

REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 5
DATE OF MEETING:	13 AUGUST 2026	
REPORT FROM:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	DELEGATED
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	JASON DHESI HEAD OF HOUSING	OPEN
SUBJECT:	HOUSING OMBUDSMAN REPORT AND GOVERNING BODY RESPONSE	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS02

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 To consider the Housing Ombudsman Report 2025/6 and the complaints received by Housing Service, together with the Service's proposals for improvement and to provide a response for the Finance and Management Committee to consider when it considers the Council's Annual Submission to the Housing Ombudsman.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 Landlords are required to provide an annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman to demonstrate their compliance against its' Complaint Handling Code.
- 2.2 The Council must submit a Governing Body Response to its annual complaint's performance and service improvement report.
- 2.3 This report is the annual complaints performance and service improvement report, and the Committees comments will be reported to the Finance and Management Committee.
- 2.4 The Finance and Management Committee will consider this report, this Committee's response, the Council's Self-Assessment against the Code and the Council's Complaints Policy and will approve the Council's annual Submission to the Housing Ombudsman.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Housing Ombudsman launched its' Complaint Handling Code which became a statutory requirement for all social landlords from April 2024.

3.2 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code covers the following areas
There are 9 sections of the Code:

- **Definition** – what is a complaint?
- **Exclusions** – what will not be treated as a complaint
- **Accessibility** – making it easy to make a complaint- meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and offering reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- **Staff** – landlords should have a designated person or team to respond to complaints
- **Process** – sets out a clear 2 stage complaints process
- **Stages** – sets out the timescales to provide a response at both stages including the use of extensions
- **Putting things right** – considering the impact on the resident and setting out what will be done to put things right
- **Self-assessment** – landlords must complete an annual self-assessment of their compliance against the Code
- **Scrutiny** – appointing a Member Responsible for Complaints to have responsibility and accountability for complaints

3.3 The Housing Ombudsman requires an annual submission, which needs to have been considered and approved by the organisations governing body, which for the Council is the Finance and Management Committee.

3.4 The Finance and Management Committee requires the input of this Committee in relation to the assessment of the complaints and the improvement proposals.

3.5 Housing Ombudsman Complaints – 2025-6

During the financial year 2025-6, 4 complaints were received and 7 complaints were determined by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to the Council's Housing Service

Date complaint Received	Date of Determination	Brief description of complaint	Outcome
23 July 24	14 Aug 25	Drug Related Nuisance	Service failure in: handling of resident's reports of ASB reports
30 Jan 25	7 May 25	Condensation damp and mould, Complaints Handling	Maladministration in: complaint handling; damp & mould
13 Feb 25	7 Oct 25	Leaks, Complaints Handling	Severe maladministration in: handling of repairs. Service failure in: complaint handling.

31 Mar 25	30 Jan 26	Leaks	Maladministration in: handling of reports of leaks & repairs. No maladministration in: complaint handling.
23 Apr 25	23 Apr 25	Personal (e.g. harassment / discrimination), Staff conduct, Counter-allegations against complainant	Outside HO jurisdiction
28 May 25	26 Sep 25	ASB, Leaks, Transfer Application/Mobility Schemes	Maladministration in: handling of repairs. No maladministration in: handling of resident's reports of ASB; handling of resident's housing transfer requests.
25 Jul 25	24 Oct 25	Condensation damp and mould, Complaints Handling	Maladministration in: handling of resident's reports damp & mould reports. No maladministration in: complaint handling
31 Mar 26	undetermined	Asbestos/MMF	Awaited

3.6 **Learning/service improvements**

A series of service improvements and Policy updates have been implemented in response to the findings to date. A new Damp and Mould Policy were approved by the Housing and Community Services Committee in August 2025, alongside an updated Repairs Policy developed in consultation with the Tenants Voice Group and endorsed at the same committee meeting.

A revised Damp and Mould process has been introduced, fully aligned with current guidance and compliant with Awaab's Law. This includes the requirement to provide tenants with a clear action plan and to undertake follow up visits to ensure that remedial works have been completed effectively. Staff involved in damp and mould inspections have received comprehensive training on the new process and the importance of accurate and consistent record keeping.

Recent key appointments within the Housing service have strengthened leadership capacity, supporting greater consistency, transparency, and service improvement. Communication standards have also been reinforced through team meetings and toolbox talks, emphasising the need to save correspondence such as letters and emails within internal systems.

In monthly meetings, the impact of the commencement of the bi-annual tenancy surveys has generated significant additional work across all disciplines. We have raised this with Wates in terms of the repairs identified through the visits and have finessed the work sheet which Housing Officers work through with tenants as part of the tenancy audit. Most importantly this process has enabled us to capture, and support needs our tenants may have so that we are better able to tailor services to meet their needs and hopefully increase our tenant satisfaction levels.

3.7 During the financial year 2025/26 72 complaints were received about the Housing Service of which 16 progressed to a stage 2 complaint. Complaints were received under the following themes -

- Corporate Complaint Tier 1 – 72
- Housing 1
- Adaptations to a property (Council), Housing - Lack of communication - Decisions 1
- Damp & Mould 9
- Damp & Mould, Housing - Delays in repairs 2
- Delays in adaptations for a property 1
- Delays in repairs 13
- Delays in the application process for properties 2
- Issues with a Contractor 3
- Issues with a Contractor, Housing - Issues with repairs 2
- Issues with a Contractor, Planning - Lack of communication 1
- Issues with repairs 3
- Issues with repairs, Housing - Tenancy Management 2
- Lack of communication 3
- Other 7
- Planned Works 5
- Staffing complaints 3
- Tenancy Management 4
- Council - Anti Social Behaviour 2
- Council - Delays 2
- Council - Operational Issues 1
- Pest Control 1
- Rent 1
- Repair Issue 3

Corporate Complaint Tier 2 16

- Damp & Mould 2
- Damp & Mould, Housing - Delays in repairs 1
- Delays in repairs, Operational Services - Delays in responses 2
- Issues with a Contractor, Housing - Issues with repairs 2
- Issues with repairs 2
- Issues with repairs, Housing - Tenancy Management, Revenues - Council Tax/Business Rates - Decisions 1
- Lack of communication, Housing - Planned Works 1
- Planned Works, Housing - Tenancy Management 1

- Tenancy Management 2
- Delays in processes 1
- Staffing complaints 1

- 3.8 Analysis of complaints highlights the need for continued focus on reducing delays and improving the repairs service. In response, the Housing Service Transformation Plan and restructure significantly increased capacity across both the administrative and operational responsive repairs teams, strengthening the Council ability to deliver a more efficient and effective service.

In addition, the development of the 30-year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and the 5-year Asset Management Plan have provided a clear strategic framework for future investment and service delivery. Together, these plans will support a shift from a predominantly reactive approach to a more proactive and planned model of asset management and maintenance. Tenancy Audits commenced in September 2025 as the Council aim to update our record and capture protected characteristics. Enabling us to tailor the service we provide to meet tenants need. This transformation is expected to improve the quality and reliability of services, enhance the condition of tenants' homes, and ultimately increase overall tenant satisfaction.

- 3.9 The need to evidence learning from complaints is also a requirement of the Regulator for Social Housing, and so a tracker will be implemented to demonstrate organisational learning and change resulting from complaints.

4.0 Financial Implications / s151 comments

- 4.1 When the Housing Ombudsman is considering complaints which have been made against a social landlord, if they uphold the complaint, they can require the landlord to both undertake remedial work and pay the tenant compensation.
- 4.2 For the financial year 2025-2026 the Council has been ordered to pay £3,900 in compensation.
- 4.3 The Council's Housing Compensation Policy allows for local settlements to settle complaints and during 2025-2026 the Council budget was £25,598.

5.0 Legal Implications / Monitoring Officer Comments

- 5.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 placed a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code. Therefore, the Housing Ombudsman is required to ensure all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling, regardless of their size and operating model. Failure to comply with the Code and annual Submission requirements will be reported to the Housing Regulator.

6.0 Council Implications

Employment Implications / Head of Paid Services Comments

6.1 None arising directly from this Report.

Council Plan Implications

6.2 None arising directly from this Report.

Risk Impact

6.3 There are both operational risks in terms of remedial works and financial sanctions which can be applied by the Housing Ombudsman to social landlords, when a determination is made to uphold the complaint.

6.4 If a social landlord could not evidence compliance with their Complaint Handling Code, pecuniary and operational requirements could be placed on the organisation. This risk and failure to report to the Housing Ombudsman can be linked to SR15 Failure to meet Regulatory Standards for Housing.

Local Government Reorganisation Implications

6.5 None

7.0 Community Impact

Consultation

7.1 None

Equality and Diversity Impact

7.2 Equality and diversity implications are considered as part of the Housing Ombudsman's investigations. An Equality Monitoring Form is also completed by tenants and Service Users in the Council's complaints process. Any complaints due to lack inclusion of inclusion will be reported in the service improvement proposals above.

Social Value Impact

7.3 The role of the Housing Ombudsman is to investigate complaints about social landlords from tenants. Its' aim is to get social landlords to put things right if they have gone wrong and if this has affected tenants directly. There is also an expectation, echoed by the Regulatory for Social Housing, that social landlords will learn from complaints and seek to change how they deliver services etc. in response to those complaints.

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.4 Improving the quality, safety and thermal performance of the Council's housing stock through timely repairs, effective diagnosis and planned investment supports a more sustainable approach to asset management by reducing the need for repeated reactive visits, avoiding unnecessary material use and helping to extend the life of building components.

The move towards a more proactive and planned approach, supported by the 30-year HRA Business Plan, the 5-year Asset Management Plan and ongoing tenancy audits, will enable the Council to use stock condition information more effectively when prioritising investment. This will help ensure that works are targeted where they will deliver the greatest benefit for tenants, improve energy efficiency where practicable, reduce waste, and support the Council's wider environmental objectives while maintaining compliance with statutory housing standards.

8.0 Background Papers

None

9.0 Appendices

None