

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 2 SEPTEMBER 2026****MINUTE EXTRACT****CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT**
2025-2026

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to present the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report, covering the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were made:

- (i) Of the 118 enquiries received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, 27 had proceeded to investigation and 25 of those had been upheld. The remaining enquiries had not warranted a full investigation because, for example, they were premature in their submission, outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction or the Ombudsman had decided simply an investigation was not warranted. An upheld complaint was one where fault had been found. A Member suggested that future reports should explain more clearly why cases had not been progressed and make clear that such complaints had nevertheless been considered and reached an outcome.
- (ii) Members discussed the increasing use of artificial intelligence to prepare complaints and how this made dealing with them more time consuming and complex placing an additional burden on officer resources. Whilst caution was advised against using artificial intelligence to respond to complaints, particularly where legal issues were involved, options were being considered to assist with triage and streamline the complaints process.
- (iii) It was recognised that artificial intelligence could help some residents articulate concerns which they might otherwise have difficulty expressing, and services would need to adapt to this.

- (iv) Concern was expressed at the reduction in performance against the Stage 2 response-time target, from 61% to 31%. The Director explained that this reflected the volume and increasing complexity of complaints and the resources available within the team. Where a response could not be issued within 10 working days, Members were assured that complainants were still contacted during that period and given an expected response date to help manage expectations and provide reassurance.
- (v) Members noted that 299 Stage 1 complaints related to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities services and expressed concern about the number of these complaints that escalated to Stage 2 and resulted in the payment of compensation, rather than being addressed early on. Members requested that further information be shared with the Commission to examine the learning arising from those complaints and the action being taken to improve the service.
- (vi) Members welcomed the recording of compliments, including the positive feedback received. It was noted that compliments represented approximately 15% of the combined total of complaints and compliments. It was agreed that the use of a QR code to make it easier for service users to submit feedback was helpful.
- (vii) Members requested that abbreviations be avoided or explained in future reports and that charts and graphs be fully labelled.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report, covering the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 be noted;
- (b) That future reports explain why complaints referred to the Ombudsman were not progressed to investigation, to make clear that those cases had reached an outcome, and that abbreviations be avoided or explained and tables and graphs fully labelled;
- (c) That further information be provided on the learning arising from complaints relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities services being escalated to stage 2 and resulting in compensation payments being made and what improvements were being made in the services to address these earlier on in the complaints process.