social housing must comply with and detail the outcomes that providers are expected to achieve.

In relation to complaints, the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard states that:

- Registered providers must ensure their approach to handling complaints is simple, accessible and publicised.
- Registered providers must provide accessible information to tenants about:
 - a) how tenants can make a complaint about their registered provider;
 - b) the registered provider's complaints policy and complaints handling process;
 - c) what tenants can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how a complaint was handled; and
 - d) the type of complaints received and how they have learnt from complaints to continuously improve services

The Housing Ombudsman Service provides redress for individual tenant complaints. However, its Complaints Handling Code became statutory from 1st April 2024 and provides a single, robust set of standards for complaints procedures to be accessible, fair and efficient. A legal duty is also placed on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the Code, regardless of whether it receives individual complaints from residents about a landlord.

Following consultation, a further revision of the Housing Ombudsman's Code came into force on 1 April 2024 and the Council's Housing Complaints Policy was amended to take account of these changes.

The revised Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which includes a self-assessment against the Code.

The Council welcomes complaints and actively encourages tenants and customers to express their dissatisfaction. All expressions of dissatisfaction represent a positive

opportunity to gather intelligence and insight that will help to improve our service delivery.

Since the implementation of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, there has been an increase in the number of housing complaints being recorded.

This is partly attributable to the adoption of the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint and it being made easier for residents to complain by providing different channels through which complaints can be made. There has also been a national publicity campaign to raise awareness amongst social housing tenants about how to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the service being provided by their landlord.

The analysis of complaints enables the Council to understand where things have gone wrong and to identify what can be done to stop this happening again. The service takes a positive approach to learning from both individual complaints as well as any trends in the type of complaints being received.

Since April 2024, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning, who is also the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), has received a quarterly report on the volume, outcomes and trends of complaints being received and also reviews performance at the monthly meetings held with housing managers. This more formalised approach to reviewing issues, risks and trends is being implemented to support our revised complaint handling arrangements.

The MRC continues to challenge senior officers around how the service is run, with the expectation that tenants receive a high standard of service. He has also attended Tenant Panel meetings, including the sub-group focussing on complaints and TSMs in order to gain direct input and engagement with our tenants.

During the year a new online complaint reporting form has been introduced. This form captures all information about a complaint and the person making the complaint in one place. This is making recording and assignment of complaints easier.

The annual Housing Complaints and Service Improvement report, attached as Appendix A, includes a number of proposed service improvements:

- **Review of service resourcing** to increase capacity for effective complaint handling and support responses within required timescales.
- **Improve Stage 1 complaint responses** by introducing a monthly review of a sample of responses by Assistant Directors, with involvement from the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning.
- **Strengthen consideration of redress** by ensuring Stage 1 responses include a thorough review of the case and clear consideration of what the complainant is seeking.
- **Improve identification and recording of complaints** so that all expressions of dissatisfaction are captured and responded to appropriately.
- **Use Housemark data analysis** to better understand complaint trends and support targeted service improvements.
- **Improve access to complaint information** through tenant newsletters, the annual report, website information and the new online complaint form.

- **Increase visibility of the complaints process** by displaying posters in sheltered housing schemes and communal areas of flats.
- **Improve support for tenants with vulnerabilities and diverse needs** by recognising individual needs, making appropriate adjustments and providing responses in accessible formats.
- **Gather better information on tenant vulnerabilities and diverse needs** through tenancy sign-up and the ongoing programme of tenancy check visits.
- **Provide further/ongoing officer training in 2026/27** on complaint handling, recognising dissatisfaction and supporting tenants with diverse needs.
- **Explore a dedicated housing complaints CRM system** to improve complaint tracking, reporting and data analysis in the future.

This report also includes a recommendation relating to amendments made to the Council's Tenant Satisfaction Measures return for 2025/26. The return was submitted to the Regulator of Social Housing in June 2026, following Cabinet's approval of the figures on 26 June 2026. Following queries raised by the Regulator, amendments have been made to TSM RP02. Officers also identified an error in the data provided for CH01 and CH02, which has now been corrected.

The updated / corrected figures are presented below:

Measure	Performance
RP02	
Proportion of:	
Non-emergency; and	73.4%
Emergency repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale	84.6%
CH01 - Complaints received per 1,000 homes:	
Stage 1	26.9
Stage 2	5.8
CH02 - Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	
Stage 1	95.2
Stage 2	83.3%

The amended figures have been accepted by the Regulator and the annual TSM return accepted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

APPENDICES
Appendix A – Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2025/26
Appendix B - Self assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)	
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A.2 APPENDIX A



Tendring
District Council

ANNUAL HOUSING COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT FOR 2025/2026



A.2 APPENDIX A

ANNUAL HOUSING COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT

Welcome to our complaints performance and service improvement report for 2025-26.

The Council owns and manages just over 3,000 homes and our tenants are important to us. Handling complaints effectively allows us to address issues, learn from them, prevent future occurrences and improve our services.

We understand that there will be times when we do not meet the expected level of service that our tenants deserve. Where this is the case, it is important that we put things right.

The Housing Ombudsman is responsible for investigating complaints about social housing providers.

In April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman introduced a new Complaint Handling Code to ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively and promptly.

In this report we cover how we have scrutinised our compliance against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. We provide information on the complaints we have received during 2025-26, some examples of service improvements we have made or are planning as a result of learning from complaints and an overview of a case that the Housing Ombudsman has made a decision on during 2026-26.

Our Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy sets out our approach to complaint handling, so we can resolve complaints effectively and comply with the code.

[Corporate and housing complaints policy](#)

Complaint handling code self-assessment

We have completed a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

This ensures we align our policies and practices to provide a prompt and effective complaints service.

Our assessment is that we fully complied with the code in 2025-26 and we will continue to improve our service during 2026-27 to ensure ongoing compliance.

[Link to full assessment on website once complete](#)

In June 2026, the Housing Ombudsman wrote to the Council to highlight some areas of the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy that could be revised in order to more closely align with the requirements of the Complaints Handling Code. Amendments to the policy have been drafted and shared with the Ombudsman for confirmation that they meet its requirements.

Our complaint handling performance during 2025-26

We received a total of 102 complaints between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. This is an increase of 13% compared to the previous year.

84 complaints were responded to at Stage 1 of our complaints process and 18 were escalated to Stage 2

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Complaints received	Number	Change compared to previous year
Total number of complaints received: April 2025 to March 2026	102	13% increase (<i>Total complaints received April 24 to March 25 was 90</i>)

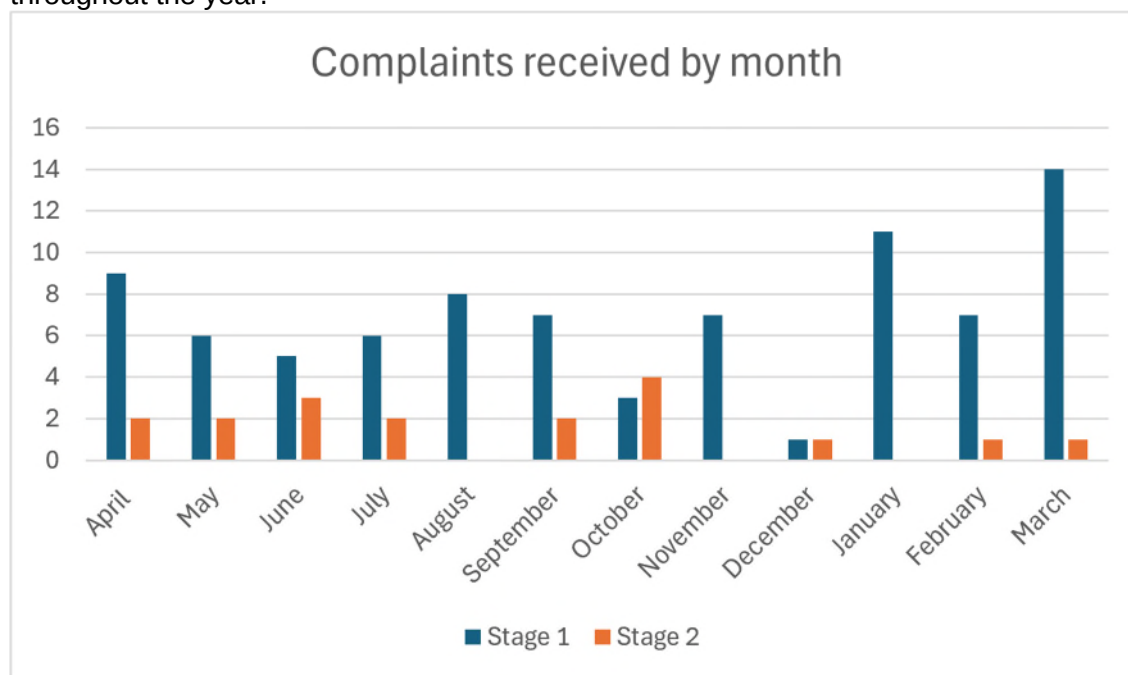
Complaints received by stage	Number	Change compared to previous year
Stage 1	84	8% increase (<i>previous year 78</i>)
Stage 2	18	50% increase (<i>previous year 12</i>)

Complaints were received across the following service areas:

Service area	Stage 1	Stage 2
Repairs, planned maintenance or improvements	46 (55%)	10 (55%)
Rents or service charges	4 (5%)	0
Tenancy matters	28 (33%)	7 (39%)
Neighbourhood issues	4 (5%)	1 (6%)
Transfers or mutual exchanges	0	0
Right to Buy or leasehold matters	2 (2%)	0
Total	84	18

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Complaints were received throughout the year with the graph below showing the distribution throughout the year.



Response times

Complaint response times	
Response to Stage 1 Complaints sent within Code timescales - 10 working days unless extended as permitted in the Code	95.24% (previous year 93.6%)
Response to Stage 2 Complaint sent within Code timescales – 20 working days unless extended as permitted in the Code	83.33% (previous year 91.7%)

Use of the extension periods permitted in the Code

We aim to respond to all complaints within the Housing Ombudsman code timescales and the table below shows how we have performed:

Stage 1	Number	Percentage
Response to Stage 1 Complaint sent within Code timescales without the use of the 10-day extension permitted in the Code	61	72.6% (previous year 69.9%)
Response to Stage 1 Complaint sent within Code timescales with the use of the 10-day extension permitted in the Code	19	22.6% (previous year 30.1%)

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Stage 2	Number	Percentage
Response to Stage 2 Complaint sent within Code timescales without the use of the 20-day extension permitted in the Code	12	66.7% <i>(previous year 72.8%)</i>
Response to Stage 2 Complaint sent within Code timescales with the use of the 20-day extension permitted in the Code	3	16.7% <i>(previous year 27.2%)</i>

Complaints not included in the table above were responded to outside of the timescales set out in the Complaint Handling Code

Outcomes to complaints

The table below shows the number of complaints that were either upheld (where the council acknowledged some degree of fault) or not upheld. In accordance with the implementation of the revised Complaint Handling Code from 1 April 2024, a complaint can no longer be recorded as partially upheld. If an organisation has got something wrong, it must record the complaint as being upheld, even if there are elements of the complaint it has not upheld.

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The proportion of complaints that were upheld in 2025/26 has decreased over the 2024/25 figures although it remains the case that more complaints were upheld than not upheld.

Stage 1	Upheld	Not upheld
Repairs, planned maintenance and improvements	43	3
Rents or service charges	0	4
Tenancy matters	5	23
Neighbourhood issues	0	4
Transfers / mutual exchanges	0	0
Right to Buy or leasehold matters	2	0
Total	50	34

Stage 2	Upheld	Not upheld
Repairs, planned maintenance and improvements	9	1
Rents or service charges	0	0
Tenancy matters	4	3
Neighbourhood issues	0	1
Transfers / mutual exchanges	0	0
Right to Buy or leasehold matters	0	0
Total	13	5

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

From 1 April 2023, all social housing providers have been required to collect data for tenant satisfaction measures on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints.

The measures are aimed at helping improve standards for people living in social housing, by:

- Providing visibility, letting tenants see how well their landlord is doing. And enabling tenants to hold their landlords to account
- Giving the Regulator insight into which landlords might need to improve things for their tenants

A.2 APPENDIX A

There are 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures and, in relation to complaints, the relevant measures are:

- Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints (TP09 - measured by a tenant perception survey)
- Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (CH01 - measured by landlord's management information)
- Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales (CH02 - measured by landlord's management information)

The Council's performance in relation to these indicators in 2025/26 was as follows:

Measure	Performance
TP09 - Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to complaint handling	36.3%
CH01 - Complaints received per 1,000 homes: Stage 1 Stage 2	26.9 5.8
CH02 - Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code Stage 1 Stage 2	95.2 83.3%

Any findings of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with its statutory Complaint Handling Code. This means that the Housing Ombudsman is required to ensure that all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling. To assist with this, all landlords are required to submit their self-assessment by 30 September each year (previously 30 June).

Should the Housing Ombudsman identify any concerns with a landlord's compliance with the Code, they will engage with them to bring them back into compliance promptly. If there is evidence of ongoing failures in compliance, the Ombudsman will consider using their wider powers including Complaint Handling Failure Orders.

The Council's Housing Complaints Policy was reviewed and revised in 2025 to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Complaints Handling Code. It was amalgamated with the council's more general complaint handling policy and renamed the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy. Following a review of the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy by the Housing Ombudsman in June 2026 following which it was highlighted that the policy could be improved to more fully align with the Complaint Handling Code, the policy has recently been revised.

A.2 APPENDIX A

Housing Ombudsman determinations

During the financial year 2025/26, the Housing Ombudsman determined one complaint received by it in respect of Tendring District Council and found that there was a service failure. A summary of the case is provided below (as published on the Housing Ombudsman's website):

Complaint reference 202317086:

Background

The resident lives in a second-floor flat with her daughter. She has health conditions and has said the complaint has negatively impacted her mental health. She has been reporting leaks to her landlord since 2021 and has raised concerns about the presence of asbestos in her property.

What the complaint is about

The landlord's handling of a roof leak.
The landlord's complaint handling.
Our decision (determination):

There was reasonable redress in the landlord's handling of a roof leak.
There was service failure in the landlord's complaint handling.
We have made orders for the landlord to put things right.

Summary of reasons

The landlord's handling of a roof leak.

There were significant delays in the landlord completing the repairs to the roof. The landlord did not provide regular updates to the resident. It has now completed the work and it acknowledged in its stage 2 complaints response that the delays had been unreasonable. It identified learning and said how it would improve things in the future. It offered £900 compensation which we consider to be reasonable in line with our remedies guidance. This is because there were significant delays and the matter had a detrimental effect on the resident.

The landlord's complaint handling

The landlord issued its stage 2 response outside of the timescales in its complaints process. It did not acknowledge the delay, despite the resident needing to chase the response.

£950 compensation offered and accepted by complainant

A.2 APPENDIX A

Housing Ombudsman Landlord Performance Report

In May 2025 the Housing Ombudsman published a report on the Council's performance as a housing landlord. Such reports are usually published where there have been more than five findings against the landlord in a year. The report covered the 2024/25 financial year.

Housing Ombudsman Spotlight reports

From time to time the Housing Ombudsman publishes spotlight reports that identify trends in the complaints that are escalated to them. The reports are useful for landlords in highlighting these trends and providing guidance.

Their most recent report is a Spotlight on repairs and maintenance <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/reports/spotlight-reports/repairing-trust/>

Repairs is the biggest cause for complaints for the Council as it is for the Housing Ombudsman. The findings presented in this report resonate with the Council's own experiences. We have identified that we need to improve our performance in respect of repairs and working with members of our Tenant Panel, drawing on their experiences, we are changing our culture. Our aim is that it is easy to report a repair, that the report is acknowledged and responded to quickly and that the repair is undertaken well and within an appropriate timeframe.

Service Improvements and Learning from complaints

During 2025/26 we have observed a shift in the nature of complaints received. This has largely been around the complexity and level of challenge involved in the complaints, with some complainants clearly making use of artificial intelligence (AI) to assist them in making their complaint. The increased level of complaints has resulted in more complaints escalating to Stage 2. There have also been occasions where it has been difficult to meet the response times set out in the Complaint Handling Code.

We have continued to provide our Housing Portfolio Holder (as member responsible for complaints) with quarterly data on the complaints received. During the year we also introduced a Tenant Panel subgroup focusing on complaints and tenant satisfaction measures, that our member responsible for complaints also attends. We feel that tenant involvement and scrutiny of our complaint handling performance is important.

Reflecting on the quality of complaint responses, particularly at Stage 1, it is evident that the Council needs to become better at resolving matters at Stage 1. There needs to be a genuine review of the case at that point and a reflection on what it is that the complainant is seeking as redress. A complaint response should not be issued without that thorough assessment taking place.

The Council has been reviewing how its services are resourced and is making changes so that it has more capacity to respond effectively to complaints.

It is proposed that a sample of complaints responded to at Stage 1 will be reviewed by the Assistant Directors each month, in order to monitor thoroughness and quality. The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning will also be involved in this process.

A.2 APPENDIX A

In addition to reviewing the way in which complaints are dealt with it is important that the Council captures all complaints, however made. It is possible that there are more tenants who are dissatisfied about the services they receive and maybe are unaware of how to complain or have expressed dissatisfaction that has not been captured and responded to as a complaint.

The Council has recently joined Housemark which is an organisation specialising in data analysis. Housemark will help us to understand our data better and assist us in making service improvements.

The quarterly tenant newsletter and annual report includes details about how to complain and this information is available on the council's website. The website has recently been updated to include an online complaint form that can be fully completed and submitted online. This form is in addition to more traditional methods that remain available.

New posters have been produced that will be displayed at sheltered housing schemes and in communal areas of flats that explain how to make a complaint.

Complaints from those experiencing vulnerabilities require a special focus and is an area where the Council needs to improve. Firstly, the vulnerability needs to be recognised and then appropriate adjustments made to ensure the vulnerability is taken into account and the complaint response provided in a format that the tenant is able to understand. Information on tenant vulnerabilities and diverse needs is being gathered at tenancy sign up and for existing tenants via a rolling programme of tenancy check visits that is approximately halfway through.

Officer training in respect of complaint handling and working with those with diverse needs is something that has not been prioritised. Dedicated training will equip officers with the tools to recognise customer dissatisfaction in the first instance and then be able to provide a response that addresses the complaint. This will be addressed during 2026/27 with the provision of training for those who require it and is something the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning is fully supportive of.

The Council does not use a dedicated customer relationship management (CRM) system for housing complaints and as such is restricted in the extent to which complaint data can be analysed. It is an aspiration to develop a dedicated CRM system in the future.

A.2 Appendix B: Self-assessment form

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'</i>		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	The Council's Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy adopts the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint.
1.3	1.1 A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction, landlords must give them the choice to make a complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	Our Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy explains what an "expression of dissatisfaction" means and confirms that the complainant does not have to use the word "complaint" when expressing dissatisfaction. The policy also explains that a third party i.e. someone acting on behalf of a person or organisation receiving or seeking to receive a service from the Council (e.g. Councillor, MP, next of kin), may use the complaints process. Information is also provided about organisations that may assist a person in

				making a complaint, and staff will signpost to these where applicable.
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	Our Complaints Policy explains that a first-time request for a service or for information from the Council is not viewed as a complaint. This would be classed as a service request. However, if a request is repeated, if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue will then be logged as a complaint.
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	Our Policy states that, if a resident expresses dissatisfaction with our response to their service request, this would be classed as a complaint even if we are still handling their request.
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	We often ask residents to complete surveys – for example, after major maintenance or improvement works have been carried out.

	person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.		Tenants newsletter, Tendring Reports Response letter to transactional surveys	Any dissatisfaction expressed through these surveys would not be defined as a complaint although we will make respondents aware of how they can pursue a complaint. A revision has been made to our processes so that any tenant expressing dissatisfaction via a transactional survey is advised of how to submit a formal complaint. Regular articles are also included in our all-tenants newsletter, Tendring Reports, explaining how to complain. Information will also be included in any articles giving feedback on broader consultations, for example the TSM responses.
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Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	All complaints will be accepted unless the matter being raised is not covered under the Council's Complaints Procedure; see paragraph 2.2 below. Each complaint is considered on its individual merits and, if not accepted, the resident will be advised of the reason for this.

2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include: • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	Our Housing Complaints Policy sets out the circumstances when a complaint will not be accepted and these include: ➤ requests for a service (for example, the first time you ring to request a repair); ➤ complaints about the actions of a third party (for example, a noisy neighbour); ➤ matters where there is a separate means of resolution (for example, a Tribunal or appeals route); ➤ matters dealt with under the Council's Employment Procedures; ➤ insurance claims against the Council; ➤ requests for information; ➤ corporate complaints (complaints about any other Council service – these are dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure);

				➤ complaints that have already been investigated under this or another of the Council's complaints procedures; ➤ complaints that have been investigated by the Housing or Local Government Ombudsman; ➤ complaints made twelve months after the date the resident learned that something went wrong (unless there are exceptional circumstances why the complaint has not been made sooner); ➤ complaints relating to Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Requests; ➤ complaints about Councillors; ➤ complaints outside of the Council's jurisdiction (for example, complaints about utilities companies); ➤ complaints subject to legal proceedings; ➤ complaints about the level of rent or service charge or the amount of the rent or service charge increase; or ➤ complaints from contractors about their commercial or contractual relationships with the Council.
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue,		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	Our Housing Complaints Policy was revised in 2024 and subsequently incorporated into the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy in

	unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.			September 2025 to confirm that we now accept complaints referred to us within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of it. This time limit was previously six months. The Policy also confirms that we have discretion to accept complaints outside this timeframe where there are good reasons for doing so.
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints correspondence	All complaints will be accepted unless the matter being raised is not covered under the Council's Complaints Procedure (see para 2.2). In these circumstances, an explanation will be provided to the resident setting out why the matter is not being accepted as a complaint. The resident will also be informed of the right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman and provided with their contact details.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	All complaints will be accepted unless the matter being raised is not covered under the Council's Complaints Procedure; see paragraph 2.2 above. Each complaint is considered on its individual merits and, if not accepted, the resident will be advised of the reason for this.

				There is not a blanket approach taken to excluding complaints.
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Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	1.2 Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Website Tendring Reports Reasonable Adjustments Policy	Our Policy sets out the various ways that a complaint can be made to us and these include: ➤ by filling in our Complaints form, which is available on our website and on request from any member of staff; ➤ by raising it with any member of our staff ➤ by emailing councilhousingcomplaints@tendringdc.gov.uk ➤ by phoning 01255 686868 or the direct number of the team you have been dealing with; or ➤ by visiting our Reception at Pier Avenue in Clacton, which is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am to 1pm. We have now introduced an online complaints form. We have introduced a Tenant Panel Complaints Sub-Group where members are encouraged to investigate and provide feedback on the different channels through which complaints can be made. We regularly publish details about our complaints handling process and also publish information regarding

				the advice and support that can be provided by the Housing Ombudsman. A separate Reasonable Adjustments Policy was approved in May 2024 which specifically includes a section on complaint handling.
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.		Training delivered by Corporate Complaints Team Emails to staff Staff newsletter articles	All staff have been and continue to be made aware of the complaints procedure. This is included in the training delivered to all new staff and in team members' one-to-ones. Following the introduction of the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy, training was delivered by the Corporate Complaints Team to all Officers who are involved in complaint handling. This ensures a consistent approach throughout the Authority and across both HO and LGSCO complaints. Regular articles about complaints are included in the staff newsletter sent to all staff who deliver housing services. An online complaints form has been introduced.
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign		Quarterly quantitative reports to Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures	High volumes of complaints will not be seen as a negative. The volume of complaints received has increased significantly since the introduction of our Housing Complaints Policy and the adoption of the Housing Ombudsman's complaint definition. The volume of complaints received is reviewed following the publication of the annual TSM data.

	that residents are unable to complain.			
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Website Tenants newsletter, Tendring Reports	The Complaints Procedure is published on the Council's website and this details the two stage process and timescales. Hard copies of this Policy are available on request and information is included in our tenant's newsletter, Tendring Reports.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Website Tenants newsletter, Tendring Reports	We will regularly publish details about our complaints handling process and policy. We also publish information regarding the advice and support that can be provided by the Housing Ombudsman. Our Policy is published on our website.

3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	This is included in the Policy together with details of organisations who may be able to provide assistance, such as Citizens Advice Bureau.
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Website Tenants newsletter, Tendring Reports Posters	Each complaint acknowledgement and response advises that support and advice can be obtained from the Housing Ombudsman and provides contact details. The Ombudsman service is also publicised via posters in the Council's offices, on its website and in tenants' newsletters.

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Job descriptions	The Council's Assistant Director, Corporate Policy and Support is the Council's Corporate Complaints Officer and has overall responsibility for the Corporate Complaints and for being the point of liaison with both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman service and the Housing Ombudsman. The Corporate Director (Operations and Delivery) is responsible for the effective operation of the complaints procedure within their area of responsibility. Following the revision of the Housing Ombudsman's Code in 2022, a stand-alone Housing Complaints Policy was

				introduced and the Assistant Director – Housing and Environment is responsible for ensuring that complaints are dealt with in accordance with the Complaints Procedure. Complaints are received and logged by the Business Support Officer (Housing and Environment) and are then allocated to officers as follows: • Stage 1 complaints – the complaint is allocated to the relevant service Senior Officer or Manager. • Stage 2 complaints – since the introduction of the joint Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy, the complaint is investigated on behalf of the Council’s Corporate Director – Operations and Delivery. The Investigating Officer will not be the same person that investigated the complaint under Stage 1 to ensure that their investigation is independent and objective. Reminders are sent in relation to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints to ensure resolution within the stated timeframes.
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Job descriptions	The officer responsible for recording complaints has access to staff at all levels. However, the resolution of complaints and response rests with service managers and / or the Corporate Director – Operations and Delivery, depending on the Stage of the complaint.

4.3	1.3 Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and are resourced to handle complaints effectively.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Job descriptions Emails / training for staff Staff newsletter	We ensure that all relevant staff are aware of this policy and have the skills and knowledge to implement it and its associated procedures. Key messages regarding the prioritisation of complaint handling were delivered during training for all staff involved in complaint handling following the introduction of the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy and are disseminated to staff via team meetings and individual meetings.
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Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	A combined Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy is in place, introduced in September 2025, and residents are not treated differently if they complain.
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	Our Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy states that the Council will try to resolve complaints informally wherever possible. Circumstances may warrant an informal complaint to proceed to Stage 1 of the formal complaints process. Where a review of a Stage 1 decision is requested, reconsideration of the decision is carried out at Stage 2 of the complaints process. The Complaints Procedure states that the complaint must be

				acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt by the Council.
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	The Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy comprises only two stages.
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints correspondence Standard practice Relevant contract documentation	In the majority of cases, our complaint response – even if relating to a contractor – will be handled by the Council. Residents would not be expected to go via two separate complaints processes.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Standard practice	See the comment at 5.4 above.
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Standard practice	The acknowledgement sent at Stages 1 and 2 sets out the Council's understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking, also known as the complaint definition.
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Response letters sent	If any aspects of the complaint do not fall within the landlord's responsibility, this will be clearly set out in the acknowledgement or response sent, and the complainant will be advised who that element of their complaint should be referred to.

				Where a complaint crosses into another service, where possible, a single combined response is issued.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: - deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; - give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; - take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and - consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	Our Housing Complaints Policy includes the following complaint handling principles ➤ Conduct the investigation in an impartial manner ➤ Deal with the complaint on its individual merits ➤ Aim to resolve complaints at the earliest stage possible ➤ Act independently and have an open mind ➤ Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest ➤ Consider all information and evidence carefully ➤ Keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter ➤ Give the complainant and anyone who is subject to a complaint a fair chance to set out their position ➤ Not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors ➤ Keep the complainant updated about the progress of the investigation ➤ Send a response when the answer to the complaint is known and not when outstanding actions to address the issue are completed.

				➤ Advise the complainant of their right to seek advice from the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout the complaints process ➤ Advise the complainant of their right to escalate a complaint and not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint ➤ Keep a record of all complaints and the outcomes at each stage
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Email reminders to staff Complaints correspondence	All investigating officers are aware of the requirement to agree any time extensions required with the complainant and to provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Reasonable Adjustments Policy	A separate Reasonable Adjustments Policy was approved in May 2024. This confirms that a record will be kept of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Reasonable adjustments will be kept under active review.
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	The Council will not refuse to escalate any complaint unless it has valid reasons to do so.

5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Housing complaints database and supporting folders	All records relating to individual complaints are retained, in line with the Council's Retention Policy. This includes the original complaint, all subsequent correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any relevant supporting documentation.
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	Our Corporate & Housing Complaints Policy aims to ensure that complaints are resolved at the earliest stage possible using available remedies, as appropriate.
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy	A separate Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy was approved in May 2024 and implemented. This sets out what is defined as unacceptable behaviour and the action the Council can take in response to this, as well as the review mechanisms in place.
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy	This has been taken into account in the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour policy.

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint records Vulnerability Policy	Our Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy aims to ensure that complaints are resolved at the earliest stage possible using available remedies, as appropriate. Most complaints are able to be resolved at Stage 1. A separate Vulnerability Policy has also been developed.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints database and records Vulnerability Policy	Complaints are logged and acknowledged within five working days of the complaint being received. A complaints database records the complaints received, together with a summary of the complaint and applicable timescales. The acknowledgement will identify who will be responsible for investigating the complaint and the target date for response. The acknowledgement will also set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcome the resident is expecting.
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint database and records	Our Housing Complaints Policy was amended in 2024 to reflect this change in response times. This has since been incorporated into the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy.
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint database and records	The investigating officer will be responsible for deciding whether an extension to the applicable timescale for response is required and for informing the complainant. Any extension will not exceed 10 working days unless there is a good reason for this and the reason(s) is clearly explained to the resident.

	reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.			In 2025/26, 93.6% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within the timescales set out in the Code without the use of the permitted extension period, that is within 10 working days of the acknowledgement being sent.
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Individual complaint responses	This information is included in the correspondence informing the resident of the deadline extension. This information is also included in the acknowledgement of the complaint.
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints records	The complaint response letter is sent as soon as the answer to the complaint is known. The Investigating Officer or someone nominated on their behalf is responsible for ensuring that outstanding actions are tracked and that updates are provided to the complainant.
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints records	The Investigating Officer is responsible for ensuring that all points raised in the complaint definition are addressed and for providing clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence Email reminders to staff	This information is included in the Policy to ensure that complainants know how additional issues raised will be dealt with. This will also be confirmed in correspondence to the complainant.

	the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.			
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints correspondence Email reminders to staff	The specified requirements for Stage 1 responses are confirmed in the Policy. Staff responsible for responding to complaints are reminded of these requirements when the initial complaint is sent to them for investigation.

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence Email reminders to staff	Our Policy states that, if a complainant is unhappy with the initial response received to their complaint, they should contact us and ask for their complaint to be escalated to Stage 2. They do not have to explain or give a reason for requesting that a complaint is escalated to Stage 2.

				We will only refuse to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 if we have a valid reason for doing so and, if this is the case, we will always provide an explanation.
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint database and records	Complaints are logged and acknowledged within five working days of the complaint being received. A complaints database records the complaints received, together with a summary of the complaint and applicable timescales. The acknowledgement will identify who will be responsible for investigating the complaint and the target date for response. The acknowledgement will also set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcome the resident is expecting.
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence Email reminders to staff	Our Policy states that, if a complainant is unhappy with the initial response received to their complaint, they should contact us and ask for their complaint to be escalated to Stage 2. They do not have to explain or give a reason for requesting that a complaint is escalated to Stage 2.
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	Stage 2 complaints will be investigated on behalf of the Council's Corporate Director – Operations and Delivery. The Investigating Officer will not be the same person that investigated the complaint under Stage 1 to ensure that their investigation is independent and objective.

6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	Our Housing Complaints Policy has been amended to reflect this change in response times. This has since been incorporated into the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy.
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	The investigating officer will be responsible for deciding whether an extension to the applicable timescale for response is required and for informing the complainant. Any extension will not exceed 20 working days unless there is a good reason for this and the reason(s) is clearly explained to the resident. In 2025/26, 91.7% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within the timescales set out in the Code without the use of the permitted extension period, that is within 20 working days of the acknowledgement being sent.
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	This information is included in the correspondence informing the resident of the deadline extension. This information is also included in the acknowledgement of the complaint.
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints correspondence	The complaint response letter is sent as soon as the answer to the complaint is known. The Investigating Officer or someone nominated on their behalf is responsible for ensuring that outstanding actions are tracked and that updates are provided to the complainant
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	The Investigating Officer is responsible for ensuring that all points raised in the complaint definition are addressed and for providing clear

	policy, law and good practice where appropriate.			reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: - the complaint stage; - the complaint definition; - the decision on the complaint; - the reasons for any decisions made; - the details of any remedy offered to put things right; - details of any outstanding actions; and - details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence Email reminders to staff	The specified requirements for Stage 2 responses are confirmed in the Policy. Staff responsible for responding to complaints are reminded of these requirements when the initial complaint is sent to them for investigation
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence	Our Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy is a two-stage process.

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence Housing Compensation Policy	Our Policy includes a section on Putting things right and this states: Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the

	• Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been a delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices.			actions we have already taken or intend to take to put things right. These can include: ➤ Acknowledging where things have gone wrong ➤ Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons ➤ Taking action if there has been a delay ➤ Reconsidering or changing a decision ➤ Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum ➤ Providing a financial remedy ➤ Changing policies, procedures or practice. Complaints can be resolved at any stage of our complaints policy. If we uphold your complaint you can expect an apology and for us to put things right quickly. We may also propose one or more of the above actions. The aim of these actions is to put you back in the position you were in before the problem occurred and make amends for any loss you may have suffered as a result. Although we will consider each complaint on its merits we will try to ensure we offer similar remedies for similar situations. Remedies may include a review of our practices and procedures to ensure that the same thing does not happen again, or we may take a specific action.
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				A Housing Compensation Policy was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in April 2025 and is now in operation. This takes into account the Housing Ombudsman's guidance on remedies.
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints handling practice Complaint correspondence Housing Compensation Policy	In considering appropriate remedies, the Investigating Officer will consider • What outcome does the complainant want to achieve by complaining? What has gone wrong? • Can action be taken to put the person affected back in the position they would have been in if nothing had gone wrong? • Is there an actual quantifiable financial loss, such as costs incurred or payments not received? • How severe was any other impact in terms of distress, harm or risk? • Overall, is the remedy proportionate, appropriate and reasonable?
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaint correspondence Housing Compensation Policy	The complaint response letter will clearly set out any remedial actions and the timescales for these. The Investigating officer will then be responsible for ensuring that the proposed remedy is followed through to completion. A record of the remedy will be recorded on the complaints database.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.		Complaint handling practice Housing Compensation Policy	This guidance is taken into account when deciding on remedies. This guidance was also taken into account in the writing of the Council's

				Housing Compensation Policy that was adopted by the Council's Cabinet in April 2025.
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Section 8: Self assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a) the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b) a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c) any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d) the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e) any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f) any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Cabinet report Complaints self-assessment Complaint performance report	A self-assessment is carried out each year to ensure that our complaints handling policy and processes remains in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complain Handling Code An annual report will also be prepared and presented to the Council's Cabinet no later than the end of June covering these requirements to ensure transparency and enable scrutiny and challenge

8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Cabinet report Complaints self-assessment Complaint performance report	This report will be presented to the Council's Cabinet no later than the end of June each year and will be published on the Council's website, together with any comments made by Cabinet. The required documents and confirmation will be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September each year.
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Complaints self-assessment	A self-assessment will be carried out following any significant restructure, merger and / or change in procedures.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.		Relevant Ombudsman investigation Complaints self-assessment	If required to do so, this will be carried out.
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website. Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	This is included in our Complaints Policy and will be actioned, if and when applicable.

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Quarterly performance reports Annual complaint performance report	Since 1 April 2024, the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing has received quarterly updates on complaint performance including whether any service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from complaints. This information is also included in

			Service meetings	the annual complaint report presented to the Council's Cabinet. Complaint handling has also been a regular agenda item on the regular meetings that the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing has with housing managers that started in April 2024.
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Quarterly performance reports Annual complaint performance report Service meetings	Since 1 April 2024, the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing has received quarterly updates on complaint performance including whether any service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from complaints. This information is also included in the annual complaint report presented to the Council's Cabinet. Complaint handling has also been a regular agenda item on the regular meetings that the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing has with housing managers that started in April 2024.
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.		Website Tenants' newsletter, Tendring Reports Tenant Panel meeting minutes Staff newsletters	Updates on the Council's performance in handling housing complaints will be included on the Council's website and in its tenant newsletters. Regular items will also be included on the agenda for the Tenants Panel.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.		Complaint performance reports Service meetings Quarterly performance reports	This role has been carried out by the Assistant Director – Housing and Environment who will assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision.
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy	The Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing is the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

	have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').		Service meetings Housing dashboard information	and has lead responsibility to support a positive complaint handling culture. The MRC will receive quarterly quantitative and quantitative reports and will discuss issues relating to complaints performance at monthly meetings with housing managers.
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Quarterly performance reports Annual complaint performance report Service meetings	An annual report will be presented will be presented by the MRC to the Council's Cabinet to provide insight on our complaint handling performance
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Annual complaint performance report Quarterly performance reports	An annual report will be presented to the Council's Cabinet no later than the end of June covering these requirements to ensure transparency and enable scrutiny and challenge
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints,		Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy Staff newsletter Job descriptions / one to ones	These objectives are included in our Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy and reinforced to staff via various methods of internal communications.

	working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.			
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