

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2024/2025

GOVERNING BODY'S RESPONSE

New Forest District Council understands the importance of complaints in driving improvements to our services and is committed to the effective handling of complaints.

The Council's approach to complaint handling is also in line with the **Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 for people, place and prosperity** and our values: LEAF:

- **Learning**: we use complaints as an opportunity to learn from our mistakes.
- **Empathy**: we show empathy to complainants.
- **Ambition**: we have ambition to improve our services where it is identified that someone has not received the standard of service that they should have.
- **Fairness**: we are fair to complainants and residents in our complaint handling.

It is recognised that the new Complaint Handling Codes issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman have placed enhanced requirements on the Council to ensure our complaint handling meets the expected standards and we have now completed our first full financial year with our procedures and processes aligned to these new and important codes.

We have seen an increase in the number of complaints received by the Council during the past financial year and the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/25 ('the Annual Report') explores the possible reasons for this.

We are pleased that the Annual Report, together with the Council's self-assessments against the Complaint Handling Codes, show that we are compliant. However, we recognise that there continues to be important areas where improvements can be made.

Going forward, the Cabinet, Members Responsible for Complaints, and Scrutiny Panels will monitor and scrutinise the Council's complaints handling and provide constructive challenge where required.