

Report Title	Annual Compliments and Complaints Report 2025/2026
Meeting	Executive
Meeting Date	27 August 2026
Report Author	Daniel McCaffrey and Sandra Farnell
Directorate	Director of Resources
Lead Executive Member(s)	Cllr Mohammed Ammer
Wards Affected	All
Public. Part Exempt, or Fully Exempt	Public
Appendices (if any)	None

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of compliments and complaints received and managed by Pendle Borough Council during the 2025/26 financial year. It outlines changes made to the Compliments and Complaints Policy in 2025, presents complaints performance and trends across Council services, summarises improvements to complaint handling arrangements, and highlights how learning from complaints has been used to support service improvement.
- 1.2 The report supports the Council's commitment to transparency, accountability and continuous improvement, and provides assurance that complaints are handled fairly, efficiently and in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaint Handling Code.

2. Recommendations

For the reasons set out in this report, the Executive is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the Annual Compliments and Complaints Report 2025/26.

3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

- 3.1 During 2025/26, the Council continued to strengthen its complaints handling arrangements following the introduction of the revised Compliments and Complaints Policy in 2025. The updated policy was introduced to ensure compliance with the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code, reflect learning from previous complaints and Ombudsman feedback, and improve customer experience through earlier and more consistent resolution of issues.

- 3.2 Overall complaint volumes during 2025/26 decreased compared to 2024/25. Improvements to early resolution, clearer triaging of service requests, and stronger ownership within service areas have resulted in improved Stage 1 resolution rates, fewer escalations to Stage 2, and improved performance against response times.
- 3.3 Feedback from services, managers and complainants indicates that the revised policy and supporting processes are clearer, more consistent and more customer-focused. Complaints continue to provide valuable intelligence about service delivery and customer experience, and learning from complaints has been used to inform service improvements during the year.
- 3.4 The Council will continue to strengthen good complaint handling practice, improve customer experience, and ensure that learning from complaints is embedded across services for the benefit of Pendle's communities.

4. Policy Changes Introduced in 2025

- 4.1 The Compliments and Complaints Policy was reviewed and updated in 2025 to reflect learning from complaints, Ombudsman decisions, internal audit findings, and changes to the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code.

Key changes included:

- 4.2 Clearer distinction between service requests and complaints
- Improved definitions and guidance to ensure service requests are resolved quickly without being unnecessarily logged as formal complaints.
 - This supports proportionate handling and early resolution.
- 4.3 Strengthened roles and accountability
- Clarified responsibilities for the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Complaints Handling Lead, and Service Complaint Coordinators.
 - Introduced to improve consistency, ownership and oversight.
- 4.4 Improved alignment with the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code
- Updated timescales, escalation routes and response requirements.
 - Explicit requirement to inform complainants of their right to approach the Ombudsman where extensions are required or following Stage 2.
- 4.5 Enhanced focus on learning and service improvement
- Greater emphasis on monitoring and sharing learning through Performance Clinics and senior management reporting.
- 4.6 Clearer approach to persistently unreasonable behaviour
- Strengthened guidance in Appendix 2 of the Complaints Policy with vexatious complaints to ensure behaviour is managed fairly and proportionately while maintaining access to the complaints process.

- 4.7 These changes were introduced to improve customer experience, reduce avoidable escalation, provide clearer guidance for staff, and strengthen governance and organisational learning.

5. Complaints Performance Overview 2025/26

- 5.1 Total enquiries received 2025/26
- 228 Service Requests
 - 928 Complaints
- 5.2 Total complaints received: (2025/26: 928)
- 94.4% resolved at Stage 1
 - 52 complaints (5.6%) progressed to Stage 2
 - 13 complaints referred to the LGSCO
- 5.3 Performance against response times improved during the year, with:
- 88.4% of Stage 1 complaints responded to within timescales
 - 50% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within timescales
- 5.4 Variations in complaint volumes across service areas reflect differences in customer contact and service demand.

6. Improvements to the Complaints Process

- 6.1 Several operational improvements were introduced during 2025/26, including:
- clearer guidance and process maps for staff;
 - improved recording and monitoring through a shared system;
 - stronger central oversight and challenge of delays; and
 - improved consistency and quality of written responses.
- 6.2 These improvements have resulted in:
- improved timeliness of responses;
 - increased resolution at Stage 1;
 - fewer escalations to Stage 2; and
 - a reduction in repeat complaints on the same issues.
- 6.3 Early resolution of service requests has also reduced frustration for customers and prevented unnecessary escalation.

7. Learning from Complaints and Best Practice

- 7.1 Complaints continue to provide valuable intelligence about service delivery and customer experience. During 2025/26, learning from complaints has been used to:
- review and improve service processes;
 - clarify customer communications; and
 - identify training and resource needs.

- 7.2 Examples of improvements informed by complaints include:
- Informed ongoing improvements to our waste collection service
 - Informed ongoing improvements to our assisted collection service
 - Informed ongoing improvements to our trade waste collection service
 - Informed continued improvements to the Councils website and open data pages
 - Informed improvements to the digital customer journey

- 7.3 Best practice identified during the year includes:
- proactive engagement with complainants;
 - clear, empathetic and evidence-based responses;
 - appropriate use of apologies;
 - demonstrable service changes following upheld complaint; and
 - intelligent use of digital tools to assist in the processing of complaints.

8. Ombudsman Activity

- 8.1 During 2025/26, 7 complaints relating to the Council were considered by the LGSCO:
- 0 were investigated;
 - 3 were assessed and closed; and
 - 4 were deemed not for the Ombudsman.

9. Compliments

- 9.1 The council has recorded 36 compliments for the year 2025/26:

Compliments broken down by Service Area	
Economic Growth	2
Operational Services	27
Planning, Building Control and Regulatory Services	3
Revenues and Benefits	3
Policy & Commissioning	1
Total	36

10. Governance, Monitoring and Assurance

- Complaints performance is monitored quarterly through the Council's performance management framework.
- Complaint handling remains subject to regular review and internal audit.

11. Link to Council Plan Priorities: (Providing High Quality Services and Facilities, Proud and Connected Communities and Places, Good Growth and Housing and Healthy Communities)

- 11.1 This report supports the following Council Plan priorities:

- Providing High Quality Services and Facilities – by improving complaint handling, response times and the quality of outcomes for customers;
- Proud and Connected Communities and Places – by promoting transparency, accountability and fair access to redress; and
- Healthy Communities – by using feedback from residents to improve how services are delivered and experienced

12. Implications

12.1 Financial Implications

None as a direct result of this report.

12.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The Compliments and Complaints Policy and complaint handling processes are aligned with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, supporting good governance and reducing legal and reputational risk

12.3 Climate and Biodiversity Implications

None as a direct result of this report.

12.4 Human Resources Implications

An updated Staff Guide to Handling of Complaints has been produced in line with the revised policy and additional training has been provided within existing resources.

12.5 Equality and Diversity Implications

N/A

13. Consultation

13.1 The report reflects input from:

- Service Complaint Coordinators;
- Senior managers; and
- Feedback from complainants and Ombudsman decisions

14. Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options were considered.

15. Statutory Officer Sign off (please put an x in the relevant box below)

Section 151 Officer	x
Monitoring Officer	x

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16. Background Documents

- Compliments and Complaints Policy (2025)
- LGSCO Complaint Handling Code

17. Contact Officers

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