Committee Report Checklist

Please submit the completed checklists with your report. If final draft report does not include all the information/sign offs required, your item will be delayed until the next meeting cycle.

Stage 1
Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	**Yes / No**	**Date**
Councillor engagement / input from Chair prior to briefing		
Relevant Group Head review	**Yes**	**12.6.26**
MAT+ review (to have been circulated **at least 5 working days before Stage 2**)	**Yes**	**23/7/26**
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee		
	Reviewed by	
Finance comments (circulate to Finance)		
Risk comments (circulate to Lee O’Neil)	**LO**	**19/06/26**
Legal comments (circulate to Legal team)	**LH**	**23/07/26**
HR comments (if applicable)		

For reports with material financial or legal implications the author should engage with the respective teams at the outset and receive input to their reports prior to asking for MO or s151 comments.

Do not forward to stage 2 unless all the above have been completed.

Stage 2
Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	**Completed by**	**Date rec’d**
Monitoring Officer commentary – at least **5 working days before MAT**	**L Heron**	**23/07/26**
S151 Officer commentary – at least **5 working days before MAT**	**T.Collier**	**23/7/26**
Commissioner engagement 23/7/26	**J Kingston**	**13/8/26**
	Delete as applicable:	No issues Comments in S. 7
Confirm report signed off for publishing for MAT by relevant member of Management Team	**L.O’Neil**	**20/08/26**
Confirm final report cleared by MAT	**MAT**	**18/08/26**

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

8 September 2026

Title	Complaints Reporting - Annual Report 2025/2026
Purpose of the report	To acknowledge and inform
Report Author	Sandy Muirhead, Group Head Commissioning and Transformation
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Corporate Priority	Services
Recommendations	**Committee is asked to:** Receive and acknowledge the report.
Reason for Recommendation	Be open and transparent about the Council's complaints handling Provide clear and concise comparative data on complaints, broken down by service area Use this customer feedback to take remedial actions, identify service improvements and demonstrate learning and improved practices and processes from these.

1. Executive summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
• Like all Councils, Spelthorne Council receives complaints from residents about its services and actions. Complaints are responded to at Stage 1 by the relevant service and by the complaints officer at Stage 2. Some of these are referred, by the customer if still dissatisfied, to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO produce an annual report on reports received/investigated and assessed.	• To give councillors oversight of our overall performance on complaints and how learning from complaints cases drives service improvements.
This is what we want to do about it	**These are the next steps**

• Inform members of the Ombudsman report and decisions. • Inform members of the Council's complaints handling performance under its two-stage Complaints Policy. • Inform members of the service improvements identified and implemented as a result of learning from complaints.	• The performance report on all complaints and the LGSCO annual reports will be published on the Council's complaint webpage. • Measures to improve response times at Stage 1 of the complaints process will be investigated and implemented.

2. Key issues

2.1 This report provides information about the Council's handling of corporate complaints received during the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

2.2 The Council has adopted the following definition of a complaint as defined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code:

'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.'

A complaint can be about quality of service, delay in providing a service, the actions of staff or perceived failure to adhere to Council policy. The complaints process is covered on the Council's web site Complaints procedure | Spelthorne Borough Council

2.3 This report focuses in particular on:

- Complaints at Stages 1, which are dealt with by the relevant service
- Complaints escalated to Stage 2, which are dealt with by the Group Head Commissioning and Transformation and the Information Governance Compliance and Complaints Officer.
- Complainants who remain dissatisfied after Stage 1 and Stage 2 may refer their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), who will assess whether the Council was at fault. The LGSCO's annual report on complaints received about the Council is also covered in this report.

2.4 All Council services are responsible for triaging, investigating and responding to Stage 1 complaints. They must also ensure that any commissioned providers handle complaints appropriately and in line with contractual and statutory requirements.

2.5 Customers can make Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints online, by email, by post or by telephone. Alternative arrangements are available for those who need additional support. Full details of the process are set out in the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy available as a background paper. **Appendix A** provides details of numbers and types of complaints at Stage 1 and 2 and from the LGSCO.

2.6 **Stage 1 complaints summary:-** The number of formal Stage 1 complaints increased from 63 in 2024/25 to 112 in 2025/26. The biggest increase in Stage 1 complaints was in Neighbourhood Services, with other increases being seen in Environmental Health, Council Tax, and Planning. Stage 1 response times need improvement. In total, 29% of Stage 1 complaints missed the 10-day response target, compared with the 15% target. Technical issues with the new complaints system did affect some aspects of performance early in the financial year, but these have now been resolved. However, due to increasing volumes of complaints service response times are below both for the latter part of 25/26 and in 26/27. Measures are in place to address this situation.

2.7 **Stage 2 complaints summary:-** Stage 2 complaints increased slightly from 27 to 30 in 2025/26. The proportion upheld has fallen over the last three years, from 33% in 2023/24 to 8% in 2025/26, indicating that most Stage 1 decisions were upheld on review. Response times declined slightly, with 68% answered within 20 working days in 2025/26 compared with 81% the previous year. Seven Stage 2 complaints missed the target, mainly due to complexity or involvement of multiple services, and complainants were kept informed. Performance improved in Q1 2026/27 and exceeded the target, supported by having a complaints officer in post to coordinate responses effectively.

2.8 **Ombudsman complaints:-** The Ombudsman received 24 contacts about the Council in 2025/26. Only 3 cases were investigated, and all three were upheld. These related to Environmental Health, Housing, and Council Tax. The Ombudsman recommended remedies including apologies, service improvements and financial payments. Total financial remedies were **£1,150**.

2.9 **Learning and improvements** The Council identified learnings from complaints which are being implemented, including the need for:

- better tracking of complaints, including weekly update reports to service managers on complaints relating to their services
- more timely updates to customers, including ensuring acknowledgements are made and keeping them updated on progress if there are any delays in responses
- improved service processes for dealing with complaints.

3. Options appraisal and proposal

3.1 There are no options as the recommendation is to receive and acknowledge

4. Risk implications

4.1 The main operational risk is that complaint responses are delayed or do not meet the required standard. This is mitigated through agreed SLA timescales, service ownership of Stage 1 responses, oversight of Stage 2 complaints, and ongoing monitoring of performance data. The improved complaints portal should also support better tracking, allocation and timely responses. We have also put in additional resources to support the complaints process. Breaches of target response times are highlighted with services and procedures reviewed and modified as necessary.

4.2 Financial risk arises where service failure results in compensation, remedial payments or additional officer time. This is mitigated by ensuring services have clear processes for identifying, investigating and resolving complaints, with early escalation of complex or cross-service cases and learning from upheld complaints used to improve future practice.

4.3 Reputational and governance risks are reduced by following the Council's complaints policy, keeping customers informed, recording decisions clearly, and complying with any LGSCO recommendations within required timescales. This helps reduce dissatisfaction, avoid unnecessary escalation and demonstrate that the Council is learning from complaints.

4.4 There is also a compliance risk if complaints are not handled in line with the Corporate Complaints Policy, the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code, or relevant statutory and contractual requirements. This is mitigated through published procedures, staff guidance, monitoring of performance indicators, and ensuring commissioned providers manage complaints appropriately.

5. Financial implications

5.1 Financial implications may arise where a complaint requires a financial remedy. This may be recommended by the LGSCO or agreed at Stage 2 where the Council is found at fault, with the amount informed by comparable LGSCO cases. In 2025/26, the LGSCO recommended two financial remedies totalling £1,150 which is paid from the relevant service budget.

6. Legal comments

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Corporate implications

7. Commissioners' comments

7.1 No comments from Commissioners

8. S151 Officer comments

8.1 The S151 Officer confirms that all financial implications have been taken into account, as highlighted remuneration payments totalled £1,150.

9. Monitoring Officer comments

9.1 Embedding the lessons learned from complaints and by identifying recurring issues, addressing root causes and implementing service improvements, the Council aims to reduce the number of complaints received over time.

10. Procurement comments

10.1 There are no procurement implications arising directly from this report.

11. Equality and Diversity

11.1 Any actions the Council undertakes in delivering services takes account of equality diversity and inclusivity impacts

12. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

12.1 There are no direct impacts in relation to climate change.

13. Other considerations

13.1 There are none.

14. Local Government Reorganisation Implications

14.1 There are no direct implications for LGR in this report except in gaining an understanding of the likely number of complaints and therefore requirements for complaint management in West Surrey.

15. Timetable for implementation

15.1 Service improvements recommended because of a complaint are implemented as soon as feasible.

16. Contact

16.1 Sandy Muirhead, Group Head commissioning and Transformation

Janice Troll, Information Access and Complaints Support Officer

Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.

Background papers: Corporate Complaints Policy
UPDATEDSpelthorneCorporateComplaintsPolicyv1.1April_2025.pdf

Appendices:

Appendix A Complaints Performance

Appendix B Comparative data with statically nearest neighbours and other Future West Surrey authorities