

## Self-assessment against the requirements of the Code

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<b>1: Definition of a service request and complaint</b>	We recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint, and these are defined in our policies and procedures.	Yes - This can be found in the Complaints Policy on our website: <a href="#">Complaints Process</a>	<p>This is set out in the Complaints Policy (latest version adopted 17 July 2024).</p> <p>The definition of a Service Request used in the Joint Complaint Handling Code is used by the Complaints Policy in Section 1 (Definition of a Service Request).</p> <p>As the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman use slightly different definitions of a complaint (one refers to residents, the other refers to individuals) both definitions are contained within the Policy in Section 2 (Definition of a Complaint).</p>

<p><b>2: Exclusions</b></p>	<p>Our complaints policy sets out circumstances where we would not consider a complaint. These are reasonable and do not deny individuals access to redress.</p>	<p>Yes - Complaints Policy, Section 3 Matters Falling Outside the Scope of the Complaints Procedure, Paragraph 3.2 - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a></p>	<p>The relevant extract of our Complaints Policy identifies six areas where the Complaints Policy will not apply. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the resident has known about the issue for more than 12 months unless there is good reason for the delay or if there are safeguarding or health and safety issues.</li> <li>• Something for which there is a statutory right of appeal or that can be appealed about to a tribunal (such as the Housing Benefit Appeals Service) or go to court about, unless there is a good reason the resident should not be expected to use that appeal right.</li> <li>• Where legal proceedings have already started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form or Particulars of Claim, have been filed at Court.</li> <li>• Matters that have already been considered under the Council's Complaints Policy or by the Ombudsman.</li> <li>• Anonymous complaints will not normally be accepted as it would not be possible for the Council to respond to them. However, the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy in consultation with the Council's Monitoring Officer will</li> </ul>
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			<p>make a decision on a case-by-case basis as to whether an anonymous complaint should be investigated further.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allegations that a Councillor has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members. There is a separate procedure for these complaints.”</li> </ul>

<p><b>3: Accessibility and awareness</b></p>	<p>We provide different channels through which individuals can make complaints. These are accessible and we can make reasonable adjustments where necessary</p>	<p>Complaints Policy, Section 4 Accessibility and Awareness - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a></p> <p>Complaints Policy, Section 6, The Complaints Procedure, Paragraph 6.2 and 6.3 - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a></p> <p>Extract from Section 6 of the Complaints Policy:</p> <p>“Complaints about a Council service can be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the on-line complaint form</li> <li>• In writing (letter or email)</li> <li>• Using the Council's Complaint leaflets (these are available at the Whitfield Reception or can be posted to the resident)</li> <li>• Via the telephone</li> <li>• In person at the Council Offices by appointment.”</li> </ul>	<p>The Council fully complies with its Public Sector Equality Duties and if a reasonable adjustment is required it will be implemented.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Complaints Policy.</p>
<p><b>4: Complaint handling resources</b></p>	<p>We have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take</p>	<p>Yes - The Corporate Services team is</p>	<p>The Council undertook a review of its resourcing for complaints in 2024, and with</p>

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	responsibility for complaint handling. Complaints are viewed as a core service and resourced accordingly.	responsible for complaint handling, liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring that complaints are reported to the Cabinet (the governing body).	effect from January 2025 increased the size of the Corporate Services complaints team.
<b>5: The complaint handling process</b>	We have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code and individuals are given the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction that meets the definition of the complaint in our policy.	Yes - Complaints Policy - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a>	The Council has a single Complaints Policy that deals with the Joint Complaint Handling Code for both Ombudsmen.  Residents will never be treated differently if they choose to raise a complaint. The Council views all complaints as an opportunity for reflection and potential service improvement.
<b>6: Complaints stages (Stage 1)</b>	We process stage 1 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	No – only partly  Complaints Policy, Section 7 Stage 1 The Complaint Handling Process, Paragraph 7.13 - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a>	The Council actively encourages resolving complaints at any stage of the complaints process having regard to the complexity of the case and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk.  The Council did not achieve 100% compliance with this target in 2024/25. It is working to achieve compliance in 2025/26 and this is addressed in the quarterly complaints reports to the governing body (Cabinet).

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<b>6: Complaints stages (Stage 2)</b>	We process stage 2 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes - Complaints Policy, Section 8 Stage 2 of the Complaint Handling Process, Paragraph 8.6 - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a>	Extract from Complaints Policy:  "The Council will issue a final response to the stage 2 WITHIN 20 WORKING DAYS of the complaint being acknowledged."
<b>7: Putting things right</b>	When something has gone wrong we take action to put things right.	Yes - Complaints Policy, Section 9 Putting Things Right, Paragraph 9.1 and 9.2 - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a>	Extract from the Complaints Policy:  "These can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A written apology;</li> <li>• Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;</li> <li>• Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;</li> <li>• Taking action if there has been delay;</li> <li>• Reconsidering or changing a decision (where it is possible to do so);</li> <li>• Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;</li> <li>• Providing a financial remedy;</li> <li>• Providing additional training for staff;</li> <li>• Changing policies, procedures or practices; and/or</li> </ul> Taking some other form of action."

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<b>8: Performance reporting and self-assessment</b>	We produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes a self-assessment against the Code.	<p>Yes - Complaints Policy, Section 11 Performance Reporting, Paragraph 11.1 - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a></p> <p>The Annual Self-Assessment is also published on our website - <a href="#">Complaints</a></p>	<p>This information is contained within the report received by the Governance Committee at its meeting in December each year.</p> <p>The Council's Constitution assigns responsibility to the Governance Committee for the following:</p> <p>"To monitor complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations"</p> <p>Additionally, during 2024/25 complaints performance at Stage 2 was reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the quarterly Strategic Performance Dashboard.</p> <p>For 2025/26 (Q1 reporting onwards), a dedicated quarterly complaints performance report will be submitted to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>

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<b>9: Scrutiny &amp; Oversight</b>	We have appropriate senior leadership and governance oversight of the complaints process and performance.	Yes - Complaints Policy, Section 11 Performance Reporting, Paragraph 11.1 - <a href="#">Complaints Process</a>	<p>This information is contained within the report received by the Governance Committee at its meeting in December each year.</p> <p>The Council's Constitution assigns responsibility to the Governance Committee for the following:</p> <p>"To monitor complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations"</p> <p>Additionally, during 2024/25 complaints performance at Stage 2 was reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the quarterly Strategic Performance Dashboard.</p> <p>For 2025/26 (Q1 reporting onwards), a dedicated quarterly complaints performance report will be submitted to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>