Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

8 July 2026

By email

Mr Holmes
Chief Executive
West Berkshire Council

Dear Mr Holmes

Annual Review Letter 2025–26

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 2026. 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 details of the decisions we have made about your organisation, read the reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your organisation 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 15 July 2026.

Your organisation's performance

Disappointingly, we have seen delays in the Council's responses to enquiries and in providing evidence of compliance with recommendations we have made, a concern I also raised last year.

We made two investigation enquiries during the year, with one response received outside the 20-day timescale we set, taking 51 working days. In this instance we had to take the unusual step of threatening to issue a witness summons to secure the information. Given the small number of enquiries made of your Council, this level of delay is particularly concerning.

We also experienced delays in receiving evidence that the Council had complied with our recommendations. We recorded compliance in four cases during the year, and in two of those cases compliance was late. Both delays affected personal remedies such as apologies and payments, resulting in unnecessary waiting and added frustration for complainants. Such actions should be straightforward to carry out.

Please take action to ensure responses to our requests for information are provided promptly and that there is effective oversight of agreed recommendations, so they are delivered without delay.

Supporting complaints and service improvement

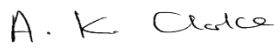
We remain committed to supporting the sector to embed effective systems of redress. Where authorities are navigating reorganisation and devolution, we are ready to help ensure that robust complaint handling

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 for more information.

Our Annual Review of Local Government Complaints will be published next week, 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