

9 July 2025

By email

Ms Howe
Interim Chief Executive
Worthing Borough Council

Dear Ms Howe

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I wrote to you in May with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. In that letter I explained that where we had concerns about your organisation's complaint handling or to highlight exceptional performance I would write again, and I have set out our experience of your organisation's complaint handling below.

As a reminder, [your annual statistics are available here](#).

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public 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.

This letter will be published on our website on 16 July 2025.

Your organisation's performance

During the year, we made enquiries on two cases about your Council. In both cases we received a request for an extension just before our deadline and the responses were then received after the new deadlines. In one of the cases, and only after taking the unusual step of threatening to issue a witness summons did we get a response. This is not a step we take lightly. I ask that you take action to improve response times to our enquiries. It is important we are provided with the information we have asked for promptly, and that, where you anticipate delays, you communicate with us as soon as possible, keeping us informed throughout.

We also recorded late compliance in each of the three cases where we made recommendations during the year. While the Council agreed to the recommendations, payments to complainants were made later than agreed in two cases and agreed service improvements were implemented late. I would encourage the Council to discuss with us at the draft decision stage of our process if the timescales suggested for recommendations are not achievable or realistic.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published [good practice guides](#) to support councils to adopt our [Complaint Handling Code](#). The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. We issued the guides alongside free [training resources](#) councils can use to make sure front line staff understand what to do when someone

raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular [complaint handling training](mailto:training@lgo.org.uk) programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amerdeep Somal', followed by a horizontal line.

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