Member Responsible for Complaints Annual Report 25/26 Statement

Response from the Member Responsible for Complaints to the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Annual Complaints Report 25/26 Cllr Rocky Gill.

As Member Responsible for Complaints, I welcome the Annual Complaints Report for 2025/26 and the transparent assessment it provides of the Council's complaint handling performance, the experiences of our residents and the areas where further improvement is required.

Complaints provide an important source of insight into how residents experience Council services. We should not view them simply as individual cases to be resolved, but as an opportunity to understand where services, processes and communication are working well and, importantly, where they need to change.

During 2025/26 the Council received 3,394 complaints, an 18% increase compared with 2024/25. While increased awareness and confidence in the complaints process may contribute to this, the report rightly recognises that increased volumes can also indicate pressures within services, including issues with communication, timeliness and processes.

Performance in responding to complaints within the required timeframe was 79% against the Council's 90% target. This is an area where I expect continued focus and improvement. However, timeliness alone should not define good complaint handling. Residents should receive responses that properly address the issues they have raised, clearly explain decisions and actions, and demonstrate that the Council has listened and understood their experience.

It is positive that only 7% of complainants requested a further review during 2025/26. Nevertheless, the report identifies lack of clarity around proposed actions and incomplete responses to all issues raised as recurring reasons for escalation. This provides clear learning about the importance of getting the response right at the earliest opportunity.

I particularly welcome the increased emphasis on learning from complaints and using resident feedback to drive service improvement. The Council has established a Customer Focus Board and the Customer Feedback Team is working directly with service areas to identify improvement opportunities and address the underlying causes of complaints.

The report also demonstrates that communication remains a recurring theme across several service areas. In Housing, Environment and Communities, for example, complaints highlight issues around updates, ownership and residents having to repeatedly chase for progress. Across the directorate, the learning reinforces the importance of clear communication, realistic expectations and continuity in case handling.

As Member Responsible for Complaints, I will continue to provide challenge and oversight to ensure that the organisation does not focus solely on complaint volumes or response times, but considers what complaints tell us, what action is being taken as a result, and whether those actions are making a measurable difference to residents.

I recognise the work of the Customer Feedback Team and services across the Council in responding to increasing demand while continuing to strengthen complaint handling and organisational learning. Equally, the findings within this report demonstrate that there is more to do, particularly in improving timeliness, communication and consistency across services.

I therefore endorse the Annual Complaints Report for 2025/26 and support the continued focus on using complaints and resident feedback as a driver for accountability, learning and meaningful service improvement.

Cllr Rocky Gill