



Governing Body Response to the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Annual Report 2023/24 and Self-Assessment 2024/25

Councillor Jane Riley – Portfolio Holder for Culture & Customers – Member Responsible for Complaints

In line with statutory regulations, the Council has drafted its first self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code of April 2024 and an accompanying Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Annual Report. As Councillor and Portfolio Holder for Culture & Customers, I review these reports with acknowledgement to my advocacy for a positive complaint handling culture, ensuring transparency and equity are at the core of all customer interactions.

The Annual Report has identified that 2023/2024 was the year that saw the most complaints (645) across a five-year period. Housing – Repairs remained our busiest service area by way of complaint volumes, with almost one-third of all total complaints received to the Council being allocated to them. As recognised by the Housing Ombudsman Service, the most common reasons for complaints received to Ipswich Borough Council included service delays, poor communication from third-party contractors, and service standards. These reasons, root causes and trends will continue to be scrutinised in the coming year to ensure that the service we provide is as efficient as possible.

That being said, and with consideration to the launching of the Online Repairs Portal in 2023/24, the increased volume of complaints is not inherently negative and indicates that our online services are more accessible and robust. It is anticipated that the volume of all contact received, including comments and compliments, may increase again in 2024/25.

Since the findings of the report and self-assessment, Ipswich Borough Council have:

- * Appointed my role as MRC, alongside our Senior Lead Person for Complaints (Assistant Director of Operations) and our Quality Assurance Complaints Officer
- * Built a new 2-Stage complaint handling system, meaning all complaints are accessible and monitorable
- * Revised both Complaints Policy and Procedure, including clearer guidance for complainants regarding accessibility in line with the Equality Act 2010, Complaint exclusions (i.e. insurance claims, formal appeals), and how to contact the relevant Ombudsman
- * Engaged cross-Council with Tenancy Satisfaction Measures reporting, spotlighting Damp and Mould and Antisocial Behaviour

This was a insightful report that has provided an opportunity for Ipswich Borough Council to reflect on the current processes and highlight opportunities for improvement in its complaint handling, but also to recognise those areas of best practice already in operation. I approve the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Annual Report 2023/24 and Self-Assessment 2024/25.