

Cabinet – 3 December 2025

Half Yearly Update Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The Council must comply with increased self-assessment, reporting and compliance and scrutiny requirements in relation to its complaints handling and performance as set out in the Housing Ombudsman’s statutory Complaint Handling Code and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s non-statutory Complaint Handling Code.</p> <p>To meet these requirements, the Council now produces an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for each financial year, which must be approved by Cabinet, as the Council’s governing body, and submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 June each year.</p> <p>The Council has also chosen to prepare a half yearly update to provide the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet with an overview of complaint handling following the end of the first half of each financial year.</p> <p>This report includes the half yearly update for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 which was scrutinised by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel (with members of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel invited) on 20 November 2025.</p>
Recommendations	That Cabinet note the half yearly update.

Reasons for recommendation	The half yearly update on complaints has been introduced to meet increased scrutiny requirements, as set out in the complaint handling codes, ensuring both overview and scrutiny panels and Cabinet, as the governing body, receive regular updates on complaint handling.
Wards	All
Portfolio Holders	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate Councillor Steve Davies - Housing and Homelessness
Strategic Directors	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation Richard Knott – Chief Operations Officer and Deputy Chief Executive
Officer Contact	Amanda Wilson Information Governance and Complaints Manager 02380 285306 amanda.wilson@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members with a half yearly update complaints performance and service improvement report to cover the period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 (**Appendix 1**).
2. This report also outlines the Council’s processes for member scrutiny of complaints following the Complaint Handling Codes from both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman taking effect on 1 April 2024

Complaint Handling Codes

3. There are two Ombudsmen with jurisdiction over the Council. The Housing Ombudsman for complaints from the Council’s tenants relating to the Council in its capacity as their landlord and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman with jurisdiction over all other complaints.

4. From 1 April 2024, both the statutory [Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#), issued in accordance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, and the non-statutory [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#) took effect.
5. The new Complaint Handling Codes include a requirement to produce an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for scrutiny and challenge which must include:
 - (a) the annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure the Council's complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements;
 - (b) a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Council's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the Council has refused to accept;
 - (c) any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman;
 - (d) the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
 - (e) any annual report about the Council's performance from the Ombudsman;
 - (f) any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the Council.
6. The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code states that *'The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.'* Guidance produced by the Housing Ombudsman provides that for a local authority, the governing Body is Cabinet.
7. In addition, the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code includes the following requirements:

'1.70 '...a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').

1.71 The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.

1.72 *As a minimum, the MRC, and the governing body (or equivalent) must 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*
- (c) regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings*
- (d) the annual complaints performance and service improvement report'*

8. The guidance produced by the Housing Ombudsman provides that for a local authority, the MRC will be the portfolio holder with responsibility for Housing.
9. In addition, the Housing Ombudsman's guidance published on its website states that the self-assessment form, the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and the governing body's response should be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September each year for the preceding financial year.
10. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, includes mostly equivalent provisions to those set out above. However, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is less prescriptive on who should hold the role of MRC. There is also no requirement for the self-assessment against the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's code nor the annual complaint performance and service improvement report to be submitted to them.

The Council's Arrangements for Scrutiny of Complaints

11. To meet the new member scrutiny requirements, and the new 30 September submission date, the following arrangements have now been put in place:
 - There are two MRCs:
 - Housing and Homelessness Portfolio Holder – MRC - complaints under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman (and other Housing complaints).
 - Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holder – MRC - all other corporate complaints.

- The MRCs will be given regular updates on complaint handling through their Portfolio Holder Briefings.
- Cabinet, as the governing body, will also receive two reports per year on complaint handling to meet the obligations under the codes:
 - July - The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report will be considered and the self-assessments and the governing body's formal response will be approved, prior to being published and then submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by 30 September each year.
 - December – The half yearly update report.
- Overview and Scrutiny Panels:

It remains important that there is still general scrutiny of the Council's complaints handling process. The panels will receive two updates per year:

- June –The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report will be considered by the Housing and Communities Panel and Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- November - The Resources and Transformation Panel (with Housing and Communities Panel members invited) will consider the half yearly update report.

Annual Complaints Performance And Service Improvement Report For 2024/25

12. The Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the annual complaints performance and service improvement report 2024/25, annual self-assessments and draft governing body's response at its meeting on 26 June 2025. This was also considered by the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 18 June 2025. These documents were approved by Cabinet on 2 July 2025.
13. The Council submitted these documents to the Housing Ombudsman in accordance with the 30 September 2025 submission date.
14. The documents are published on the Council's webpage: [Feedback, comments and complaints - New Forest District Council](#)

Half yearly update report

15. The half yearly update report is included at **Appendix 1**.

Corporate plan priorities

16. Our approach to complaint handling is in line with the Council's [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.

Options appraisal

17. An alternative option would be for Cabinet to only receive one update each year on complaints. However, it is considered that bringing two updates is more in keeping with the requirements of the complaint handling codes.

Consultation undertaken

18. EMT has been consulted on this report.

19. The MRCs have also received an update on the information included within the report through their portfolio holder briefings.

20. This report and **Appendix 1** have been considered by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel (with members of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel invited).

Financial and resource implications

21. There are none arising directly from this report, however resources for the Legal and Information Governance Service (including complaints related resources) will need to be kept under review in light of the continued increase in the volume of work, and the upcoming additional pressures on the service as a result of Local Government Reorganisation and additional actions required as a

result of changes to data protection legislation made by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

Legal implications

22. The Council is subject to a legal requirement to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's statutory Complaint Handling Code.
23. The Council should also be complying with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's non-statutory Complaint Handling Code.

Risk assessment

24. A formal risk assessment is not deemed to be required.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

25. There are none arising directly from this report.

Equalities implications

26. There are none arising directly from this report.

Crime and disorder implications

27. There are none arising directly from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

28. There are none arising directly from this report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Half yearly update complaints performance and service improvement report

Background Papers:

Published documents as referred to within report