

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND VALUE FOR MONEY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**18 NOVEMBER 2019**

---

**Title:**

**REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS CLOSED IN 2018/19**

**[Portfolio Holder:Councillor John Neale]  
[Wards Affected:All]**

---

**Summary and purpose:**

This report provides a summary of the complaints received by Waverley in 2018/19, the Council's performance in responding to those complaints and, where applicable, the lessons learned. Complaints about Waverley's services received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman in 2018/19, are addressed in a separate report on this agenda.

---

**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

Investigating complaints provides the Council with an opportunity to keep under review and improve the quality of its services to the community, and is a key part of understanding residents' needs. Lessons learned from complaints help the Council to meet its priorities of delivering excellent customer service, providing value for money and improving community wellbeing.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

Waverley's complaints handling policy helps to ensure that there is no discrimination in the way in which it delivers services in a fair and equal way.

**Financial Implications:**

Sometimes the appropriate remedy for a complaint will be to offer the complainant compensation and this may be financial. All compensation payments must be authorised by the relevant Head of Service.

**Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications associated with this report. The Council's complaints handling process is fully consistent with best practice and the most recent guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

---

**Analysis of complaints received and closed in 2018/19**

1. In February 2018 the Council's complaints procedure was changed from three to two stages, and following a short transition period the new procedure came into effect on 1

April 2018. As a result this report provides only limited comparative data in relation to previous years.

- The table below shows the number of complaints closed in 2018/19 for each service and at each level.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
Communities	10	0	10
Customer and Corporate Services	2	0	2
Elections	0	1	1
Environment	43	14	57
Finance	27	6	33
Housing Operations	113	38	151
Housing Strategy and Delivery	19	5	24
Planning	46	20	66
Policy and Governance	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>345</b>

- 75% of all complaints closed in 2018/19 were resolved at Level 1.
- As in previous years, Housing Operations received the highest number of complaints, a total of 151. The majority of these complaints concerned matters relating to property services and responsive repairs.

### **Waverley's performance in responding to complaints**

- The corporate target currently states that 95% of all complaints should be responded to within 10 and 15 working days respectively.
- In 2018/19 85% of all complaints closed were responded to within the target timescales compared with 82% in 2017/18. Performance at each level was as follows:

Level 1 - 82%

Level 2 - 98%

- The target of 95% has been in place for many years and 2018/19 and continues to set a challenging level of performance. 2018/19 is the first year when the target has been met for complaints investigated under Level 2 which is now the final stage of the complaints process. There continues to be scope for improving performance at Level 1.

### **Outcome of complaints closed in 2018/19**

- The following table gives information on the outcome of all complaints closed in 2018/19.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Not upheld</b>	<b>Partly upheld</b>	<b>Upheld</b>	<b>Total</b>
Communities	7	3	0	10
Customer and Corporate Services	2	0	0	2
Elections	1	0	0	1
Environment	20	23	14	57
Finance	16	11	6	33
Housing Operations	77	36	38	151
Housing Strategy and Delivery	19	4	1	24
Planning	64	1	1	66
Policy and Governance	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>345</b>

9. The assessment of whether a complaint is upheld, partly upheld or not upheld is often a subjective matter, and this judgement is made by the officer investigating the complaint. Overall, 60% complaints were not upheld, 22% were partly upheld and 18% were upheld. The majority of housing operations complaints that were partly upheld or upheld concerned the service provided by contractors in respect of responsive repairs and property services.

### **Remedying complaints**

10. When seeking to remedy a complaint that has been upheld or partly upheld, the Council follows the advice of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman that the remedy offered should as far as possible put the complainant back in the position he or she would have been in but for the fault that has been identified. An apology will always be offered but it also may be considered necessary to reimburse a complainant for any expenditure they have incurred as a result of poor service by the Council or its contractors.

### **Lessons learned from complaints**

11. Learning lessons from complaints is an important part of improving Waverley's services and these are recorded on the complaints database. Lessons learned are looked at, and actioned on a case by case basis. Changes that need to be made to policies, procedures or other administrative processes are identified by the officer investigating the complaint and then discussed with the relevant Head of Service who then ensures that all necessary action is taken to avoid a recurrence of the problems identified by the complainant. Annexe 1 gives some examples of lessons learned in 2018/19. Many lessons learned concerned procedural/administrative issues and the need to improve communications with the customer.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Value for Money and Customer Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the information in this report and passes any comments to the Executive.

---

## **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

---

## **CONTACT OFFICER:**

**Name:** Sue Petzold

**Telephone:** 01483 523202

**E-mail:** [sue.petzold@waverley.gov.uk](mailto:sue.petzold@waverley.gov.uk)