

Wealden District Council

Complaints Improvement Plan

Plan Duration: April 2025 – March 2026

Lead Officer: Kirsty Ward and Maurice Chellen

Review Frequency: Quarterly

Last Updated: June 2025

1. Introduction

This Complaints Improvement Plan outlines the Council's actions to strengthen our complaints handling function in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) guidance. It focuses on enhancing capacity, improving response times, learning from feedback, and strengthening governance and oversight.

Objective 1: Strengthen Capacity and Resilience in Complaints Handling

Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Progress
Appoint suitably qualified staff to fill vacancy	IG Manager	1 November 2024	☐ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☒ Complete
Build Information Governance (IG) resilience by identifying and training staff from other service areas to support the complaints function during periods of absence or high demand.	IG Manager / IG Officer	31 August 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Develop service-level complaint support roles. Identify and train staff across services to build resilience.	IG Manager / IG Officer / Service Managers	30 July 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Review internal processes and workflows. Streamline and automate complaints pathways to reduce delays	IG Manager / IG Officer	30 July 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete

Objective 2: Improve Oversight and Member Engagement

Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Progress
Introduce quarterly complaints reporting. Include data, trends, themes, learning and performance	IG Officer	4 July 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Present quarterly report to Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)	IG Manager / IG Officer	4 July 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Provide the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) the opportunity to review and provide a formal written response to the Annual Complaints Report.	IG Manager / IG Officer	30 September 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Present quarterly complaints performance data including outcomes and learning to Housing Consumer Panel and Wealden and Tenants Together Board	IG Manager / IG Officer	On-Going	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete

Objective 3: Improve Customer Feedback and Learning

Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Progress
Implement satisfaction surveys post-complaint to gather insight on experience and resolution	IG Officer	27 June 2025	☐ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☒ Complete
Analyse and act on customer feedback. Identify improvement areas and feed into service planning.	IG Officer	On Going	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Publish learning and outcomes. Share anonymised lessons learned internally and externally	IG Officer / Comms	4 July 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress

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Objective 4: Improve Response Times and Case Quality

Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Progress
Monitor timeliness through weekly dashboards. Escalate overdue cases and reduce delays.	IG Officer	On Going	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Deliver training for complaint handlers. Focus on resolution, communication and Code compliance	IG Manager / IG Officer	30 September 2025	☒ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☐ Complete
Review and update complaint procedures. Ensure clarity, consistency, and accessibility	IG Manager / IG Officer	31 July 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Implement a standardised approach to service Requests, creating a centralized recording system.	IG Officer	30 September 2025	☒ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☐ Complete
Develop clear guidance and definitions to distinguish between service requests and complaints and provision of staff training to reinforce consistent handling and recording practices.	IG Officer	30 September 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete

Objective 5: Complaint Handling

Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Progress

Offer opportunities for complainants to comment on draft findings and suggested remedies.	IG Officer	Not yet agreed	☒ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☐ Complete
Produce Remedies Policy	IG Manager	30 June 2025	☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Complete
Extend complaints processes to activities by contractors and partners: • Make contractual clauses to require third parties to escalate and report complaints. • Grant the Council oversight powers to audit contractor complaint handling logs. • Include contractor complaint cases within the central complaint register.	IG Manager / IG Officer	31 March 2026	☒ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☐ Complete
Establish regular case reviews and lessons learnt sessions with teams	IG Officer	31 March 2026	☒ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☐ Complete

2. Governance and Monitoring

- This plan will be reviewed quarterly by the Information Governance Manager and Member Responsible for complaints.
- The plan contributes directly to the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Service Code and supports the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman focus on transparency, learning, and fairness.