

To: Cabinet

Date: 18 June 2025

Report of: Director of Housing

Title of Report: Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report 2024/25

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To approve the Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report (Landlord Services) 2024/25
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Well-Run Council
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:
Agree the content of the Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report (Landlord Services) 2024/25 in Appendix 1. Provide a formal response to the Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report 2024/25.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report (Landlord Services) 2024/25	No
Appendix 2	Housing Ombudsman Code Complaint Handling Self-Assessment	No
Appendix 3	Draft response from Cabinet	No

Introduction and background

1. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a legal duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor social housing landlords' compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
2. From 1st April 2024, compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code became a statutory requirement of all social housing landlords, including Local Authorities with housing stock.
3. The Complaint Handling Code requires that landlords must produce an Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report for scrutiny and challenge, as well as completing and publishing an annual self-assessment against compliance with the Code. This must be published by 30th September.
4. The Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report (Landlord Services) 2024/25 is set out in Appendix 1. This report covers all complaints we have handled from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 that relate to our services as a landlord and/or would come under the scope of the Housing Ombudsman. It does not include complaints about other Council services which would come under the scope of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.
5. The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code states:

"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 the 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*
 - f. Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord*

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 section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this."
6. Whilst the report needs to be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman, they have instructed that the report should be written in a format to present the information to residents.
7. For the purpose of the annual report, the Housing Ombudsman considers that Cabinet is the governing body.
8. The report seeks to provide information on the performance of the Council's complaint handling relating to the landlord function, in terms of the volume, outcomes and timeliness of the responses. In addition, the report seeks to identify themes, trends and lessons learnt that will drive service improvements.

9. The Report for 2023/24 was approved by Cabinet on 16th October 2024, and was published on our website alongside Cabinet's response and our self-assessment.
10. Our self-assessment was amended earlier this year and reviewed by the Housing & Homelessness Panel on 6th March 2025.

Report Structure

11. The report covers the role of the Housing Ombudsman, an explanation of our complaints process, as well as performance data and analysis for complaints handled by OCC and ODS relating to the housing landlord function.
12. The report also covers details of engagement with the Housing Ombudsman, including the determinations received during 2024/25.
13. Further analysis of trends and challenges is also provided, as well as learning, service development, and improvements made.

Finally, the report sets out further improvements plans for 2025/26 and beyond.

Key Findings

The key points to be noted for the response are:

- a. An overall drop in the number of Stage 1 complaints received, due to a large decrease in the number handled by ODS. This is attributed to increased use of technology to better communicate with tenants and identify issues promptly after a repair, as well as a greater understanding of what should be considered a complaint, and what is within their remit.
- b. An increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints handled by the Council, some of which can be attributed to taking on cases ODS would otherwise have handled.
- c. For ODS, of the complaints responded to within 2024/25 at Stage 1 and 2, they responded to 100% of those within target.
- d. For complaints handled by the Council within that period, 48.6% were responded to within target at Stage 1, and 83.8% at Stage 2. This was due to vacancies within the Customer Care & Complaints team, staff absence in the team and in other service areas, and the increased volume of enquiries.
- e. The report details steps we have taken to prevent this issue in future, including additional staff within the Customer Care & Complaints team, and additional staff in other teams we work with.
- f. The report also details improvements made to our services following complaints in 2024/25. This is not comprehensive as the focus of the Customer Care & Complaints team has had to be on investigating and responding to complaints, however we have been able to ensure learning from the most serious complaints via multi-disciplinary sessions. During 25-26, with a more stable staff team, we will be putting a work programme together that will look to increase our learning and service improvements, capturing intelligence and thematic issues to put in place fundamental service improvements that will tackle the root cause of issues.

Requirement of Cabinet

14. There is a requirement for the governing body (Cabinet) to provide a response to the Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report and for that response to be incorporated within the final report or published alongside it.

Financial implications

15. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal issues

16. There is a legal requirement to have an annual complaints performance and service improvement report approved by the governing body (Cabinet) and for the report to be published. A response by Cabinet to the report will be published with the report. The report, Cabinet's response, and the self-assessment must also be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman.

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None
