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| **Classification:** Public | |
| **Key Decision:** No | |
| **Gravesham Borough Council** | |
| **Report to:** | Housing Services Cabinet Committee |
| **Date:** | 4 June 2025 |
| **Reporting officer:** | Vicky May, Assistant Director |
| **Subject:** | Annual Complaints and Improvement Report 2024/25 |
| **Purpose and summary of report:** | |
| To update Housing Cabinet Committee with details of Housing related complaints received during 2024-2025. | |
| **Recommendations:** | |
| 1. For information only. | |
| Key Implications: | |
| Item | Implications |
| Legal | The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code. This means that the Housing Ombudsman is required to ensure that all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling, regardless of their size and operating model. |
| Finance and Value for Money | Good complaint handling ensures instances of service failures or injustice are limited; that improvements to services can be identified at the earliest opportunity and any maladministration can be addressed and rectified promptly. |
| Balancing the Budget | 1. Does this report form part of the balancing the budget delivery plan? No |
| 1. If yes to question a, when will the projected savings be recognised in the budget? N/a |
| 1. If no to question a, should it form part of the plan? No |
| Corporate Plan | This report relates to Corporate Objective 02 - #ONECOMMUNITY |
| Climate Change | There are no implications |

1. Introduction
   1. In October 2023, the Housing Ombudsman Service consulted on their Complaint Handling Code, ushered in by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Following the consultation, the Housing Ombudsman introduced a statutory Complaint Handling Code on 1 April 2024, meaning that social housing landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements.  The code aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and ultimately to provide a better service to residents.
   2. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code. This means that the Housing Ombudsman is required to ensure that all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling, regardless of their size and operating model.  The duty allows the Ombudsman to assess landlords even where no complaints have been referred to them for investigation.
   3. The changes introduced in April 2024 means; landlords will need to submit their self-assessment annually to the Ombudsman. The statutory Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to have a Member Responsible for Complaints on their governing body in order to:
      1. Champion a positive complaint handling culture
      2. Provide assurance to the governing body on the efficiency of its complaints system including challenging the data and information provided.
      3. Seek assurances from the complaints team and where appropriate the operational teams that complaints are being managed, change is happening and that residents are being heard through the process.
      4. Seek assurances from the complaints team and where appropriate the operational teams that complaints are being managed, change is happening and that residents are being heard through the process.
      5. To ensure complaint handling promotes service improvement for residents and learning and business improvement for the organisation.
   4. Information relating to this role can be found at on the Housing Ombudsman’s website at the following location:  [Expectations for the MRC role | Housing Ombudsman (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/centre-for-learning/key-topics/mrc/expectations-for-the-role/).  In regard to Gravesham Borough Council, the Member responsible for Complaints relating to Housing will be the Cabinet Member for Housing Services.
   5. Therefore, in order to give assurances to the Cabinet Member and the Housing Services Cabinet Committee, the subsequent content of this report focusses on corporate complaints received by the Council during the financial year 2024-25, Ombudsman investigations, common themes and lessons learnt.
2. Learning from complaints
   1. As a result of complaints received by the Council in regard to the Council’s landlord function, the assistant director has provided a report which can be viewed in appendix A.
   2. An overview shows:

2.2.1 There were 116 stage 1 complaints across the service of which 53.4% were upheld and 91.3% responded on time.

2.2.2 There were 18 Stage 2 complaints across the service of which 72.2% were upheld and 88.8% responded on time. It is worth noting that if the Council has got something wrong, it must record the complaint as being upheld even if there are elements of the complaint it has not upheld.

2.2.3 The Repairs Service received the most complaints however this is not unique and common to see across the sector. With 24,887 repairs completed this represents 0.2% that subsequently made a complaint.

2.2.4 The Tenancy Management Team received 0.7% of complaints when compared to 5641 managed homes as a landlord.

2.2.5 There were 4 enquiries made with the Ombudsman of which 3 cases concluded with two no further action or evidence to suggest there was maladministration. The other case did determine failings as a landlord and subsequently compensation was offered.

2.3 Since Sep/Oct 2025, management within Housing have been proving the Cabinet Member for Housing a copy of all complaints received each month so that a random sample can be provided for review. This has enabled meaningful, impartial feedback whilst also ensuring that any risks are identified and mitigated, and any learning opportunities are highlighted.

**3. Conclusion**

3.1 There remains a high level of complaints through lack of communication and staff conduct which management will be focussing on over the next 12 months to ensure that as a landlord we are effectively communicating in a timely manner and providing the best possible professional landlord service to our tenants.

3.2 In addition, there are several operational improvements that can be made to improve the service. These include:

3.3.1 Improved customer service to our tenants to ensure that communication is effective and positive.

3.3.2 Improved communication between tenants and landlord – The Housing Management and Repairs & Asset Service have increased tenant engagement and communication platforms therefore there is scope to increase this further.

3.3.3 Review the telephone system – Within the 2023/24 report it was reported that officers would consider capabilities of the Ring Central system, and this has been utilised throughout 2024/25 to listen, review and used for training and quality purposes. Officers will be considering phone call options moving forward to include the options of setting up a central place for all calls to be triaged to increase the level of service provided.

3.3.4 Improved and user-friendly Tenant Handbooks to ensure the responsibility or landlord and tenant is clear.

3.3 As the Tenant Involvement Panel becomes more established, there will be scope to present random anonymised complaints to the panel and share existing policies for scrutiny.

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| Secondary Implications | |
| Risk Assessment | What are the risks associated with the content of this report? N/a |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | *A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.* |
| Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of [personal data](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/key-definitions/what-is-personal-data/) or [special category data](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/special-category-data/) or [criminal offence data](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/criminal-offence-data/)?  No  If yes, you should complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment and/or seek advice from the Information Governance Team at [gdpr@medway.gov.uk](mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk). |
| Equality Impact Assessment | Does the content of this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against those with a protected characteristic?   * Age * Disability * Gender reassignment * Marriage and civil partnership * Pregnancy and maternity * Race * Religion or belief * Sex * Sexual orientation   No  If yes, you need to complete an equality impact assessment  *In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered* |
| Other Considerations | How will the content of report support or affect the following: |
| Socio-economic impact: N/a |
| Crime and Disorder: N/a |
| Safeguarding Children & Adults: N/a |
| Social Value: N/a |
| Consultation & Engagement: | Has there been any consultation or engagement, including future planned consultation/engagement, in relation to this paper?  No, however this will be shared on Gravesham website and also be sent to our tenants through GoVocal & Whatsapp Channel via a link.  Please liaise with the Community Involvement team for assistance if required. [community.involvement@gravesham.gov.uk](mailto:community.involvement@gravesham.gov.uk) |
| Involvement of other services | Have any other departments been involved or engaged with during the creation of the report:  Digital or IT  Communications |