

Cabinet Response to Complaint Code Self-Assessment and Annual Report

Lancaster City Council's Cabinet welcomes and endorses the annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Reports and the accompanying Self-Assessments against both the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Cabinet is satisfied that the Council's Housing Service remains compliant with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Code and notes the significant progress made across wider Council services in aligning with the expectations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Code. Cabinet also recognises that complaint handling is a continuously evolving area of service delivery and that work will continue to strengthen consistency, oversight and performance across the organisation.

Lancaster City Council values feedback from residents and tenants and sees complaints as an important source of insight, assurance and learning. Complaints provide an opportunity to understand residents' experiences, identify where services have fallen short and take action to improve future service delivery. Cabinet supports the Council's commitment to maintaining a positive complaints culture where concerns are listened to, acknowledged and used to drive improvement.

Cabinet is encouraged by evidence that residents are aware of the complaints process and are making use of it. The increase in complaint volumes is recognised not simply as an indication of dissatisfaction, but also as evidence of a more visible, accessible and transparent complaints framework. We welcome the significant investment made in complaint handling over the past year, including the continued development of the Granicus system, enhanced performance monitoring, quality assurance arrangements, staff training and strengthened governance oversight. These developments provide greater confidence that learning, service improvements and outstanding actions can be effectively recorded, tracked and reported.

Cabinet acknowledges that complaint response times have not always achieved the standards expected by the Ombudsman Codes. However, we are pleased to note the measurable improvements made during the year and the arrangements now in place to monitor performance, quality assure responses and support officers in delivering timely outcomes for residents. Cabinet expects this improvement trajectory to continue and welcomes the introduction of performance indicators, quality assurance reviews and regular scrutiny by the Member Responsible for Complaints. Cabinet recognises that repairs, delays and communication remain the principal drivers of resident dissatisfaction identified through complaints and welcomes the targeted improvement actions contained within the report to address these issues.

Cabinet notes the Ombudsman determinations issued during the reporting period and is satisfied that the Council has responded appropriately to the findings, complied with the actions required and used these cases to inform wider learning and service improvement activity. We welcome the clear focus placed on identifying themes, understanding root causes and implementing improvements to reduce the likelihood of similar issues recurring.

We are pleased to see a mature and increasingly evidence-based approach to learning from complaints across both Housing and wider Council services. The service improvement plans demonstrate clear ownership, accountability and monitoring arrangements, with a focus on addressing recurring themes, improving communication, strengthening oversight and enhancing the customer experience.

Overall, Cabinet is satisfied that the Council has continued to strengthen its complaints framework, promote transparency and embed a culture of learning and accountability. We will continue to monitor progress and will support further improvements to ensure complaint handling remains resident-focused, accessible and aligned with best practice and Ombudsman expectations.

Councillor Paul Stubbins – Member with Responsibility for Complaints.

