



---

## Governance Committee

**24 June 2026**

---

### **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) - Complaint Handling Code update report and annual letter**

---

Report by:  
Monitoring Officer

---

Officer Contact:  
Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer,  
email: [lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk), tel: 01245 606560

---

#### Purpose

To update members in relation to the Council's position relating to the adoption of the LGSCO complaint handling code and latest statistical data from the LGSCO.

#### Recommendations

1. That the report is noted.
- 

---

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) issued a new complaint handling code in February 2024. The LGSCO encouraged

Councils to adopt the Code as quickly as they are able to and indicated that the Code would be considered in ombudsman casework from April 2026.

- 1.2 The code has been issued as “advice and guidance” for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to complaints. If a council decides not to follow the Code it is expected to have a good reason for doing so.
- 1.3 The Code only applies to complaints where there is no statutory process in place. So, for example, it does not apply to complaints about the behaviour of councillors although the ombudsman can consider how the Council has dealt with such a complaint.
- 1.4 The purpose of the Code is to enable the resolution of complaints raised by individuals promptly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It is also designed to help create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and individuals. The LGSCO has also provided guidance and training tools to support the Council in addressing how best to adopt and comply with the code.
- 1.5 There is also a separate Housing Ombudsman which has statutory reporting requirements and code. In relation to the Council’s homeless duties these fall under the LGSCO.

## **2. City Council adoption of the new Complaint handling code**

- 2.1 The Council’s complaint policy and operational arrangements were broadly compliant with the complaint handling code, but steps to improve reporting and scrutiny arrangements were necessary to ensure full compliance. The Council moved to a new complaint management system, the Feedback Hub and geared up to adopt the complaints handling code from April 2026.
- 2.2 The updated position since the last report to Governance Committee in June 2025 is set out in the assurance self-assessment. The new annual report to Cabinet is likely to be scheduled for September 2026 (to be confirmed with the new responsible Cabinet Member).
- 2.3 An assurance report by way of a self-assessment in relation to compliance with the complaints handling code is attached at appendix 1.
- 2.4 The existing annual letter from the LGSCO which reports on the statistical performance in relation to complaints involving the ombudsman which is reported to Governance Committee is also attached as Appendix 2. The LGSCO has changed the approach to annual reporting, and the data is provided to Councils in May. However, a detailed report is only issued in July where necessary.

## List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Self-assessment assurance report to Governance Committee

Appendix 2 – annual letter statistical data from LGSCO

Background papers: Nil

---

## Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: The LGSCO is now considering the new complaints handling code in case work from April 2026. Accordingly, the Council worked towards adopting the complaint handling code and full compliance as quickly as possible. The code was adopted from April 2026. The position will be monitored and reported in accordance with the agreed arrangements.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

---

Consultees: None

---

## Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Council Complaints Policy

---

## Appendix 1 - Self-assessment against the requirements of the Complaints Handling Code

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<b>1: Definition of a service request and complaint</b>	We recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint, and these are defined in our policies and procedures.	Yes	Complaints policy has been updated accordingly.
<b>2: Exclusions</b>	Our complaints policy sets out circumstances where we would not consider a complaint. These are reasonable and do not deny individuals access to redress.	Yes	This is expressly set out at the end of the policy.
<b>3: Accessibility and awareness</b>	We provide different channels through which individuals can make complaints. These are accessible and we can make reasonable adjustments where necessary	Yes	Complaints may be made online, by letter, by telephone or in person. Complainants are asked to contact us if they need further assistance to lodge a complaint and reasonable adjustments tailored to the needs of individuals are made as necessary.
<b>4: Complaint handling resources</b>	We have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. Complaints are viewed as a core service and resourced accordingly.	Yes	Complaint handling is co-ordinated by the customer service centre staff who support services in managing complaints.

<b>Code section</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Do we follow the Code: Yes/No</b>	<b>Explanations and Commentary</b>
<b>5: The complaint handling process</b>	We have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code and individuals are given the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction that meets the definition of the complaint in our policy.	Yes	This is covered in the comments, compliments and complaints policy (referred to as the complaints policy). It is normal practice to signpost a person to the complaints policy where they express dissatisfaction with a service provided.
<b>6: Complaints stages (Stage 1)</b>	We process stage 1 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes	This is covered in section 2 of the complaints policy
<b>6: Complaints stages (Stage 2)</b>	We process stage 2 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes	This is covered in section 3 of the complaints policy. Minor updates to reflect current practice have been made to the policy.
<b>7: Putting things right</b>	When something has gone wrong we take action to put things right.	Yes	This is what happens in practice. Performance reporting will help to demonstrate this.
<b>8: Performance reporting and self-assessment</b>	We produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes a self-assessment against the Code.	Yes	Appropriate reporting arrangements are being put in place for an annual complaints performance and service report to be made to Cabinet (planned for September 2026). Self-assessment against the code is provided to Governance Committee each year and any annual ombudsman complaint report (where provided).

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<b>9: Scrutiny &amp; Oversight</b>	We have appropriate senior leadership and governance oversight of the complaints process and performance.	Almost complete (first annual report to Cabinet due 2026).	<p>Appropriate arrangements now in place as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lead officer - Louise Goodwin,</li> <li>2. Lead Member – the current member is no longer a member of Cabinet so arrangements are being made for a new Cabinet Member to be appointed.</li> <li>3. Annual performance report to Cabinet (first report due September 2026).</li> <li>4. Quarterly reports have been trialled and are being developed further for data from April 2026 to be provided to lead officer, MT, lead member, informal cabinet and statutory officers</li> <li>5. Assurance through self-assessment - included in annual report to Governance Committee</li> <li>6. Annual ombudsman performance report – to be provided to relevant officers/members and included in reports to Cabinet.</li> </ol>

20 May 2026

*By email*

Mr Eveleigh  
Chief Executive  
Chelmsford City Council

Dear Mr Eveleigh

### **Annual Review letter 2025-26**

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2026.

We recognise that local authorities continue to face significant pressures in delivering services to their communities. We hope the data and insight we share with you each year remains a useful tool for reflection and continuous improvement. Please consider it as part of your corporate governance processes.

[Your annual statistics are available here.](#)

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

We will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 15 July 2026.

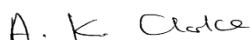
### **Supporting complaint and service improvement**

We remain committed to supporting the sector to embed effective systems of redress. Where authorities are navigating reorganisation and devolution, we are ready to help ensure that robust complaint handling is built into new arrangements from the outset. Please do get in touch if your organisation would benefit from our advice and guidance.

Our [Complaint Handling Code](#), in force since April 2025, is now applied in our casework and offers structure and support to your local complaint system. Our training programme provides a flexible, expert-led route to building complaints capability across your teams, with courses open for individual delegates to book. Contact [training@lgo.org.uk](mailto:training@lgo.org.uk) for more information.

Our Annual Review of Local Government Complaints will be published in July 2026, setting out the national picture of complaints, trends across service areas, and emerging systemic issues. We encourage you to read it alongside your own organisation's data.

Yours sincerely,



Amerdeep Clarke  
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman  
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Reference	Authority	Category	Subcategory	Received
25000219	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	08/04/2025
25001193	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	22/04/2025
25001442	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Antisocial behaviour	29/04/2025
25002247	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Leisure and culture	12/05/2025
25003985	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse & recycling	02/06/2025
25005217	Chelmsford City Council	Planning & Development	Planning & Developmt-other	16/06/2025
25019701	Chelmsford City Council	Planning & Development	Enforcement - other	04/12/2025
25010642	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Env Servs- Prot- Reg-other	27/08/2025
25012145	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Pollution	16/09/2025
25012931	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Noise	25/09/2025
25014022	Chelmsford City Council	Benefits & Tax	Council tax	07/10/2025
25014942	Chelmsford City Council	Highways & Transport	Parking provision	29/10/2025
25015227	Chelmsford City Council	Benefits & Tax	Council tax	06/10/2025
25015831	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Allocations	24/10/2025
25016625	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse & recycling	03/11/2025
25016973	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Access to information	20/11/2025
25018543	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	NULL	24/11/2025
25019023	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Leisure and culture	01/12/2025
25019340	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse & recycling	01/12/2025
25019930	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Corp & Other Servs-other	05/12/2025
25023812	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	19/01/2026
25024140	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Allocations	14/01/2026
25024939	Chelmsford City Council	Highways & Transport	Traffic management	27/01/2026
25025564	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Private housing disrepair	02/02/2026
25026646	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Private housing disrepair	11/02/2026
25030756	Chelmsford City Council	Planning & Development	Householder planning application	27/03/2026

Reference	Authority	Category	Subcategory	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason	Remedy
24012027	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	24/06/2025	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Loss of service,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Procedure or policy change/review
24013658	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Pollution	01/09/2025	Not Upheld	no fault	
25000219	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Standards committees	01/05/2025	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
25001193	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	22/04/2025	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
25001442	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Antisocial behaviour	10/12/2025	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble
25002247	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Leisure and culture	17/07/2025	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation	
25003985	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse & recycling	02/06/2025	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
25005217	Chelmsford City Council	Planning & Development	Planning & Developmt-other	12/09/2025	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
25010642	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Env Servs- Prot- Req-other	17/12/2025	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice	
25012145	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Pollution	16/09/2025	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
25012931	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Noise	21/01/2026	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation	
25014022	Chelmsford City Council	Benefits & Tax	Council tax	23/01/2026	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice	
25014942	Chelmsford City Council	Highways & Transport	Parking provision	05/03/2026	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
25015227	Chelmsford City Council	Benefits & Tax	Council tax	09/01/2026	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
25016625	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse & recycling	16/03/2026	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice	
25016973	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Access to information	17/03/2026	Closed after initial enquiries	Other reason not to investigate	
25018543	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	NULL	24/11/2025	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised	
25019023	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Leisure and culture	25/02/2026	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault	
25019340	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse & recycling	02/12/2025	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice	
25019930	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Corp & Other Servs-other	13/03/2026	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to Organisation	
25023812	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	19/01/2026	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
25024140	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Allocations	14/01/2026	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	
25025564	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Private housing disrepair	02/02/2026	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given	

Reference	Authority	Category	Subcategory	Decided	Remedy	Remedy Achieved	Satisfaction with Compliance
24012027	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	23/06/2025	Apology Financial redress: Loss of service Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Procedure or policy change/review	08/10/2025	Remedy satisfied on time
25001442	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Antisocial behaviour	10/12/2025	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	05/01/2026	Remedy satisfied on time

<b>Explanatory notes</b>	
<b>Cases received</b>	
Cases with a recorded received date between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. Status as of 7 April 2026.	
<b>Cases decided</b>	
Cases with a recorded decision date between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. Status as of 7 April 2026. Please note that some cases may have been reopened since that date, with either a decision outcome pending or a new decision outcome recorded. <b>We report our decisions by the following outcomes:</b>	
<b>Invalid or incomplete:</b> We were not given enough information to consider the issue.	These decision outcomes are included in the number of cases reported as <b>not for us / not ready for us</b> in the complaints overview section on the online map.
<b>Advice given:</b> We provided early advice or explained where to go for the right help.	
<b>Referred back for local resolution:</b> We found the complaint was brought to us too early because the organisation involved was not given the chance to consider it first.	
<b>Closed after initial enquiries:</b> We assessed the complaint but decided against completing an investigation. This might be because the law says we're not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective use of public funds if we did.	This decision outcome is included in the number of cases reported as <b>assessed and closed</b> in the complaints overview section on the online map.
<b>Upheld:</b> We completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or the organisation provided a suitable remedy early on.	These decision outcomes are included in the number of cases reported as <b>investigated</b> in the complaints overview section on the online map.
<b>Not upheld:</b> We completed an investigation but did not find evidence of fault.	
The following decision reasons are <b>satisfactory remedy decisions</b> , i.e. upheld cases where we were satisfied the authority had already provided a suitable remedy to resolve the complaint: <i>Upheld - Injustice remedied during organisations complaint processes</i> <i>Upheld - fault &amp; inj - no further action organisation already remedied</i>	These decision reasons are included in the number of cases reported as <b>satisfactory remedies provided by the council</b> on the online map.
<b>Compliance outcomes</b>	
Cases with a recorded remedy achieved date between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. Status as of 27 April 2026. The relevant date is the date of compliance with the recommendations (for example, the date on an apology letter) rather than the date the evidence is provided to us. If we were notified after 27 April 2026 of a remedy achieved before 31 March 2026, this will not be included here. Where the 'Satisfaction with Compliance' column records a non-compliance outcome of 'Remedy not complete and not satisfied', the 'Remedy Achieved' date designates the date the case was closed and a new case opened.	
This year we are publishing a <b>timely compliance statistic</b> alongside the overall compliance rate. The statistic will show both the number and percentage of cases where agreed recommendations were recorded as completed on time. To be recorded as 'on time', all parts of a multi part recommendation need to have been recorded as delivered within agreed timescales. Alongside this new statistic we are providing more detailed 'Satisfaction with Compliance' outcomes. These are:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Remedy satisfied on time</i></li> <li>- <i>Remedy satisfied late. Personal remedy and service improvement late.</i></li> <li>- <i>Personal remedy late. No service improvement recommendations.</i></li> <li>- <i>Personal remedy late. Service improvement satisfied on time.</i></li> <li>- <i>Service improvement late. No personal remedy.</i></li> <li>- <i>Service improvement late. Personal remedy satisfied on time.</i></li> <li>- <i>Remedy not complete and not satisfied.</i></li> </ul>	