



## Report to Policy Committee

### Author/Lead Officer of Report:

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**Report of:** *Ajman Ali – Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services*

**Report to:** *Strategy & Resources Policy Committee*

**Date of Decision:** *24<sup>th</sup> July 2024*

**Subject:** **Sheffield City Council’s Corporate Complaint Annual Report – 2023/24**

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken Initial  Full

Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA 2744

Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place? Yes  No

Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken? Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes  No

If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-

*“The (**report/appendix**) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (**insert relevant paragraph number**) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”*

### Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Outline the complaints and compliments Sheffield City Council received in 2023-24 reporting year in line with corporate requirements
- b) Identify key trends and developments within complaints
- c) Identifies future development and a corporate complaint service improvement plan for 2024-26

## Recommendations:

Strategy & Resources Policy Committee is asked to:

1. Consider the statistical analysis of the annual report and the breakdowns therein including information on the performance of complaints and the issues raised.
2. Agree that the conclusions and recommendations set out in paragraph 1.15 of this report should form the basis of its written response to the Annual Complaints Report for publication.
3. Note the links to the Customer Experience Strategy, which will provide the fundamental support and direction needed to improve and transform the way Sheffield City Council handles and manages complaints.
4. Provide ongoing support to the implementation and service improvements as outlined in the 2024-2026 Complaint Service Improvement Plan.

## Background Papers:

- Joint Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Implementation Paper to Strategy & Resources Committee – April 2024



Joint Ombudsman  
Complaint Handling C

- Corporate Complaints Policy & Procedures: See - [Complain about a council service | Sheffield City Council](#)
- Customer Experience Strategy [Sheffield City Council Customer Experience Strategy DRAFT v1.0](#)

## List of Appendices included:

- **Appendix 1:** 2023-24 Annual Complaint Report
- **Appendix 2:** 2023-24 Complaint Reason Categories Summary
- **Appendix 3:**
  - Appendix 3a – 2023-24 Amey Annual Complaint Report
  - Appendix 3b – 2023-24 Veolia Annual Complaint Report
- **Appendix 4:** 2023-24 Ombudsman – Provisional Summary
- **Appendix 5:** 2024-2026 Complaints Service Improvement Plan

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.	Finance: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted) Adrian Hart</i>
		Legal: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted) Andrea Simpson</i>
		Equalities & Consultation: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted) Louise Nunn</i>
		Climate: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted) Kathryn Warrington</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>	<i>Ajman Ali</i>
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>	<i>Fran Belbin – Deputy Leader</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> <i>Corleen Bygraves-Paul</i>	<b>Job Title:</b> <i>Joint Acting Head of Customer Services</i>
	<b>Date: 10/07/2024</b>	

## **1. PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the complaints that Sheffield City Council received during 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, highlighting the themes and trends.
- 1.2 The report also explains how Sheffield City Council has performed against the required standards and includes examples of how services have learned from complaints received - arguably a most valuable aspect of the complaints process.
- 1.3 Feedback from the former governance Committee (Audit & Standards) continues to be considered as part of these reports and in respect of complaints performance throughout the year. However, following attendance at this Committee in April 2024, the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee now has lead responsibility for complaints including the monitoring of complaint handling performance on behalf of the Council.
- 1.4 The Complaint Handling Codes of both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman require that organisations should produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which should include:
  - an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure its complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements;
  - a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the organisation's complaint handling performance which should also include a summary of the types of complaints the organisation has refused to accept;
  - any findings of non-compliance with the Code;
  - the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
  - the annual letter about the organisation's performance from the Ombudsman; and
  - any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the organisation.
- 1.5 The Codes further require that 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 with the response to the report from the relevant governance arrangement be published alongside this. This report meets the reporting requirement and presents at paragraph 1.15 conclusions and recommendations arising from the information in the Annual Complaints Report which, if the Committee agrees, will form the basis of its written response for publication.

- 1.6 In addition to the annual report, complaints data is included as part of the Council's performance framework and is circulated on a regular basis to management for review and action.
- 1.7 Complaints Managers have continued to provide objective support and advice for Managers across the organisation. They have also attended quarterly Portfolio Leadership meetings to discuss performance and to inform service leaders on how improvements may be achieved.
- 1.8 The Complaints Managers have successfully built relationships with Complaint Service & Development Leads within the Housing and Adults Services to improve complaint management and response times in those areas and provided training sessions for all staff to support improvement in the accuracy, recording and responses to complaints.
- 1.9 To support the area which receives the highest volumes of complaints, the Customer Feedback & Complaints team led a Neighbourhoods Service Leadership event to provide senior managers with improved insight on complaint performance and handling, including knowledge of the forthcoming new Ombudsman complaint handling codes.
- 1.10 The 2023-24 Annual Complaint Report is appended to this report. See **Appendix 1**. The Customer Experience Strategy is a key driver in the delivery and success of making the necessary improvements in complaint handling. Section 4-11 of the report includes an analysis of complaint data including:
- **Complaint volumes and trends** (Including strategic partners and statutory complaints):
    - 8634 new complaints were received.
    - 96% were received at stage 1 and
    - 2% were escalated to Stage 2.
  - **Resolution and response timescale performance and themes:**
    - Total number of complaints resolved (excluding statutory and strategic partners): 5681
    - Stage 1**
      - 78% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. (80% for Housing & Repairs Services)
      - 63% of Housing & Repairs Services were responded to within 10 working days
      - 59% of all resolved complaints were resolved at the first point of contact (within 3 working days) by problem solving.
      - Average number of working days to respond to complaints at Stage 1 was 18 working days
    - Stage 2**
      - 39% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. (46% for Housing & Repairs Services)

- Average number of working days to respond to complaints at Stage 2 was 53 working days
- **Escalation rates and trends**
  - Escalation was 5%, representing a 6 % reduction on the previous year's result.
- **Complaint outcomes**, including upheld/partially upheld complaints; those complaints which were not accepted as a complaint; and those resolved at the first point of contact (complaints resolved through problem solving).
  - 6% of resolved complaints were partial/fully upheld
  - 4.2% of resolved complaints were not upheld
  - 29.8% of all complaints resolved were only partially recorded by Officers
- **A summary of recorded remedies:**
  - 122 remedies were recorded
  - 21.4% of resolved complaints were recorded with a remedy. This is a 2.4% improvement on the previous year's results.
- **Equality data and analysis (see section 6.9)**
  - Of the limited data recorded, 14.8% (2) complaints, following investigation resulted in the equality reason being upheld. These related to sexual orientation and sexist concerns.
  - 21% (3) related to race – but none were upheld
  - 50%(7) related to disability, but none were upheld
- **Reason categories** recorded by customers when raising a complaint. **See Appendix 2**
  - Overall, the highest categories recorded were: Delay' 38% (872); 'Staff' 23% (525) and Quality' – 14% (308)
- **Quality Assurance performance**
  - Overall performance for 2023-24 was 83%, compared with 84% in 2022/23
- **Complaint survey results**
  - 6% of customers who were surveyed, scored a score of >5, in response to a single question based on their overall satisfaction regarding the handling (not outcome) of the complaint.
- **Compliments & Suggestions summaries**
  - 214 compliments were recorded
  - 33 suggestions were recorded
- Learnings from complaints and the improvement actions implemented (see section 11).

1.11 Sheffield City Council's Strategic Partners' (Amey- Streetscene & Veolia – Waste management), 2023-24 annual complaints reports are detailed in **Appendix 3**.

1.12 The 2023-2024 Provisional Ombudsman Summary pending receipt of the Ombudsman Annual Letters (anticipated to be received by autumn 2024)

is included in **Appendix 4**. To support its function of having lead responsibility for complaints including monitoring of complaint handling performance Strategy & Resources Policy Committee must be given regular information on complaints which provides insight on the organisation's complaint handling performance. Accordingly the 2023-2024 Annual Ombudsman Report in its final form will be presented to the Committee later in 2024.

1.13 The 2024-2026 Complaints Service Improvement Plan (SIP) is also appended in **Appendix 5** of this report. It highlights how Sheffield City Council aims to continue making incremental improvements to the handling and management of complaints, with an aim of improving customer satisfaction for customers when raising a complaint. The SIP includes 3 main objectives:

- To support Directors to improve complaint response times
- To explore options to improve recording of the equalities and geographical data within the complaints
- To improve the recording and breakdown of complaints received by the Council's strategic partners (Amey & Veolia).

1.14 Since the implementation of the new complaint recording management system (CRM) in 2021/22, there have been a number of achievements, including:

- The introduction of mandatory fields to improve user compliance
- Increased internal reporting to all levels of management to inform responding managers of impending timescales
- Implementation of a formal delegation to Directors process
- Regular training sessions for staff
- The introduction of a monthly Housing and a monthly Adults Service complaint bulletins - to support complaint handling and response times in these areas
- Implementation of a complaint feedback survey
- Reporting on any equality issues raised when a complaint is made

1.15 A number of conclusions and recommendations for future improvements can be drawn from the information in the Annual Complaints Report. It is proposed that these form the basis of the written response of Strategy & Resources Policy Committee, to be published alongside the Annual Report. They include:

- Continue to improve performance to complaint procedure timescales.
- Continue to improve the accuracy and recording of complaints, with focus on complaints being recorded at Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure and the number of remedies recorded on closure of a complaint.

- To increase the number of compliments and suggestions recorded, supported by the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team continuing to work with managers to ensure that the process for recording and reporting compliments/suggestions is improved.
- Continue to improve the way in which the Council learns from complaints. This will ensure that all learning reported is considered and the impact of service improvement is understood and recorded.
- To include benchmarking with other Local Authorities to learn from shared and best practice approaches which will be used to further improve performance.
- To increase the sample size of customer surveys as a means of improving our understanding to how customers feel when using our complaint process and procedures and making any necessary changes based on this feedback.
- To improve equality analysis of customer feedback and to ensure there is an improved and independent process for analysing these results.
- To include a geographical breakdown of complaints – aligned to the Local Area Committees.

1.16 From April 2024, an annual self-assessment will be completed to ensure that the Council's approach to complaint handling is in line with the new Code. See: [The Complaint Handling Code | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

1.17 From September 2024, Sheffield City Council will implement local monitoring of all corporate complaint performance against the LGSCO's new complaint handling code response timescales, which includes: acknowledgment of complaints within 5 working days, responses at Stage 1 within 10 working days and at Stage 2 within 20 working days. See: [Complaint Handling Code - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

## 2. **HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?**

The Corporate Annual Complaints report has synergies with the Council's Customer Experience Strategy, the Council Plan and the Council Values – putting people at the heart of what we do and ensuring that maximising outcomes for our customers is central to our work as a whole organisation.

The Customer Experience Strategy will support our complaint transformation journey, to ensure that we provide the best service we can to everyone who interacts with us when making a complaint. This strategy which focuses on delivering and improving customer experience (including complaints) will support learning from complaints and any associated service improvements needed.



- 2.1 The Council has continued to enhance its complaints handling and management, by adopting a revised Sheffield City Council Complaint Handling Policy incorporating the principles of the new Ombudsman Codes and by increased transparency, accessibility, and complaint handling governance; demonstrating that individuals are at the heart of its service delivery. This was approved by the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee in April 2024.

### **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 No consultation is needed in respect of this report. By their nature, the complaints described in the Annual Complaint Report provides feedback to the Council

### **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

#### **4.1 Equality Implications**

- 4.1.1 Investigations through the complaint procedure considers all relevant policy and legislation including those relating to equalities and human rights.

#### **4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications**

- 4.2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.2.2 However, as the Council faces pressures on services due to the ongoing impact of national and local economic conditions, we are committed to using complaint information to transform services and assist where possible in delivering financial savings and to improve customer experiences.

#### **4.3 Legal Implications**

- 4.3.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

#### **4.4 Climate Implications**

- 4.4.1 There are no direct implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change arising from this report.
- 4.4.2 Customers are able to complain relating to its approach to CO2 emissions and climate change which are addressed and formally considered through the complaint procedures.

#### **4.4 Other Implications**

4.4.1 Not applicable

**5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 Not applicable

**6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Strategy & Resources Policy Committee has lead responsibility for complaints including monitoring of complaint handling performance on behalf of the Council.