

2023/24 Self-assessment against the requirements of the Complaint Handling Code

N.B: Yellow highlight indicates further consideration and action to be taken.

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
1: Definition of a service request and complaint	Required Action:	To recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint, and these are defined in our policies and procedures.
1.1 Effective complaint handling enables individuals to be heard and understood. The starting point for this is a shared understanding of what constitutes a service request and what constitutes a complaint. In most cases organisations should be able to put things right through normal service delivery processes.	Yes	The council recognises that there is a difference between a service request and a complaint. We adhere to the Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint. Therefore, we consider a complaint to be: “An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.” Therefore, a tenant or resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such.
1.2 A service request may be defined as: ‘a request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision.’	Yes	A service request is a request from a customer to the council requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but they will be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.
1.3 This provides organisations with opportunities to resolve matters to an individual’s satisfaction before they become a complaint.	Yes	A complaint is raised when a customer expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request. The council will not stop its efforts to address the service request even if a complaint is raised.



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1.4 A complaint may be defined as: ‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.’	Yes	This definition has been adopted within the council’s complaints policy.
1.5 An individual should not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative should still be handled in line with the organisation’s complaints policy.	Yes	The council recognises within its complaints policy that a tenant or resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Any individual or organisation that uses or receives a council service and feels disadvantaged, or they are about to be disadvantaged, through the actions of the council may make a complaint. A complaint can be made on behalf of the service user or other third party.
1.6 Organisations should recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This should be set out in their complaints policy.	Yes	The council recognises that there is a difference between a service request and a complaint. We adhere to the Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman definition of a Complaint and is outlined in the council’s complaint policy.
1.7 Service requests are not complaints but may contain expressions of dissatisfaction. Organisations should have the opportunity to deal with a service request before a complaint is made. A complaint may be raised when the individual expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. An organisation should not stop its efforts to address the service request if the individual complains.	Yes	Service requests are not complaints, but they will be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly. A complaint is raised when a customer expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if handling the service request remains ongoing. The council will not stop its efforts to address the service request if the customer complains.
1.8 Service requests should be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.	No	This currently sits outside the policy, however, service requests should be recorded, monitored, and reviewed by individual Services. This is not consistent across all services.
2: Exclusions	Required Action:	Complaints policy sets out circumstances where they would not be considered a complaint. These are reasonable and do not deny individuals access to redress.

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2.1 An organisation should accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If the organisation decides not to accept a complaint, it should be able to evidence its reasoning. Each complaint should be considered on its own merits.	Yes	If the Council decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will 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.
2.2 Organisations should accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring, or the individual becoming aware of the issue. Organisations should consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	The council will normally only accept complaints made within twelve months of the incident or circumstances that led to the complaint. However, discretion to accept complaints made outside this time may be applied.
2.3 A complaints policy should set out the circumstances in which a matter might not be considered or escalated. Organisations should ensure that these are reasonable and should not deny individuals access to redress.	Yes	Complaints will be accepted unless there is a valid reason not to do so. Within the council's complaints policy, there a list of the reason why a complaint may not be investigated.
2.4 If an organisation decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation should be provided to the individual setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.	Yes	If the Council decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will 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. Templated letters have been created to assist this process.
2.5 Organisations should not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they should consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	If the Council decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided.
3: Accessibility and awareness	Required Action:	To provide different channels through which individuals can make complaints. These are accessible and can make reasonable adjustments where necessary

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<p>3.1 Organisations should make it easy for individuals to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Organisations must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of individuals who may need to access the complaints process.</p>	Yes	<p>The council is committed to working within the Equality Framework for Local Government and will make facilities available to assist customers in making a complaint including translation facilities, home visits and information being made available in other formats as necessary. Complaints can be made in person, over the telephone, in writing, by email and digitally. All information relating to the council's complaint policy and procedures is available digitally or printed copies can be requested and collected from Town Halls or posted.</p>
<p>3.2 Individuals should be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff should be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the organisation.</p>	No	<p>This is currently a work in progress. There is full training and workshops planned with line managers and staff to educate and develop this understanding. It is recommended that all staff have an annual refresher course which forms part of the council's online Learning Zone. If a complaint cannot be resolved at the point of service delivery the Service concerned will deal with it as a formal complaint.</p>
<p>3.3 High volumes of complaints should 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 that individuals are unable to complain.</p>	No	<p>The council has a clear and accessible path to its complaints policy and procedures; however, little is done to promote this widely. The council will see a natural increase in the level of complaints following the adoption of the new government complaints policy and the completion of staff training by end of 24/25 Q2. It is recommended that the council explores further ways to promote to residents and tenants regarding the complaints policy. One suggestion is to include this with the annual council tax letters. The council will regularly promote the policy and the complaints process through available media channels (social media, newsletters etc.)</p>




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3.4 Organisations should make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all individuals. This should detail the process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy should also be published on the organisation's website.	Yes	The council is committed to working within the Equality Framework for Local Government and will make facilities available to assist customers in making a complaint including translation facilities, home visits and information being made available in other formats as necessary. The council has a clear and accessible path to its complaints policy and procedures.
3.5 The policy should explain how the organisation will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	The policy explains how the council will publicise details of its complaints procedures, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code. It states - This policy will be available on the council's main website and the Council Housing specific page. The council will regularly promote the policy and the complaints process through available print and media channels (social media, newsletters etc.).
3.6 Organisations should give individuals the opportunity to have a suitable representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the organisation.	Yes	A complaint can be made on behalf of the service user by a councillor, advice worker, solicitor or other third party. A third-party consent form should be signed and returned to the council prior to commencing any investigation. Elected members are encouraged to use the complaints procedure on behalf of their constituents. Complaints raised by elected members are subject to the same requirements for consent. Complaints received anonymously will be considered by the Service concerned, any investigation being proportionate to the potential outcome.
3.7 Organisations should provide individuals with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	This covered in all templated letters. The complainant will be advised of any further steps which they may take if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the review of their complaint. In that they may refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman.

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
3.8 Where an organisation asks for feedback about its services through a survey, it should provide details of how individuals can complain so they can pursue any dissatisfaction if they so wish.	No	This is currently not common practise, however, steps to include as described will be considered where appropriate.
4: Complaint handling resources	Required Action:	To have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. Complaints are viewed as a core service and resourced accordingly.
4.1 Organisations should have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the relevant Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent).	No	Our Customer Service team are equipped at handling complaints and assigning to relevant services where appropriate. Our Governance team liaise and send reports directly to the relevant Ombudsman. However, it is recommended that each service has an overall officer responsible for the overseeing and ensuring the correct handling of complaints within that service.
4.2 Anyone responding to a complaint should have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They should also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes	This is standard practice within the council but will need monitoring to ensure all elements are met.
4.3 Organisations are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff should be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and resourced accordingly	No	This is work in progress. There is currently a training programme covering these important elements of complaint handling. It is recommended that all staff have an annual refresher course which forms part of the council's online Learning Zone and that line managers cover this area of work within their annual conversations with direct reports.
5: The complaint handling process	Required Action:	To 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.




Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
5.1 Organisations should have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code.	Yes	 Lancaster City Council Complaints
5.2 The early and local resolution of issues between organisations and individuals is key to effective complaint handling. Organisations should not have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	All frontline staff are empowered to resolve problems at the point of service delivery without recourse to the formal complaints' procedure. However, if this is escalated to a formal complaint, the council operates a two-stage system for handling complaints. Stage One handles the initial complaint and its response from the council. Whereas Stage Two is for escalating complaints should one feel unhappy with the initial Stage One response.
5.3 When an individual expresses dissatisfaction that could meet the criteria for a complaint as set out in section 1 of the Code, they should be given the opportunity to make a complaint. Organisations should recognise that individuals may be reluctant to raise complaints out of fear it may impact services they receive in future.	Yes	Lancaster City Council will deal with complaints fairly, thoroughly, and sensitively and aim to address any problems raised at the earliest stage possible. Staff will be empowered to try and solve any difficulties reported by customers without recourse to the formal procedure. However, if this cannot be resolved, then the formal complaints procedure will be explained clearly.
5.4 The person responding to the complaint should: a. clarify with the individual any aspects of the complaint they are unclear about; b. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; c. give the individual a fair chance to set out their position; d. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and e. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.	Yes	This is formally covered within the policy and the templated letters. There is a guidance on complaints manual provided for all staff.  Guidance on Complaints V.1.01.p


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5.5 Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code the organisation should inform the individual of when the response will be provided and the reason(s) for the delay.		Should an extension to the response timescale be required, the Officer responding to the complaint will inform the complainant of the expected timescale for response, the reasoning for the delay will be clearly explained and the contact details for the relevant ombudsman service. The length of the extension is at the discretion of the council but will not exceed 10 working days without good reason. Templated letters are provided.
5.6 Organisations must make reasonable adjustments for individuals where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Organisations should keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments should be kept under active review.	No	The council is committed to working within the Equality Framework for Local Government and will make facilities available to assist customers in making a complaint. However, further consideration to capture information/data if reasonable adjustments for individuals are required, will be necessary within the Granicus CRM system.
5.7 Organisations should not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to do so. Organisations should clearly set out these reasons, and they should align with the approach to exclusions set out in section 2 of the Code.	Yes	Complaints will be accepted unless there is a valid reason not to do so. Within the policy is a list of the reason why a complaint may not be investigated. If the Council decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will 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 Housing Ombudsman.
5.8 A full record should be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This should include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the individual, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports. This should be retained in line with the organisation's data retention policies.	Yes	This will be held in the Granicus system.

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5.9 Organisations should have systems in place to ensure that a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Organisations should ensure that appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation to stage 2 or the Ombudsman.	Yes	This is covered within the policy. The council will not stop its efforts to address the service request if the customer complains.
5.10 Organisations should have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from individuals and/or their representatives. Organisations should be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and should keep an individual's restrictions under regular review.	Yes	The council aims to treat all complainants fairly and will, as far as possible, ensure that the substance of any complaint is addressed. Where the council considers a complainant unreasonably persistent, it will take action to restrict their access to the council's complaints procedure. The council will notify complainants deemed unreasonably persistent of the action it proposes. The council welcomes comments but will not tolerate deceitful, abusive, offensive, threatening, or other forms of unacceptable behaviour.
5.11 Any restrictions placed on an individual's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010	Yes	The council will notify complainants deemed unreasonably persistent of the action it proposes, which may include terminating contact with them, and if required, demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010
6: Complaints stages (Stage 1)	Required Action:	Process stage 1 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.
6.1 Organisations should have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further consideration. Organisations should consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the individual is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the individual.	Yes	Covered in the policy. The officer assigned to investigate and address the complaint must establish contact with the complainant to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue/s. The council will also monitor and note any outside SLA.

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
6.2 Complaints should be acknowledged and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the complaint being received.	Yes	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters.  Stage 1 Acknowledgement L
6.3 Organisations should provide a full response to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters.  Stage 1 Response Letter - General Cou
6.4 Organisations should decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform individuals of the expected timescale for response. Any extension should be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) should be clearly explained to the individual.	Yes	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters.  Stage 1 Need more time - General Coun
6.5 When an organisation informs an individual about an extension to these timescales, they should be provided with the details of the relevant Ombudsman.	Yes	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters.
6.6 A complaint response should be provided to the individual when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions should still be tracked and actioned promptly, with appropriate updates provided to the individual.	No	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters. However, follow up to outstanding actions and their completion will need to be considered as part of Granicus phase 2 update.

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<p>6.7 Organisations should address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. Organisations should be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.</p>	Yes	<p>Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters. Complaints will be seen as an opportunity to resolve the customer’s problem and to learn from feedback. A reply to a complaint should contain: A summary of the complaint and the stage this is at. Steps taken to investigate the complaint. The decision and reasons for it. Reference to whether the council upholds or does not uphold the complaint. An apology where appropriate. Information on any action that is going to be taken to resolve the problem. Details of any service improvements as a result of the complaint.</p>
<p>6.8 At the conclusion of stage 1 organisations should provide details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.</p>	Yes	<p>Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters. Details of further stages of appeal and contact details for the relevant ombudsman if the complainant remains dissatisfied are included in all correspondence.</p>
<p>6.9 Where individuals raise additional complaints during stage 1, these should be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related, and the stage 1 response has not been provided. Where the stage 1 response has been provided, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being considered, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues should be logged as a new complaint.</p>	Yes	<p>Covered in policy and covered in training.</p>
<p>6.10 Organisations should have systems in place to ensure that a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Individuals should not have to escalate a complaint in order to get an appropriate remedy.</p>	Yes	<p>Covered in policy and covered in training.</p>
<p>6: Complaints stages (Stage 2)</p>	Required Action:	To process stage 2 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.
<p>6.11 If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the individual’s satisfaction at stage 1, it should be progressed to stage 2 of the organisation’s procedure. Stage 2 is the organisation’s final response.</p>	Yes	<p>Requests for stage 2 are acknowledged and logged at stage 2. Good practice is to speak to complainant, and address every point raised as part of the original complaint.</p>

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
6.12 Requests for stage 2 should be acknowledged and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received. Within the acknowledgement, organisations should set out their understanding of any outstanding issues and the outcomes the individual is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the individual should be asked for clarification.	Yes	Requests for stage 2 are acknowledged and logged at stage 2 of the complaint's procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received. Covered in templates.  Stage 2 Acknowledgement L
6.13 Individuals should not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Organisations should make reasonable efforts to understand why an individual remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters.
6.14 The person considering the complaint at stage 2 should not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	The review is undertaken by a Chief Officer (or their delegated senior officer) which is not the subject of the complaint who will review the adequacy of the stage 1 response, as well as any new and relevant information not previously considered.
6.15 Organisations should issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters.  Stage 2 Response Letter - General.doc
6.16 Organisations should decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform individuals of the expected timescale for response. Any extension should be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) should be clearly explained to the individual.	Yes	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters.  Stage 2 Need more time - General.doc
6.17 When an organisation informs an individual about an extension to these timescales they should be provided with the details of the relevant Ombudsman.	Yes	Covered in the policy. Covered in templated letters. Should an extension to the response timescale be required, the council will inform the complainant of the expected timescale for response, the reasoning for the delay will be clearly explained and the contact details for the relevant ombudsman service.

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<p>6.18 Organisations should confirm the following in writing to the individual at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the organisation’s understanding of the complaint; 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 the Ombudsman if the individual remains dissatisfied. 	Yes	<p>This is formally covered within the policy and the templated letters.</p>  <p>Stage 2 Response Letter - General.doc</p>
<p>6.19 Stage 2 should be the organisation’s final response and should involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.</p>	Yes	<p>This is formally covered within the policy and the templated letters.</p>
<p>6.20 A process with more than two stages will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the relevant Ombudsman. A process with a single stage means the organisation may lack the ability to check its response before an individual comes to the Ombudsman.</p>	Yes	<p>The council operates a two-stage system for handling complaints. Stage One handles the initial complaint and its response from the council. Whereas Stage Two is for escalating complaints should you feel unhappy with the initial Stage One response.</p>
<p>6.21 Where an organisation’s complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor) or independent adjudicator at any stage, it should form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Individuals should not be expected to go through two complaints processes.</p>	Yes	<p>The council will in most cases manage and operate its own complaint procedures, however, if a third party is involved as part of the investigation process, it would still comply with the council’s policy and procedures and adhere to all timelines.</p>
<p>6.22 Organisations are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.</p>	Yes	<p>As above.</p>
<p>7: Putting things right</p>	<p>Required Action:</p>	<p>When something has gone wrong we take action to put things right.</p>

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
7.1 Where something has gone wrong an organisation should acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include: > Apologising; > Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; > Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; > Taking action if there has been delay; > Reconsidering or changing a decision; > Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; > Providing a financial remedy; > Changing policies, procedures or practices.	Yes	This is covered in the policy. Lancaster City Council will deal with complaints fairly, thoroughly, and sensitively and aim to address any problems raised at the earliest stage possible. These actions will form part of our learning and continued good practice. We will monitor all feedback and report where appropriate. Discretionary guidance for service managers will be formalised in further training.
7.2 Any remedy offered should reflect the impact on the individual as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Noted. Complaints will be seen as an opportunity to resolve the customer's problem and to learn from feedback and should be responded to in that way.
7.3 The remedy offer should clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the individual where appropriate. Any remedy proposed should be followed through to completion.	No	The remedy offered will clearly be laid out in the response letter. However, following through to completion is not always carried out in every case, but will form part of the Granicus phase 2.
7.4 If a proposed remedy cannot be delivered, the individual should be informed of the reasons for this, provided with details of any alternative remedy and reminded of their right to complain to the Ombudsman,	Yes	Noted. The amendments to remedies offered will clearly be laid out in a follow up response letter.
7.5 Organisations should take account of the good practice guides issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	No	Noted. This will be included on the council's intranet site and in training notes to all Cos and Service managers. https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/staff-guidance/guidance-on-remedies
8: Performance reporting and self-assessment	Required Action:	To produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes a self-assessment against the Code.

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<p>8.1 Organisations should produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. an annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure its complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the organisation's complaint handling performance. This should also include a summary of the types of complaints the organisation has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints. e. the annual letter about the organisation's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the organisation. 	No	The council currently does not produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge but will be fully compliant by April 25. The council will form a Complaints Panel, attended quarterly by a senior officer from each service as well as the Member responsible for complaints.
8.2 The annual complaints performance and service improvement report should be reported through the organisation's governance arrangements and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The response to the report from the relevant governance arrangement should be published alongside this.	No	The council currently does not produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge but will be fully compliant by April 25. The report will be issued via the council's Governance arrangements.
8.3 Organisations should also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	No	Noted. This will be managed via the SLT under such change within the operation or structure.
9: Scrutiny & Oversight	Required Action:	We have appropriate senior leadership and governance oversight of the complaints process and performance.
9.1 Organisations should 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.	Yes	Our quality assurance document serves as a comprehensive framework that guides our assessment of complaints. Complaints will be sampled at random. This approach allows us to identify good practice, key learning points, implement corrective measures, and improve services. This will be led by the Chief Officer responsible for Customer Services, and reports will be made available to the Senior Leadership Team and Member responsible for complaints.

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
9.2 A positive complaint handling culture is important to the effectiveness with which organisations resolve disputes. Organisations should use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	The council’s policy aim is to promote a culture of continuous learning and using feedback to continuously improve our services. To ensure a consistent, effective, and timely approach to complaints handling. This forms part of the training and development currently in practice and can be developed.
9.3 Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive organisational culture. Organisations should report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as citizens’ panels, staff and relevant committees.	No	Working towards this. The council currently does not produce a complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge but will aim to produce and share this with key stakeholders by April 26.
9.4 The organisation should appoint a suitably senior person to oversee its complaint handling performance. This person should assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	This position was put in place April 2024 and will continue to develop this role and responsibilities.
9.5 In addition to this, organisations should assign lead responsibility for complaints in governance arrangements to support a positive complaint handling culture. We refer to this as the ‘Member Responsible for Complaints’ (the Member). This role could be carried out by an individual or committee depending on the governance arrangements in place.	Yes	The council will form a Complaints Panel, attended quarterly by a senior officer from each service as well as the Member responsible for complaints.
9.6 The Member should receive regular information on complaints that provides insight on the organisation’s complaint handling performance. The Member should have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	A quarterly report will be issued to The Member and discussed in the quarterly Complaints panel.
9.7 As a minimum, the Member should 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; and c. the annual complaints performance and service improvement report.	Yes	As above. The Member will also receive the complaints performance and service improvement report.

Code section	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<p>9.8 Organisations should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments. > take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and > act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body. 	Yes	<p>The council acknowledges the importance and value of complaints in improving our services. The arrangements for reporting complaints data should assist the council in managing its overall performance. Mechanisms will be put in place for ensuring that any suggestions for service improvements arising from complaint investigations are considered and followed through as appropriate. Complaints will be sampled at random. This approach allows us to identify good practice, key learning points, implement corrective measures, and improve service.</p>